

Love of God in the Church

Fred R. Coulter—April 23, 2011

Today we live in a world that is filled with sin, filled with lawlessness. Let's come here to Matthew 24 and let's read a Scripture that also affects us, even in the Churches of God, and especially when you consider how things are in the state of the Church of God. And the state of the Church of God today, by the way, brethren, is very pitiful; very pitiful the things that go on.

This tells the state of the things even in the Church of God, Matthew 24:11: "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." Remember Ron Weinland, wrote a book and said he was one of the two witnesses. He said, 'I'll tell you who the other one is a little later.' And that turned out to be his wife. All the things that he said would take place, have not taken place. But what's the big Achilles' heel in claiming that you're one of the two witnesses, if you're not? And of course, if you go to the sermon *Elijah and the Two Witnesses*, you'll find out that it isn't going to be anybody from the Churches of God.

What is the big Achilles' heel of saying you're one of the two witnesses? And if you're not, what's going to happen? *At the end of 1,260 days, you've got to be martyred—right? During your ministry, you've got to be able to call down plagues—right? After three and a half days, you've got to be resurrected—correct? So what happens when it gets to the 1,260 days? Or like Harold Camping, who says the 'rapture' is going to be May 21. Wonder what he's going to say May 22?*

Here's what happens in the society because of sin and here's what happens even within the Church, because things like that represent lawlessness, v 12: "And because lawlessness shall be multiplied... [Lawlessness comes in the way of sin, rejecting the Law of God, and it also comes in the form of adding to it or making proclamations from it that are not true. So lawlessness has also affected the Church of God—right?] ...**the love of many shall grow cold.**"

And that happens in the Church because people you've known for a long time, all of a sudden BING! something happens—right? You don't know what got into their mind, but all of a sudden something happens. Sometimes people you've trusted for a long time break that friendship and they break that trust and it causes things to be difficult. Right now, the Churches of God are going through it.

So v 13: "But the one who endures to *the* end, that one shall be saved." So there is the key. We have to endure to the end—don't we? *Yes!* In spite

of all of these things! You look back many years ago and you think, well, you first come into the Church and everything's wonderful and great and all of that sort of thing. And it is, and you're happy about it, and it is the Church of God. But the difficulties come along and then they multiply and get worse. Then it ends up that God has to correct us. And it ends up that God has to scatter us and so it puts a lot of us alone.

When you visit different Churches of God—now I haven't visited different Churches of God because they won't invite me, so I won't go, but some of you do—what happens? You find the same thing here: 'The love of many shall grow cold.'

Let's see what God wants us to do, in spite of everything; Matthew 22, here's what God wants. This then is the goal and the key as to what we are to be doing all the time. This is going to be also the guarantee that if we are faithful and loving God, we will not be deceived. Jesus said, 'Take heed that no one deceive you.' That's not only in the world, but that's also in the Churches of God. So, it makes a very difficult situation—doesn't it?

That's why when we get together, I'm happy to see that everyone really is loving each other, fellowshiping with each other, and hopefully you're all striving to grow in grace and knowledge and love God even more. That's the whole purpose in it, brethren, you see. And hope that the love for the brethren, which we're going to talk about today, will reach out to more brethren.

One of the scribes came, a doctor of the law, and said, Matthew 22:36: "'Master, which commandment is the great commandment in the Law?' And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with **all your heart**, and with **all your soul**, and with **all your mind.**'" Notice what a full-time job that is—isn't that so? *Your full time devotion and attention is to go to God!*

That's why when there's a hierarchy that puts men in between you and God, God doesn't like that. And we've seen what happens when that occurs—don't we?

- it cuts off connection with God
 - it cuts off fellowship with brethren
 - it cuts off and holds back the love of God that we need to have
- **'all your heart'**: means with your emotions. Don't make decisions based upon faulty emotions.

- **‘all your soul’**: your soul then is your physical being. That’s why we follow the laws of clean and unclean meats. And now we have to follow more than that. We have to find out where we can get good and decent food, because it’s so polluted all around, too, so we can do the best we can to take care of ourselves.
- **‘with all your mind’**: because your mind is where everything takes place. Like I brought out the first day of Unleavened Bread, ‘Guard the door of your mind.’

And as you grow in grace and knowledge, **grow** with the Word of God, **live** by the Word of God, **think** with the Word of God, then what happens? *Your mind actually physically and spiritually changes!*

They now know that the way you think helps the connections in your brainwork. if there’s sin, that is there too, so that has to be undone. That has to be changed through the Spirit of God. But *the love of God and the Spirit of God are the only things that lifts us out of our sins*, through God’s mercy and love and the sacrifice of Christ, and all of that.

Verse 38: “This is *the* first and greatest commandment...” This is what we need, brethren:

- love involves *emotion*
- love involves *your being*
- love involves *your mind*
- love involves *what you need to do* with your neighbor and for the brethren

Verse 39: “And *the second one* is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (vs 39-40). It’s all magnified with

- the Spirit of God
- the love of God
- the grace of God

—and how our lives now are changed and transformed with the renewing of our minds.

Let’s see what else Jesus told us. Let’s come here to John 13. Here’s a special requirement that Jesus gave and it’s interesting that when you come to a Church of God and this is lacking, you will find that it’s lacking because people really are not focusing on the first and second commandment. They’re focused on other things.

A lot of people are focused on power, prestige, control and strange doctrines. Then when you meet people within the Church of God, then this presents a barrier—doesn’t it? So let’s see if we can look at it from God’s point of view and see if we can come to the point that we need to understand how we love one another. Remember, **you love God with all your heart and mind and soul and being**. You

love the brethren *because* you love God. This is what He said.

John 13:33: “Little children, I am with you yet a little while. You shall seek Me; but as I told the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ I am now telling you also. A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you... [Think about that! That is how you are to love one another. It’s supposed to be demonstrable]: ...By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—if you love one another” (vs33-35). Now loving one another means

- you *care for* one another
- you *pray for* one another
- you *help* one another

If you have dealings with one another, your word is your bond. Remember, part of the love of God is this as Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount. Let your ‘yes’ be *yes* and your ‘no’ be *no*. You need to keep that in mind in dealing with each other, dealing with others in the world, and so forth. But that’s what God wants.

Let’s see how Jesus expressed this even more. This is part of Jesus’ prayer, John 17:26: “And I have made known Your name to them, and I will make *it* known; so that the love with which You [the Father.] have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Think about it!

Let’s look at some of the problems that we have with this. This is the goal of the love that we are to have from God and this is the power and source by which we are to love each other. There are bad Laodiceans and good Laodiceans. Since we’ve all been Laodiceans from day one, we need to be the good Laodiceans—right? Here’s part of it, the very attitude that the Church of God gets after God has blessed them.

God says here, Revelation 3:15: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.... [Obviously, there’s a lack of love.] ...For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich...” (vs 15-18). That’s what we want in

- the love of God
- the obedience of God
- the Truth of God

That gold which comes from God purified by fire, meaning that it’s going to come with difficulties and trials. It’s not going to come any other way.

“...so that you may be rich... [That you may be rich in love, that you may be rich in your relationship with God.] ...and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the same of your nakedness may not be revealed...” (v 18).

You look around at Churches of God today, and there’s sure a lot that God is doing to expose an awful lot of things about the Church of God and here we are to be the light of the world. Think of that! I look out and I pray every day, ‘Oh, God, Your churches are pitiful. Forgive us, help us.’ They really are—aren’t they? I think part of it is, we don’t understand the battle that we have with Satan the devil. I’ll bring that out in another sermon here after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

“...and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see” (v 18). What is that eye salve? That eye salve then comes from the oil of God’s Holy Spirit to give you understanding. Not only are we to see the truth of God, but we’re also to understand our own circumstances. And we’re to understand the difficulties that are within the churches. We need to count them all brethren. I don’t count any of them enemies. I’m just sorry that too many of them turn out to be enemies of God and enemies of the brethren by going their own way and doing their own thing. That ought to grieve all of us. We’re right in this time, because there are a lot of things taking place in the world and in the churches—right?

Verse 19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.” That’s what God wants us to do. That’s the thing we need to do during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Now not only during the Feast of Unleavened Bread are we to see the sins we need to get out of our lives, but what are we to do? *Eat unleavened bread every day!* Which tells us what? *We need to be feasting on the Word of God every single day;* with the Spirit of God and the Word of God, that is our life—is it not? *Yes, indeed!*

It becomes a difficult thing for everybody all around when everybody’s half-loving God, half-loving the world, half-loving their neighbor, half-loving the brethren. Now yes, we do have to guard ourselves in this world, because of the crime and things that go on. We do have to be careful with that. But notice how that affects us. It affects all of us—doesn’t it? It affect me, it affects you, it affects the whole Churches of God so that God has to come down and correct us and split and split and scatter. Then what happens? *We’re on our own!* God wants to find out what we’re going to do.

Verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock... [What does that mean if you’re knocking at the door? *That means you’re outside, you’re not*

inside—right? Christ is saying, ‘You’ve put Me out, so I’m standing at the door and knocking.’] ...If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (v 20).

This means we can have the relationship with Christ that we really need to. That’s an important consideration that we really need to understand and apply. The worst thing we can say is, ‘Oh, there he goes again picking on the Laodiceans, and I’ve heard that ten thousand times.’ But there’s one aspect of it that is good. If we’re repenting, we can be good Laodiceans—right? If we’re zealous, we can be good Laodiceans—correct? *Yes!*

So what does He tell us to do, v 21: “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.... [That’s tremendous— isn’t it? *Yes, indeed!* He says this to all the churches, so this applies to all of us, with or without hearing aids.] ...The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (vs 21-22). That’s why it’s important, brethren, that the Word of God and the Word of God only be preached and taught.

God is not going to work through things that we devise of ourselves. Let’s come back here to 2-Chronicles 32. I know I’ve covered it, but this is so powerful that I think we need to look at it for what it is. I think we need to understand this is where God is in dealing with His churches today.

Hezekiah had a tremendous Laodicean attitude. After God rescued Jerusalem and Judea from the Assyrians, destroyed their army, miraculously killing all of the soldiers. I’ve often wondered this, in the morning when Sennacherib got up after the angel killed all of his troops—I imagine he left his attendant alive in his tent, and a couple of lieutenants with him also—and he got all dressed and was ready to go and he opened up his tent, and it was dead silence. Then he began to look out and see all the troops were dead. What did he do? He went back to Nineveh and a couple of years later his sons killed him. This was well known all around. So here come the ambassadors from Babylon. They also heard that he was healed because of this infection that he had in his foot and God gave him fifteen more years.

2-Chronicles 32:23: “And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from that time forward. In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death and prayed to the LORD. And He spoke to him, and He gave him a sign. But Hezekiah responded not again according to the good *done* to him, for his heart was

lifted up...” (vs 23-25). That’s an important statement, brethren. Look at all the good that God has done for us:

- calling us
- giving us understanding of His Word
- forgiving us our sins
- healing us of our sickness

Brethren, there’s still too much sickness within the Churches of God. We need to ask God to help us to understand what we need to do. Ask God to give us the faith so that there will be more people healed.

Verse 25: “...Therefore, there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the people of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (vs 25-26).

And what happened in the account in 2-Kings when it was brought up when Isaiah came and gave him this message. And he says, ‘It’s not going to be in your day.’ What did he say? He said, ‘Well, that’s good. It won’t be in my day.’ So he was still lifted up and selfish in that. Then they got punished with fifty-five years of Manasseh. Think on that!

Verse 31 answers the question as to why those who have been baptized, and when they go astray what happens to them, as we find out there with the Laodiceans. **How does Christ get from within you to outside of you, knocking on the door asking to get in if you’ll repent?** That’s quite a set of circumstances—isn’t it? I think we can see a parallel right here. I thought about this and I prayed about this. I’ve looked around. How many here were in the Church of God when we had the colleges and we had the three colleges and we had all the churches and we reached a time where there was \$200-million annual income?

Let’s see that all of that happened was the hand of God, because of Rev. 3. 2-Chronicles 32:31: “Nevertheless, in *the business of* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon... [they came] ...who sent to him to ask about the wonder that was done in the land... [What did he do? *He showed them all the wealth!* So the message from Isaiah from God to give to Hezekiah was, he said, ‘What did you show the ambassadors?’ He said, ‘I showed them everything. There wasn’t anything I didn’t showed them.’ He said, ‘All that’s going to Babylon.] **..God left him... [That’s quite a statement—isn’t it?] ..in order to try him, to know all that was in his heart.**”

That’s quite a statement—isn’t it? *Yes, it is!* I think there are varying degrees of that with the Churches of God today. That’s why we need to be yielding to God, need to be crying out to Him

everyday, need to be studying His Word everyday. Let it be put in our hearts and our minds. Listen, the more you yield to God, the greater it’s going to be in your relationship with Him. When you leave the things in the world and you leave the carnal things of self and come to God:

- God is going to bless you
- God is going to strengthen you
- God will be with you
- God will help you overcome your sins
- God will help you be able to love Him and love the brethren

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That’s quite a lesson there in 2-Chronicles 32; *quite a lesson!* I asked a group of men who live down in the Pasadena area, ‘I want you to think about this. Why has God abandoned three colleges, split the churches over and over again, and what were the sins?’ *Those men who came in, God sent them in!* The situation like that, God does not allow. Lots of time you hear, ‘Oh, God allows this, God allows that, God allows the other thing’—right? *No, God sent them in!*

Here’s another lesson. Look at how Solomon started out. He had everything given to him. God even mercifully, showing His grace, chose Solomon whose mother was Bathsheba. That’s something! He was greater than any king. He had gold coming in like it was water. What did he do? *He ended up having 700 wives and 300 concubines!* Since he was a temple builder, he built the altars and incense places. Here’s the temple. There’s a little valley right down here to the west. Then on up on the other hill is where he put all of these other altars for the other gods. And he even ended up worshipping the other gods because he got all lifted up with himself. Any man that has that many wives and that much money, turns away his heart from God, and you don’t find any place he repented—right?

He’s got to have been lifted up in pride and vanity—right? So, God sent him a warning, wouldn’t happen in his day. But here’s what happened during his day right after He said that He was going to tear away the kingdom. I want you to notice how this was done.

1-Kings 11:14: “And it came to pass the LORD stirred up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite. He *was* of the king’s seed in Edom.... [Sound like terrorist assault going on?] ...For it came to pass when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain after he had stricken every male in Edom—for Joab remained there six months with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom—however, Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father’s servants with him, to go to Egypt... [Repeat

of history today? Think about it!] ...when Hadad was still a little child. And they arose out of Midian and came to Paran. And *they* took men with them out of Paran and they came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house and appointed food for him and gave him land. And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him the sister of his own wife to be *his* wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. And the sister of Tahpenes bore him..." (vs 14-20)—and so forth and so on.

Verse 21: "And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, then Hadad said to Pharaoh, 'Let me depart so that I may go to my own land.' And Pharaoh said to him, 'But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you seek to go to your land?' And he answered, 'Nothing. However, you shall certainly send me away.' And God stirred up *another* adversary... [because Solomon didn't repent] ...Rezon the son of Eliadah, who fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. And he gathered men to himself and became head over a marauding band after the slaughter by David. And they went to Damascus and dwelt there and reigned in Damascus. Now, he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief which Hadad *did*. And he hated Israel and reigned over Syria" (vs 23-25). Does history repeat itself? *Yes!*

This is how God operates. So in asking this question of these men, I asked them what sins were committed that God had to respond this way and take everything away? And you go by the campus, it's still there. God also did something else that was very important. Remember the big plans they had for the campus and everything like that? The campus out in Pasadena, they've never been able to develop it. Every plan—either they didn't get financing, or it wasn't approved. The area over across the freeway where they had the press building and Imperial College, they built condominiums over there. But God is not letting one single person profit from that property.

- Why did He take it away?
- Why did He send the adversaries?
- Why were those who came in sneaking in?
- And why did they rise up and take over?

Because of all the unrepented sin! And lo—if I could use a Bible phrase—*there were many!* Too much to even go into detail here, but just remember this. God does not do things like that for no cause.

Just think if there were repentance. Just think what could have happened with that kind of income and that kind of thing that they had at that time. But it gets down to the same thing as even Gideon and his army. He asked for an army, 32,000 came. God ended up using 300, so that all the glory would go to

God. So that's the good side of the story when you come out from the other end of the punishment. If we yield to God, God will use all of us in our individual lives and together collectively to do what God wants us to do. I'm going to let the lesson of Hezekiah stay burned in my brain, right next to 'Fred, just talk. Don't get lifted up in heart', because if all of that that God gave us, ended up being rejected by Him because of sin, *don't get lifted up and think you're important*. God can use stones if He chooses, but He chooses to use human beings.

Now, I hope that the other Churches of God will look at that and remember the lesson and remember the sin, and remember how the brethren were treated. All because they didn't have the love of God the way they should have and did not have the love for the brethren the way that they should have.

Let's see what Jesus told us. Remember this was given on the Passover night. This is talking about our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This becomes very important for us to understand. And also for those who have not had a Church of God experience, look at what has happened to the Church of England. It's gone! Rome conquered it! Look what's happened to the Episcopal Church—split and shattered. Look what's happening to the Baptist churches. Even had a friend call me and say he saw the strangest thing the other day. One of his friends who is a Baptist came to him and he had the cross of the ashes on his forehead. And he said, 'What's that?' 'Oh,' he said, 'just came from church. We celebrated Lent.' Why are those things happening? *Because they're not repenting of their sins!*

When the Protestant church, the only thing they had to really change was understand the Sabbath and God gave them how many hundreds of years to do that? But because they kept a lot of precepts of God and commandments of God, they were blessed. God used them to spread the Word of God around the world. But now look at the state that they're in. I would have to say their wealth and all their importance and everything that they have and had was far than anything any Church of God every had—right?

Now the latest assault is coming against them. That's why we have the new book, *Lord, What Should I Do?* Because one of the things Randy asked me when we started, when he agreed to do the editing for the Church at Home, he said, 'What's your target audience? You have to have a target audience.' I said, 'All the disaffected Christians in Protestantville and Catholicism.' There are 76-million that have left the Protestant churches so this is not just a thing in the Churches of God.

Paul wrote to Timothy, ‘Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from unrighteousness’ (2-Tim. 2:19). And, of course, the Protestants name the name of Christ—don’t they? *Yes, indeed!* This shows God is no respecter of persons. Remember what Peter said, ‘If judgment begins with the house of God and the righteous are saved with difficulty, what will the end be for the ungodly?’ So we’re living right in those days.

When we first come into the Church, we think, ‘Oh, boy, this is great! We’re going to be alive when Jesus returns.’ Whoa, we didn’t understand a lot of things—did we? So here’s the key important thing.

- This is what is going to keep us faithful
- This is what is going to keep us loving God
- This is what is going to keep us loving each other in the way that He wants it to be

—and He spoke it to the apostles on the Passover night. We read these very words on the Passover night. So let’s read them again so we understand. Listen, our relationship is individually with God the Father and Jesus Christ. No man in-between, no structure to supersede that. With that, then

- we can draw close to God in loving Him
- we can yield to God and He can help us overcome
- we can do the things that God wants us to do as He leads us to do them

And all the credit goes to God, because *in Him we live and move and have our being*. Everything we have physically and spiritually has come from God. We’ve been created for His will and His pleasure. The more we yield to God, the more that we can grow in grace and knowledge. We don’t know what lies ahead. There are terrible days that are going to be coming. I don’t know if it’s going to be as bad as it currently is in the Middle East, but it’s going to get bad.

If we are not tied strong to God the Father and Jesus Christ, then it may be much more difficult for us otherwise. This is why I’ve said, ‘Claim the promise of Psalms 91.’ We need God’s protection. We need the shadow of His wings to watch over us, because there may come a day when a thousand will fall at our left hand and ten thousand at our right hand. There’s going to come a day when there is going to be plagues and they won’t come near us. That’s why we need to really stay right with God every single day.

Here’s what He said, John 15:1: “I am the true vine... [Remember the vine that He planted that was Israel (Isa. 5). And He came to see what it was like and it was a wild vine that God couldn’t do

anything with it.] ...and My Father is the husbandman.” Directly with the Father.

We read in John 16:27 that Jesus said, ‘Pray to the Father in My name, for the Father Himself loves you.’ We need to understand that? The church is the assembly of the called-out ones, but each one of us as called-out ones have to have our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Then when we assemble together, then it becomes an event of love and it becomes an event of Spirit.

Sabbath services are to be a spiritual experience. You understand that, whether you are at home or whether you’re in a group, which is this: God puts His presence in the Sabbath day. We have God’s Spirit in us—correct? The one who’s doing the teaching and speaking, it’s not a reward because you’re a good speaker. Remember Moses complained he couldn’t speak. Well, God made him speak.

Has to be the Spirit in the one who is teaching. God’s Spirit’s as well teaching the Word of God, because then we are together and God’s presence here, God’s Spirit in us, God’s Word in front of us, and we are learning and growing from that so that this Sabbath can become a spiritual event in your life that draws you closer to God, helps you have more faith, gives you greater strength in the Lord. That’s what Sabbath services are all about.

Verse 1: “...My Father is the husbandman.... [He’s working directly with us. That’s how we start our prayers out—isn’t it? *Our Father*—isn’t that right? *Yes, indeed!*] (Now notice what He does): ...He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit... [Or that becomes rotten and perverse. God is not going to be mocked, by the world, nor those in His church.] ...but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit” (vs 1-2).

We have our trials and difficulties to overcome—right? God wants us to bear more fruit and that fruit is based in love. Remember this, every year there’s a harvest—is that not true? That’s why we go through the Holy Days every year—correct? *Yes!*

Verse 3: “You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.” I’ve given several sermons on the *Washing of the Water by the Word*. I’m going to give one more. I’m going to call it *Who Controls Your Mind*, because whatever controls your mind, runs in your mind, that’s who you really are. Of course, God wants a clean heart through repentance. What did David say? ‘Create in me a clean heart, O Lord.’

Verse 4: “Dwell in Me... [That means live in Christ.] ...and I in you.... [Not on the outside

knocking to get in, but inside producing fruit.] ...As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can you bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me.”

Brethren, this is the prayer we need to pray, not only for ourselves, but all the Churches of God. Just think what would happen, all the different Churches of God, all of us repent, all of us preach the Truth, all of us be a witness to the world, there would be so many of them out there today that the world can't come and get them all at once—right? Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't it be great for brethren to dwell at peace? *Yes, it would be!* You can't do it. You can't bear fruit.

Verse 5: “I am the vine... [Jesus said of Himself.] ...and you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing.” That is, nothing spiritually.

Notice what happens, and think of it this way. Remember the parable. The landowner came and said, ‘This fig tree over here hasn't been bearing any fruit for three years. Tear it out!’ So what did the groundskeeper say, or the orchard man? What did he say? He said, ‘Let me hoe it and dung it and see if it can bring forth fruit. And if it does, leave it.’ There are a lot of us that need a lot of hoeing and dunging. So we need God's Spirit and the hoeing is getting rid of all of the bad things, and the dunging is putting in all the good things—right?

Verse 6: “If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch... [We've seen that happen.] ...and is dried up... [And we've seen that happen—haven't we?] ...and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are burned” Brethren, remember this: *as long as there's life, there's still hope!* Pray for the different ones that have—we'll use a term that even the Bible uses—backslid—that they can come back to God. *They can!* That's why Rev.3 for the Laodiceans is there. They can come back.

Verse 7: “**If you dwell in Me and My words dwell in you...** [That includes the whole Bible. This is why Paul told Timothy, ‘Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season. Exhort, rebuke’, and so forth.] ...and My words dwell in you... [That has to be done spiritually. That can only come by prayer and study and living God's way.] ...you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you.”

That's how we get our prayers answered, brethren. Some prayers bear a lot of repeating. All repetition is not vain repetition. As long as a prayer is not answered, you keep praying. I can look back sometimes and prayers I've prayed have taken years, but God has answered them, especially if you're dealing with other people. And you've said all you

can say to them and there's nothing more you can say except, ‘God, I'm praying to you everyday. Work out in their lives the things that needs to be to bring them to You.’ I've seen God do that. Some of those prayers have taken eight, ten, twelve, fifteen years. So don't give up on it.

Verse 7: “...you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you.... [Remember how many times He gave the promise here that if we pray, we'll get answered prayers. All on the Passover night.] ...In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.... [That's what we want to be. That's what we are.] (here's the quality of the love that we need to have; this can only happen with God's Spirit): ...As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; **live in My love**.... [That's got to be the key and important thing every day. That'll help you deal with the difficulties and problems that come along.] ...If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love” (vs 7-10).

Did Jesus have to go through trials and difficulties? *Yes, He did!* Did He always live in the love of God? *Yes, He did!* Likewise with us! How are we to keep the commandments? If you haven't gone through the series *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*, you will see that the whole level of commandment keeping that God's wants from us is a great deal more than just the letter of the law.

“If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you...” (vs 10-11).

You're not going to have a lot of outside joy because of the misery of the world. *But you can have inner joy and inner peace because of the Spirit of God and the love of God!* You can have that. As I've covered in the *Washing of the Water by the Word*—that's how Jesus sanctifies the Church, by the way—if there are difficulties and problems that you still need to resolve:

- take them to God
- pray to Him
- ask Him to remove it from you
- repent of whatever it is

You don't want to have some little corner of your mind of something that's unrepented of. You can't have the love of God in you and hate other people. You've got to have that removed.

We can hate the sin, we can despise the behavior, but unless the person is committed to sin unto death, the unpardonable sin against the Holy

Spirit, we're commanded to pray for that individual—right? *Yes, we are!* All of that is the love of God. All of that will bring joy inside—spiritual joy. He shows what this is to lead to, v 12: "This is My commandment: that you love one another..." That's what we have to do. That means that if you're talking to them and you say, 'Let's get together.' That'd be fine and then you never show up. 'Oh, let's keep in contact.' And you never call. Being scattered, that's an important thing to keep in mind.

We can't get together every Sabbath. I come to Atlanta once a year. A lot of you have driven hundreds of miles to get here. So by all means, keep in communication with one another. If there are occasions you can get together, do so.

- do so in a way of love
- do so in a way of joy
- do so in a way because you are brethren in Christ

That's to say nothing of any business deals you may have with anyone. Remember, any business deal you may have, your 'yes' better be *yes* and your 'no' better be *no*. Let me tell you how important that is with God by using an example in the Old Testament.

Remember when Joshua and the children of Israel were conquering the land and the Gideonites left so they wouldn't be invaded by the Israelites. They made sure that they wore the oldest, nastiest, mildew-infested clothes and things like that, ragged. They stayed out for a while and then they came back and they were pretending that they were from a far country. They said, 'Where are you from?' 'Oh, we're from a far country. We have very little left, we are very poor, we can hardly get along here. Please don't kill us like the others.'

So what happened, Joshua whom God appointed, made a covenant with them that they would not be killed and they would be hewers of wood and drawers of water, even though they may have been the enemy. They're in a different category. You make an agreement, your 'yes' better be *yes*. What happened during the days of Saul? *He went out he killed a whole lot of the Gideonites!* Then God ordered vengeance against Saul's house because of doing so, because they were not to be touched. The covenant was made to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. You might think that's a small unimportant thing. But that's why in dealing with each other, especially in business, it's not wrong to have business between yourselves, but it better be your 'yes' be *yes* and your 'no' be *no* and none of the other things that go on in the world. Just to let you know.

Let's see how we are to do with the brethren, v 12: "This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you.... [Then He gave the

example of how to do it.] ...No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you" (vs 12-14). That's something—isn't it? That's how we are to do for the brethren. That's what has to be in the matter of serving the brethren for any who are serving the brethren.

- serve the brethren in love
- serve the brethren in truth
- teach them the right way of God

That doesn't mean we have to become doormats and be run over by the enemy. *No, indeed!* But in dealing with each other, think of it this way. Do not deal with each other as you have to deal with an enemy, but deal with each other in love. There are times we have to lay our lives down for someone else, not in the way that Jesus did, but

- that may require time
- that may require work
- that may require some money
- that may require helping them do something to their home

—or something like that.

Look at all of the tornados that have happened here recently and all the people are suffering and what things they are going through with the different ones. God honors everyone who is out there helping his neighbor, helping them recover. God is pleased to see that in spite of the fact that many of this may have been judgment upon them because of their sins against Him. That's how you lay your life down for one another.

Not only does He call us friends, but notice what He says, because it applies to our knowledge of the Truth, v 15: "No longer do I call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends because I have made known to you all *the* things that I have heard from My Father." Isn't that something?

- Do we know the plan of God? *Yes!*
- Does the world know the plan of God? *No!*
- Do we understand the things in the Bible because of God's Spirit? *Yes!*
- Does the world? *No!*

- We're the friends of Jesus Christ.
- We are the offspring of God the Father.
- We are called the children of God.

This is how we need to be treating each other.

Verse 16: "You yourselves did not choose Me, but I have personally chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go *forth* and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; so that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He may give you. **These**

things I command you, that you love one another” (vs 16-17).

So, let's see if we can help with God's Spirit accomplish this. If each one of us does it in our lives individually, and then we affect someone else one-to-one, and then they affect someone else one-to-one, then we can help bridge over and eliminate some of the problems and difficulties that have come up between the brethren.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 24:11-13
- 2) Matthew 22:36-40
- 3) John 13:33-35
- 4) John 17:26
- 5) Revelation 3:15-22
- 6) 2-Chronicles 32:23-26, 31
- 7) 1-Kings 11:14-25
- 8) John 15:1-17

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 2-Timothy 2:19
- Psalm 91
- Isaiah 5
- John 16:27

Also referenced:

Sermon: *Elijah and the Two Witnesses*

Sermon Series:

- *The Washing of the Water by the Word*
- *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*

Book: *Lord, What Should I Do* by Fred R. Coulter

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