

We are going to continue today with where we left off last Sabbath but we're going to change the title at this point. Up to now we have addressed the preparation and the forethought, mostly about ourselves, in the matter of going to a brother in the way that God directs us to do so. And there's really been a lot of focus on that, how to do that and so forth, the attitude, the spirit we need to be in, and to approach this in a cautious manner because God gives very distinct and very specific instruction in that respect, and we certainly need to follow this according to the spirit in which God has given it to us.

But now we're going to become a little more specific of the actual *act* of how we're to go to a brother in order to gain them, and that's why I've changed the particular sermon title here today to *Gaining a Brother*, because that's what it's all about.

We need to understand the spirit of why things are given, why God gives us what He does, and the whole point of this is about gaining a brother and recognizing here a desire to hold onto everyone in the Body. We want to see everyone succeed, we want to see everyone become a part of whatever God has called us to be a part of in that respect, in time obviously to be a part of His Family just depending on when that is. But again, that desire should be there in the forefront toward one another and how we think toward one another; and certainly we have addressed some of that already.

Let's pick up a little of the context of where we left off last Sabbath and then continue on in this subject matter of seeking to help someone who has strayed away, because that's what it's about, someone who begins to stray away, someone who's done something that they shouldn't have done, and just in that spirit as it talks about here before this, in the spirit of the one and ninety nine, going after the one in ninety nine who has gone astray and/or going astray, in that particular case. A matter of learning here how to exercise this matter of going to a brother.

**Matthew 18:12 – So what do you think? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go into the mountains and seek the one which has gone astray?** This is a matter of attitude. It's a matter in which we address this. It's that which should be deep inside of us as far as a spirit and an attitude toward someone in the Body. And it goes on to say; **And if so he is able to find it, verily I say unto you, that he rejoices more over that sheep than of the ninety-nine which didn't go astray.** So again, that attitude that when one begins to go astray, when one begins to go off course, whatever it might be, that we don't want to see them lost, we don't want to see them go astray and become lost, and so there are things that God has given us charge that we're to do – but we're to do it His way!

And then it goes on in **verse 14 - Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone; and if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.** It's a matter of a desire to remain in a fellowship together. It's a matter of being at one in the Body of Christ. And if that ever begins to slip in any fashion or form there are things that we're to do. And we have to be careful with this here – I'm going to read a few things here because I don't want to miss anything; there is so much contained here and even in this sermon today we're not going to be able to cover every area, but the general overall view of everything we'll be able to see and grasp it in a better way, I believe,

than we ever have and be able, hopefully, to address this in a way that God wants us to, in a better way as well. And we grow in that as time goes along.

So the object and motivation here is to gain or to win over/to win back your brother, as to regain them, in other words, as a brother in the Body, which spiritually means they're slipping away from the relationship of a spiritual brother. Something has happened, obviously here, because of sin – because it has to be a matter of sin, not just a matter of likes and dislikes or opinions. It's a matter of something that is a result of sin, and we don't want to lose them and we want to make sure that we're doing the things that God says that we're to do in relationships and building relationships and becoming stronger in relationships. Because really, when it comes right down to it, there are only two ways to go in a relationship; either it's being built upon and growing or it's going the other direction. There is no middle ground, there really isn't. Either we're working on building a relationship which means that we address times of sin, times of difficulty, times of trouble, God's way, and do it God's way. The other is basically without God in the picture, and again here, that will come out as we go along.

This is not a matter of looking down on someone in any fashion or form. It's not a matter of being God's policeman or enforcer of behavior. That isn't anyone's job! And yet we kind of got into that a little bit as far as attitude and spirit was concerned even toward the end of Philadelphia, maybe at different times in Philadelphia, but especially when we got into the period of Laodicea. That became more of an attitude and spirit that permeated the Church, this attitude of being an enforcer of behavior. That isn't why we're called. No one is called, in that respect, to enforce someone else's behaviour. There are things done within the ministry to teach, to lead, to guide and direct, and sometimes there's a need for government, but as a whole it isn't a matter of this attitude of mind that some thought might exist in the Millennium where a scripture was taken out of context, in that respect, and it was like someone is tapping you on the shoulder if you start to sin, "No, don't do that. *This is the way, walk you in it.*" We might as well be made like robots if someone is always going to be there every moment you think a wrong thought, a wrong thought comes into your mind – because that's a part of life!

There are things that happen in life where you have to deal with the thoughts as to whether they materialize then into sin. The thought coming into the mind isn't the sin, what you *do* with the thought, what you do with the thinking when it comes into the mind, that determines the sin, the acting upon it or the dwelling upon it can determine sin, it isn't the actual thought coming into the mind.

God is blessing us in an awesome way as far as how He made us, how He created us. He created us with the ability for those very things to happen, *by design*. God *intended* that that happen to us. I hope we understand that. So that we can deal with it, so that we can judge it and made a judgment and determination what we want then in our life. You can't help it, especially in this world, obviously, because of the demonic world, they broadcast those things toward you anyway, but even in society you're going to get bombarded by or things are going to come toward you and just because of our own selfish nature things are going to come into the mind that are not right. It's how you deal with those things when they happen that count.

And that's what God wants us to do, He wants us to learn to judge and to discern things, and through that process then of rejecting selfishness, rejecting the way of 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life', rejecting those things and embracing what God reveals to us, that is the way, through that process, that character is developed in us. It is the very process by how God moulds and fashions the mind, where He can transform the mind. He didn't give us a spirit mind, in that respect, that couldn't be changed, like the angelic realm was given. They were composed of spirit, they had a spirit mind,

separate from God's spirit. They were fully spirit and the way they were created was what they were, that was them, and if they made a choice to go in a different direction than what God had given to them, then that spirit became corrupted. We're not that way. We have a mind that starts out with selfishness and 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes...' We start out as babies learning selfishness, and as we mature and grow it's just a part of our nature. And then when God comes along and begins to let us receive of a portion of His mind, His being, His thinking, through the power of His holy spirit, then it begins to merge with that spirit and we have to then make choices and decisions.

It's an awesome thing how God then moulds and fashions a new creation! That's what it's referred to as throughout the Old Testament there, a new creation inside of us, inside of our mind so that one day He *can* give us that which is spirit fully, nothing physical anymore and no pulls of anything that's physical anymore. So by design God made us this way.

And so again, it's a matter of how we deal with those things in our mind that counts. And so again here, to understand that God has not made us enforcers, God has not made us policemen of behaviour. He has made us so that we can make mistakes. Candidly, one of the primary things, in a lot of respects, I've been striving to teach the ministry the last few years is that we're to be careful not to insert ourselves into people's situations and difficulties. You may see something that is unwise, foolish, on the border of sin, but your job is not to go in there to prevent them from doing it. *They* have to make those choices and decisions themselves and if they make the wrong choice then we're there to help and we're there to guide and lead and direct, or even correct. But we're not enforcers.

You can see things that people do. If you've been around the Church for a long time and someone new comes along, *you know the process* they go through, as a whole, because you've already gone through it, *you already made all the stupid mistakes beforehand*. You've done the things that you realize what they're doing...we do, human nature, we make foolish mistakes, we do foolish things, we make foolish choices sometimes obviously in our life. It's a part of life. And so sometimes you can know because you've been down this road in your life and maybe in the lives of others as well, and you know the pattern, because there is a pattern we follow as we come out of the world and draw closer to God. There is a pattern that we all follow.

And God wants help from the Church, in that respect, of leading, guiding and directing in that but everyone has to make the *choice* themselves. Free choice! And if the choice happens to be sin, if the choice is one of stumbling, then they have to learn through that process and repent of that and go through the process that we all have to go through.

So again, this is a big thing in that respect, to get away from, to understand we're not to insert ourselves into people's lives. There's a time to back away. There is just a time to back away and let people make choices and decisions. Adults have to do that with their own children. There are times you have to back away and let them make choices and decisions. That doesn't mean about the Sabbath, that you're going to give them the *choice* of not keeping the Sabbath, that you're going to give them the *choice* of going out and playing basketball on Friday night or something like that, because they'll make the wrong choice! You're their parent! You're to guide them and direct them in those things and say, "No, you can't go that way." But there are other things of lesser importance, obviously, that they can learn and they can stumble their foot, hit their foot against the wall there and learn from, stumble, if you will, and you're there to help them.

So again, it is a matter of love and the dread of loss of a brother that we love that should be our attitude of mind, that we don't want to lose someone, we don't want to lose a relationship with someone. We want the relationship to grow and to mature and there are things that can interfere with that and we want to be there to do our part in helping to prevent that if we can. So, if your motivation is genuinely one of love then it will more fully come across as that. If that's what your motivation is, as a whole people are going to perceive that; not always, because sometimes correction is just hard to receive and it takes time for the person to realize where you were coming from. But if you come across in a corrective, policeman type, enforcer type, self-righteous type, because they're sinning and you've caught them and, "This is sin and you need to stop that!" and no love mixed in there...that's horrible! And the person that does that in that attitude and spirit, their sin is as great as the individual's sin in the first place, really, when it comes right down to it, because that's not the way to approach your brother – if it's not done out of love. If it's done out of self-righteousness and pride, that in itself is sin and has to be repented of.

And so that's why we are to examine ourselves first.

So again, if it's a matter of a policeman, an enforcer, a sheriff and whatever, then it's going to come across as such and the ability to help someone is going to be less, obviously. And so this also requires a matter of judgment, and again, you want to be very certain of what you judge, and it's not a matter of how *you* weigh the judgment, it's a matter of how *God* says it is. We want to make sure that we're right with God first because... I'm going to read a part of a letter later on here that shows, reveals oftentimes what takes place as people deal with various situations out here.

**Matthew 18:15** here, let's just look at it a little more closely. The first area of instruction says: **Moreover, if your brother shall trespass 'against' you**, the word 'against' meaning 'unto' or 'into' you; in other words, something direct. Now, what we have to realize here, there are spiritual principles, especially in other scriptures we're going to look at, but this one here really is very basic. This one here is more along the lines of is someone sins against you...it's like what it talks about in Luke, it asks the same question in the book of Luke and it says basically, 'How often are you to forgive them? Seven times? One time? Three times? Seven times a day? Many...?' It's not a matter of counting it, it's a matter of being consistent at doing what you need to do in a relationship that generally is a closer relationship anyway. And it's generally things that are done directly, as an example, in marriage, or in a family, or in some closer relationship where people are around each other more often. And so this really fits into this more fully than most other places.

This isn't about a situation where, as a whole, you know of something that someone else has done that you know is wrong. Let's say you know, perhaps in conversation it came out as they were discussing something, or maybe you called them and let's say they weren't at home and it came out in the conversation they slipped, they're at work on the Sabbath. They went to work on the Sabbath. Things like this have happened. There is a scripture that talks about, 'Be sure to know, your sin will find you out'. God has a way of bringing things out in the open. And so how do you deal with something like that? Well, you don't go to them seven times a day. You know, if they don't repent right then and stop right then there is a bigger issue at hand here.

So again, what Matthew 18:15 is talking about is not a matter of something of greater importance here, it is of great importance but not of the same magnitude, if you will, of a heinous sin that an individual better repent of immediately there or they're not a part of the Body any longer. There are other sins... it's like comparing... let's say a person's going down the freeway out here, it's 55 MPH and you're driving

down the freeway at 80 MPH. Now, that's just stupid, you know, and if you get caught, if you get pulled over you're going to pay a fine, but you're not going to pay near the fine if you're going 120mph. There is a severity in the penalty of things you pay and the stupidity that gets greater and greater and multiplied and lesser care and concern toward life and being dangerous in those kinds of situations, and the attitude of mind there that God is going to judge that we need to be... The point being is here, sin is sin, but there are those things that carry far greater penalty, they're far more severe in a relationship with one another and in the Church, and then there are those things that are smaller in comparison. But sin still has to be repented of.

If someone gets angry with someone in a family, a husband and wife, and something is said, perhaps a name has been called - hideous if things like that happen, but those things happen in life where someone may call someone a name out of anger. That's just wrong! You better go to your brother alone! In other words, if it happened in front of family, other children, or other people, you wait and you address them and discuss it. It would be nice if others would discuss it, but if it's children you have to remove that first of all, that environment, and be with the individual alone and go and talk to them and say, "That was wrong! That is not God's way of life." And you know what? What God tells you... Well, let's just go and follow through with this - the point being is here this is the kind of situation that involves Matthew 18 more than any other. It's the type of thing that maybe it can happen several times in a day, or different things happen to you from the same individual several times in a day. And God says, if they repent, *forgive them*. There is a lot said there. If they repent, God says to forgive them.

We'll come back to that because that's a loaded one as well. People can just say, "I'm sorry-I'm sorry-I'm sorry..." and never change. What do you do? Well, if they never change that means they didn't really repent, so at some point it's going to have to be addressed, isn't it? Okay?

So again here, **If your brother shall trespass against you/unto you**, instruction here is very direct. It does not say, "If your brother sins against someone else or commits sin that you believe that you are aware or have knowledge of..." Again here, it's something that's done specifically toward you and your response then toward it.

The most common area for sin in such a case is anger expressed toward you, a verbal attack, perhaps a matter of jealousy, perhaps something spiritually divisive, words against others. If someone comes to you and just begins to tell you about someone else's sins, someone else's problems, they have this news about someone else, of something they're doing wrong and so they're sharing it with you - you need to stop them dead in their tracks because that is sin! Okay? And you need to tell them, "Now, wait a minute! In the Church we don't do this." Now, if it's your job as a part of the ministry and you're discussing something with another minister in order to deal with a matter that's a different issue. But if it's a matter of just talking about, in the sense of tearing down someone, we don't do that in God's Church! That isn't the way of God's Church, to tear down other people, to get on the telephone and, "Have you heard the latest about (so and so)?" "Oh, what did they do this time?" This happens all the time! I'm just telling you, *this happens all the time!* That kind of thing we need to get away from.

And so if someone tells you something directly, verbally attacks you, says something to you in a bad way, out of anger or whatever, you're to speak to them alone about that, "This isn't right. I shouldn't be talked to this way. That hurts! I am hurt by what you said!" Now they have a response to that, they should respond to that, because that just isn't right in God's Church. And so if you don't do your part and you just let yourself be talked to that way then *shame on you* and you're not doing your part before God because we should not allow this in God's Church. And *then* if someone comes up to you and starts

wanting to unload about someone else's problems and someone else's trial, for whatever reason the human mind does that, mystifies me in many ways – it doesn't, but it should mystify all of us, that human nature can be that way – we need to stop that as well. That's talking to your brother alone, and saying, "Wait a minute! We're not supposed to do that in the Church. You're giving me something that's going to cause me now a battle toward another brother and I don't appreciate that. I don't even know if it's true! And even if it is true there is a way that this is supposed to be dealt with and you're spreading this with me? ...and then possibly causing me to have a battle here, and maybe causing some to stumble because you're sharing this with them?" That's exactly what the context of Matthew 18 is about, causing someone else to stumble because you're sharing this 'good news'.... not good news, but this 'news' about someone else and then cause them to stumble because now they have an attitude. Has that ever happened to you where someone has told you something and all of a sudden you have an attitude you're fighting toward someone else because of what they told you? I've had that. I think that's been everyone's experience through time. If you don't experience that in your lifetime you're a unique individual indeed, if that never happens to you, because that's just human nature, that happens a lot with human nature, sadly.

And so if something happens as a matter of a verbal attack, or a matter of jealousy, something is done out of jealousy toward you, you're treated in a certain way because of jealousy, some comment comes out of the mouth – like has happened! "You got ordained and I didn't? *You got ordained and I didn't?*! Something is wrong here!" Now, these things happen. I don't have to go back very far to know situations where this happens, okay? It happens, and it's a matter of jealousy, and a person needs to talk to their brother alone then and say, "Now, wait a minute. This has happened to me...I would hope that you would be happy for me. This is a serious thing, to have this kind of a responsibility and I'm hoping that I can respond properly to it because I know that to more is given, more responsibility is there, and I would hope you'd be praying for me and not coming to me with this kind of a spirit and attitude because it's just wrong." And hopefully they're going to repent! But see, you have a duty to do that, if it happens to you. If you let it go you made a big mistake, you haven't done what God said you should do. If someone responds to you in a wrong spirit that's hurtful, that causes pain, you might say, "Well, I can take it." But you haven't done them any good by bearing it the wrong way.

See, we read some scriptures earlier about covering sin? There is a right way to cover sin and there's a wrong way to cover sin. Covering sin God's way that brings someone to repentance where someone prays and asks God for repentance through the blood of Christ – that's the right way. But to cover a sin by...because it's a little easier, you don't want to stir up anything, you don't want to lose a friend...those are all wrong things. That's not the right way to cover sin. Whatever.

So again, spiritually divisive words – perhaps someone comes to you and starts telling you another doctrine. That's even worse yet! And saying, "Hey, I just don't agree with this, what's been said. I don't agree that women should be ordained. I don't agree that we're in the 'Day of the Lord'. I don't agree with that." You need to address it immediately right then and there! And if they don't receive you, if they don't listen to you, you've got another responsibility right away. These are damaging things and some of these are far worse, far more damaging because there are things that happen in relationships that just happen in relationships; between a husband and a wife, as an example, that's probably the most common, where something is said, perhaps you just had a bad day and maybe many of them in a row, and you're not treating someone the way you should and maybe you say some things in a wrong way. It's good when the other person stops you in your tracks and says something about it and says, "Now, wait a minute, I don't know what you're upset about, I don't know what's going on, but you're treating me the wrong way and it's hurtful." That's how you help people. You know, if you don't tell

people, 'something hurts me', 'this is hurting to me, what you're saying to me', then you're not doing them any good if you just let them do it all the time, if you let yourself be run over, if you let yourself... you know, some people... oh, I don't even want to get into that, it'd be a sermon.

So again, things to measure, but this in Matthew 18:15 is a very specific instruction here having to do in a very specific situation about sin against you, something that's being done wrong against you that is against what we teach as a way of life in the Church. And so don't minimize this, because relationships is very much about what we teach in the Church – relationship between a husband and a wife and having peace in that relationship and love in that relationship is very much what we teach in God's Church, and if it's anything else but that it needs to be addressed, okay? It needs to be addressed to bring about change, because the person needs to change. And if they don't, then God gives other instruction there.

Let's notice Luke 17 where it talks about this in part, saying some things a little bit differently and adding a little bit what I had already talked about here, what I had mentioned already, but again, just to read the verses here.

**Luke 17:1 - Then He said to His disciples, It is impossible but that offences/cause to stumble/stumbling, basically, obviously because of sin here, will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!** So just setting it back into the scenario of the many different examples I just gave. **It were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he be cast into the sea than he should offend one of these little ones.** We're not to offend each other, we're not to hurt each other, we're not to... You know, by doing certain things you could hurt someone else, you can cause someone else to stumble; you can, by passing along information about someone else, if you're not careful you can cause that person then to have a battle toward an individual that they shouldn't have, and they themselves can begin entering into a wrong judgment, a condemnation, a spirit of condemnation, and have their facts fully wrong even. And even if they're right, it's wrong to get caught into that spirit to where a person has to fight a battle, or is fighting... and maybe not even fighting it, maybe now they're passing it along to somebody else, because that happens too.

And after a while it gets changed a little bit because of what you heard the other person tell you and it just keeps going down the row and after a while it's so far away from what the truth was... and how many people stumbled along the way? How many people sinned along the way in this process, because individuals gave themselves to this? So, everyone sinning along the way. It needs to be stopped immediately!

**Take heed to yourselves:** that's the admonition! **Take heed to yourselves;** that's the way life is, we should take heed to ourselves in God's Church to live God's way of life, to strive to do things the way God says to do them. **If your brother trespass against you, rebuke him;** and so again, if they have sinned against you, toward you in any fashion or form, obviously as a whole here by words, by things that are said, then there needs to be a correction there. "That hurts! What you're doing is wrong! You have hurt me. You are hurting others by this, by the way you talk to so and so, and you've talked to me that way. You're hurting others by the way you're talking. You're hurting your own reputation and you're not doing things the way God said to do it, how we're to have peace in the Church. This isn't peace, this is stirring up strife." Now, they need to be honest about that, the other party, and if they aren't there are things that need to be done. Hopefully an individual is going to respond to that and say, "You know, you're right, I am sorry, I don't want to be like that. I don't want to come across like that..." or whatever, but there needs to be a response. And that's what this is in part talking about.

**Take heed to yourselves; if your brother trespass against you rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.** That's the attitude of mind. Don't hold it against them any longer, don't judge them by this any longer. And the word 'rebuke' here... sometimes it's interesting just to look at some of the words in the Greek. It's 'to meet out due measure', to meet out due measure... 'to censure', in other words according to what was done, meet it back to what God says. That's what is fair and right and just, to censure; in some cases, it is to censure, which sometimes is, again, a matter of 'a warning or sternly stated charge' if you will. That's what the word means as well, or 'correction', to do something stated against you, correction here that needs to be changed.

**Verse 4 - And if he trespass against you seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn to you again saying, I repent/change; you shall forgive him.** This gets a little hairy! Prayerfully it's something different that happens; but if it's the same thing your attitude of mind is to be an attitude of forgiveness. That's the point in all this, to be an attitude of a willingness to forgive. And how many stupid things a person might do, it might not be exactly the same thing, they might come back at you again and say something in a different manner, and you address it again, say, "Now, wait a minute. We just went through this..." "You're right, I'm sorry, I've done it again. I don't know what..." And if the attitude is one of wanting to change... BUT, if this becomes something that is done day by day by day, there is not repentance and there is not change and you have a responsibility then to go farther with this because they're just using it loosely here, it doesn't mean anything. "Oh, I'm sorry." "I'm sorry." "I'll change." "I'll repent." You know? And every day it's the same, nothing changes... well, then you need to do something else, and we'll get to that in a little bit.

But again, your attitude of mind should always be of a readiness to forgive, that's the point; that should be your desire, that they're going to respond that way, and because you really don't want to go to the next step anyway. You really hope and pray, and a matter of fact you put prayer into it before you ever, as a whole, sometimes you may have to say it right on the spot and says, "Father give me help!" and then address a matter rather than letting it go by the wayside for hours or days, or whatever. Things speedily addressed are far better as a whole, as soon as you can.

Returning to Matthew 18. So again, 'to sin unto/against someone' in such a manner as to cause them hurt, to cause them suffering as a result of something said or done that's just wrong. That's a matter of sin and it works to destroy relationships. In God's Church we're to build relationships; so either one of the two are taking place – either something is being done to destroy and hurt the relationship or something is being done to build that relationship, there is no middle ground, something that maybe is done to cause division or cause suffering instead of peace and unity which is what we're supposed to have and work toward.

**Matthew 18:15 – Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you/unto you, go and tell him his fault',** and this is an interesting word here because we've gone through this in other areas of scripture. It's that word that means 'to expose', 'to convict', 'to reprove', his fault. In other words, here is the time to expose it, and it should be embarrassing to an individual, and when an individual, a person's brought up to repentance it should be a matter of shame or embarrassment. There was an offering in the Old Testament called the 'asham offering', it's like being ashamed is basically what it was about, for what they have done, a matter of repentance, a matter of a desire to change, and there is a time to expose something and hopefully because of your conviction hopefully the other person becomes convicted of that, or to reprove and correct it.

It says, **between you and him alone**: so, that's the first step, between you and him alone. Very rarely, as a whole, are they done like this. Usually people involve someone else. Usually they involve a friend or someone that they kind of unload on and say, "(So and so) is doing it again and I don't know what to do here..." And so we tend to share, too often, sometimes with our best friend or friends and unload on them. And we're not supposed to do that in God's Church. It should be self-evident.

**...and if he shall hear you, /F, then you have gained your brother.** And that's the desire, because we want to grow together in God's Church, and if someone is sorry for hurting you, for doing something that has caused you some suffering, even to realize that they even put you in a position to have to address something like this and how awkward and how much it hurts to even have to do that. Hopefully that will bring a kind of a response here that, again, draws you closer together in the relationship. There are battles we can fight together and do fight together, because all of us sin, all of us have faults, all of us have weaknesses, all of us have done stupid things, foolish things. All of us have had sin in our life, and we need to have mercy upon each other because of that, because we understand what we're all capable of, and it's how we work with each other to grow and to change that's important. And as we do that together as a Body those are the kinds of things that can actually help to unite you and make you stronger in a Body, when you do things out of love and care and concern within the Body, to grow together in a right relationship within the Body. Those are the things that can actually help you to draw closer together, and so we need to yield ourselves to that process.

So again, it's not a matter of the person repeating the same thing over and over again, because then you're forced to do something else later on if that continues on and on and on and there's really no change...but as long as they hear. And that's the key here in a lot of this, as long as they hear; **'IF he shall hear you'**; and respond at that moment, at that time, maybe even after a little while. Maybe sometimes somebody has to just get away...give them that time to get away. If they need to get away to get themselves together, to get a hold of themselves, give them that time. That's a part of forgiving, is giving, and give them that time. But they still have a responsibility to come back to you, and if they don't come back to you then you have a responsibility to at least say, "Well, what are you going to do about what we just discussed? You haven't said anything to me; you haven't given me a response back. Do we need to talk about this more? Is something going to change here in all this? Do you feel badly for what you've done? Do you feel sorry for what you've done?" Just point blank ask that! And if you don't get a response then you've got a duty to go on with that and it's not going to be an enjoyable thing to have to do but you've got a duty to do it. Because this is the Church of God, and God says in our relationships we're to live a certain way toward each other within the Body, to have unity, oneness, to be able to have the way of peace in the Church of God.

I already talked about how some sin is far more serious and dangerous than others and carries a greater penalty, and there is a big difference between somebody getting upset sinning against you, raising their voice in anger against you, and someone going out and committing adultery in a marriage against you. *Big* difference! To be addressed in a totally different manner.

So again here, there are also matters of sins of weakness in areas like alcohol, smoking, as an example, when someone first comes into the Church we learn in time we shouldn't participate in that, it shouldn't be a part of our life, and we need to break it, to fight against it and to make the change there. And there are some things like that that can be an ongoing battle in people's lives. There are things to do with addiction, with drugs, that can be a lifelong battle because of what it does to your system. And some people talk about how quickly they quit smoking or how they prayed about it and it was just taken away from them...and it's like sometimes I've heard individuals make the comment and it's like they look

down upon others who can't quit it. Not everybody is the same. Not everybody's minds, metabolism, chemistry, is the same, and to judge like that is unrighteous judgment. You can't judge someone by what *you* have done and what you're able to do. You've got to be able to judge someone by what *their* situation is because of life and because of what they're dealing with and it's always going to be different in that regard.

And so again here, a matter of a misuse of drugs, not illegal, if it's illegal you've got another issue here to deal with. But again here, there are some situations where people can get into a bind of misusing over-the-counter drugs. It happens...and pornography, sexual imbalance and so forth, battles that people have to deal with *all the time* in this world because God calls us out of the world. These things are there and these are battles, these are real things that people have to deal with, and it's how you deal with them that God's concerned. And again, following the guidelines of Matthew 18:15, that it be done that way.

So again, sometimes some matters have to be weighed, and if you're not able to know exactly what to do sometimes you have to seek council on it, to go to an elder, an elder may in most cases, depending on how serious it is, will go to a senior elder to get input, to make sure they're dealing with it properly, sometimes senior elders will go to the evangelists, sometimes the evangelists will come to me. It depends on the situation and how certain things have been dealt with, or whatever it might be, but it's wise, if you don't know how to deal with something, to handle something, to seek help in it, to strive to do it. And we're ever growing in this. The Church is ever growing in this. I've been amazed by going through Matthew 18 because it's something I've had feelings to do for a long, long time in the sense of if the Church had done this more and done it better we would have alleviated so many of the battles we've had. And I thought I had a pretty good handle on a lot of this until, frankly, going through this series, and I realize, "Hey! We're ever growing in this!" Which we know anyway, but we're ever growing in things that God gives to us giving us more understanding, more insight of how to deal with matters, and even in this God has revealed some things that I haven't known before, we haven't known before as a Church, in that respect.

To me, that's very inspiring, but to me that's exciting too because I think of where we are. You think about where we are, that Jesus Christ is about to come to this earth and what we have opportunity of receiving now because of where we are in time, of what's going to begin to be given in the world, God is preparing a people to have these things in them already, to be a part of our being, to be a part of our practice, to be a part of our teaching and guidance and direction, of things we can pass along.

So again here, **Matthew 18:15 – Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: and if he shall hear you, then you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established**; Now, verse 16 is very awkward in how it's translated and it isn't explained in any depth at all here really. The reason for this is so that it can be *learned*, that we can learn from it through experience, through maturity in the Church as we grow, and in the most basic case, at least minimally so, something is being done to fight against sin that has great potential to hurt others.

So minimally so we begin to learn by...even if we do it improperly, Matthew 18:15, we're striving to do it, especially if it has to do with any kind of sin, candidly, but at least it's addressing the matter of sin. It's a desire to get rid of sin in the Body. And even if you do it wrong and even if you sin in it you can repent. As you learn and you realize, "I didn't handle this in the way I should have," you can learn from

that and you can repent of that and you can grow in that, because until you apply certain things you really can't know what it's all about. To have knowledge is one thing; you can have knowledge of this verse, but what is the spirit of it? You don't necessarily know. You read this by your own interpretation, to go to a brother alone, you've gained your brother...it's something you grow in through time. It isn't going to be there overnight, but it's because you practice it, to prove it, you begin to live it, and then as you grow and mature spiritually you begin to *understand it* more and more and more. The more you live this the more you'll understand it, the more you'll grow in wisdom because you begin to apply it, because you live it, because you see the necessity, the wisdom of doing so that comes from God, that it *is* the way to peace, that it *is* the way to gain someone, to help someone, to truly help someone else.

If there is a possibility to help someone else *this* is the way to do it. *This* is the way to do it. God is showing us *how* to stay together, how to enforce or reinforce, to strengthen a family/Family. Not just a physical family here, but the Family, the Church, to strengthen us as a Body. *This* is the way it's done. And if we minimally apply the most basic part of it – maybe we don't even know how to go to a brother alone and we go to the ministry and ask a minister how to do this, what to do and how to do it, at least they're going to give you some guidance and direction of how to address some of this. At least you're striving to apply something that you feel you have a responsibility in. That's the beginning! But not to do it at all, not to address it at all is a giant mistake and it's not love toward someone else, it's not helping anyone, it's not helping to do what needs to be done in the Body to strengthen the Church, to strengthen the Body. So again, at least it's a beginning.

And I've gone through this many, many years. I've given sermon on this through many, many years, and I haven't seen what I see now, to the degree I do, because of the very thing I just mentioned. Through time, through counselling, through applying it, through God's spirit leading and guiding and directing and then God just revealing more and more and more...and it becomes more exciting because you come to understand in a deeper way sin is a part of life. Out of necessity, as we are as physical human beings, there is going to be sin, there is going to be the cause of stumbling, but it's how we address it that God is concerned. It's how we deal with it and that we even learn from how God deals with us. That's a great teacher in itself, how God deals with us helps us to understand in a deeper way how to deal with one another, how to work with others, how to deal with others.

So again here, a matter of whether they will hear you. That's what we come to next here; if they don't respond by any indication of repentance or an attempt to change, if that isn't being shown there... So again, if sin has been exposed then it must be dealt with, that's the reality. It must be covered the way God says to cover it, which means the process of getting rid of it.

This sermon today is going to mean more to you on Atonement, because it really fits in. I marvel at how God moulds and fashions the timeliness, the working of certain things; in this Atonement certain things that are brought out to add to our understanding of Atonement in the first place. But this sermon fits in to it in a very powerful way, of God's way of dealing with sin, because that's what Atonement is very much about; it's how God's dealing with sin. And it's a very powerful thing, it truly is, what God reveals to us.

So again here, the King James version says, **but if he will not hear you then take with you one or two more.** Now, confusion can come from this verse in how the words 'take with' are interpreted by readers since the meaning of this expression isn't conveyed very well, candidly, right here. I mean, how do you take this? My thinking is on this, of what I've heard others talk about and the way it *seems* what it's saying, it's like, 'Okay, now if they have sinned against you, they're not responding, then you're to go to

the Church and pick out one or two others to take with you to address them.' That's not what it's saying, but that's how we could take it. But even if we did that, it's still dealing with sin isn't it, it's just not the right way, it's not the best way. Who do you go get? Who is it you go and pick out and choose to take with you?

I want to back up and go back a little bit here to make sure I cover everything. This does not say and does not mean this person who first went to their brother alone is to now take one or two others with them to go see this person a second time. That isn't what is stated here but it's what most of the time is read into this, the way it's stated, the way it's written in the King James here.

The word 'take' here, or 'receive' as it is (as it's often translated) alongside the word 'with' means that you are to 'take' or to 'receive' one or two others 'with', 'unto yourself'. It's not a matter of taking them with you and going somewhere; it's a matter of you take them to yourself. There is something you're doing here, bringing them into the situation here. This is how the word is used in the Greek language. It's receiving them unto yourself, with *you*, not a matter of travelling someplace from one point to another, that you're taking with you to go see the individual a second time. That's not what the word means at all. That's not what is being said here at all. It's something that you're to do in a process of obeying God – and we'll build upon this, we'll continue to go forward here – but again, in other words, this is something that you are doing yourself as you obey God in this matter, 'with yourself' in that respect, or 'unto yourself' in this matter; you're taking them with you as far as bringing them into the situation here.

It simply means that you are now including, 'taking or receiving' one or two others with you in this matter – you're including. Some of these words are so awkward to translate sometimes, but you're just including them in the matter with you, but *who* you include is important here. *Who* you include in this matter, because it *is* a matter about someone else – so we know that we're not to go and spread our sin or someone's sin to someone else and start talking about it, and so we're to share it with them. That's not what's being said here. That maybe somehow you're to bring along...

Who do you take with you? Who do you take? Good friends? Your good friends? How do you think that's going to be received by the other person if they know that you're really closer to two individuals and it's a serious situation and you take along two of your good friends that you share most anything with anyway? That's not going to go over well. Maybe you go and get two of *their* best friends – is that what it's talking about? ...and cause problems because of doing it that way? Is that God's way of addressing something? Who do you take? Well, it should draw us to an easy conclusion, candidly, of what it's talking about here and who we're to include in such matters.

It's amazing how scriptures brings things out and how we need to read fully in the proper context of what is said, but I forgot to quote this fully here in my notes. **...that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.** Again, that's the key to what's being said here, **that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.**

So, **Matthew 18:17 - And if they neglect to hear them**, who are the 'them' here? It's a matter of the ministry. It's about the Church. That's who you go to. That's who you're supposed to go to to deal with matters; not to your best friends, not to their best friends, not to someone else, not to just go and pick out someone and then all of a sudden you're going to go to them. It's not even talking about you, because you many not even go back to this individual. It may be that the ministry decides you shouldn't be involved in this anymore, that *they* will take care of it, that they will do it. In some cases the ministry

may determine that you need to be with them in this, to discuss this openly with the individual. It depends on the situation; how can that be judged? Well, that's why we've gone to someone else, because we don't know how to do it anymore. We don't know what we're supposed to do anymore. It's become a more serious matter because the other individual is not hearing us, they're not listening to us. So what do you do?

Well, there is more you have to do because it has to do with **the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established**. It's interesting how this word is used in what it's talking about here.

So again, it doesn't say that this individual is to hear you again; it's not about you going back to them a second time, but that he is to hear them. It says, **if he will not hear them**; so who are they? It doesn't mean you're even around. Who is this 'them', the one or two others that you have had to bring into this in the sense of including them in this matter that you're dealing with?

**Verse 19** notice – jumping on down in context - **Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name**, it's a matter of authority. This isn't just talking about three members in the Church getting together. This specifically in context here is a matter of government, it is about a matter of authority. It's like I've had occasion in times past where, depending on who I'm writing to, if it's a matter that the individual needs to understand this is a matter of God's Church; might end a letter, as an example 'In Christ's service'. I've had letters where brethren have sent me, in times past, letters saying 'in Christ's service'. That's not the case. They're not in Christ's service as a matter of authority in signing a letter. Do you understand the difference there of what I'm saying? We *are* in Christ's service in the sense that all of us have been called to be a part of the Church; all of us are a matter of serving within the Body and serving Christ and serving God – that's what we give our life for, but not as a matter of authority in the sense of addressing something, as a matter of a letter, as an example, that carries with it authority of what's being stated to an individual to get across the point this is coming from God's Church, this is coming from God. And that's then why a letter, as an example there, can be signed in a specific manner showing where it's coming from.

And for people in the Church to do that would be wrong, in that respect; it wouldn't be a right thing to say that you're just having a general conversation with someone in a letter and sending a letter to someone and saying, 'in Christ's service'. What's the point of writing it that way? What does that mean? It doesn't fit and it shouldn't be there.

So again here, the matter of '**two or three being gathered together in My name**,' in the name of Jesus Christ, if you will, is a matter of something that needs to be read and understood in exactly that way, it's a matter of the authority of Jesus Christ. Even as in a matter as an anointing; not anyone can just anoint someone, you have to be ordained to that, and then you say, "In Christ's name," in essence, that you're doing it in Christ's service. He isn't there; He put you there to do the anointing as an example. So whether it be in the signing of a letter, anointing of someone, it's a matter of doing it in Christ's name so it is a matter of authority. When two or three gather together it's a matter of authority. When an individual wants an anointing, 'where two or three are gathered together in My name'.

When it talks about a matter of when I... how does it say it here, '**and whatsoever you shall ask, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything**;' I'll just use the example of anointing. Two of you agree, you agree you want anointing, you desire to be anointed because you have a sickness, something is wrong, and you want God's intervention. And so it's a matter of beseeching God, it's a matter of

asking God to be involved here, but it's also a matter of recognizing the authority that God has given within the Church to do something like this. And so it's two individuals who have come together in God's authority, under God's authority, to do something – the one who needs the anointing and the one who does it. So there is a request, a petition toward God. So that's a good example of something that's being done here.

So are some matters of counselling... You have taken someone unto yourselves because *God told you to do that*, so you recognize you need the authority of the Church involved here, that's not just a matter between you and another person alone anymore, now it involves the Church, now it involves the government of God's Church because the person won't listen to me, the one that they love, the one who is to be a brother – husband or wife or whatever it might even be there – now it involves the ministry. You've taken them into, included them into the matter by saying, "I have a situation here that I have responsibility before God. (So and so) has done (such and such) and this is what has happened and they're not responding and they're not listening and it's getting worse and I don't know how to deal with this anymore, but I know I have a need to come to you." And so then that individual makes a determination as they look to God and God's spirit to guide them, to decide how to deal with this matter, and as a whole if they don't bring this individual along and what they do...

How are the words established? Isn't that what it said earlier? **'In the mouth of two or three witnesses that every word may be established.'** Someone has something that's taking place here, a battle that they...they take it to the ministry, they discuss this. As a whole, there are generally two involved, as an example, plus there are always two around always involved as a whole within certain matters like this within the Church. There are going to be three involved. If there were only two involved in some situations, generally someone else is going to be included eventually to establish the words of what has been said, but primarily to listen to what has been said from one party, and eventually the other party must be gone to to question, to ask, "(So and so) has come to me. I'm coming to you as a minister to get this out in the open now as to what has happened." Now, if they acknowledge what they have done then it makes it very clear that what the person has told is true. Now, if they deny it then you've got another situation. And this happens in God's Church. There may be a need of getting the parties together.

I've had some cases where... I think of some things back in the mid-80's. I think of this one situation that went on for so long in a marriage, in a couple's life, that I got to the point where I thought, "I don't know what's going on here but we have gone through this for so many times and heard so many stories..." And I really believe that they believed their stories now because they go back in time and they dig up all these things – nothing has ever been forgiven, it's always there – and rehash these things. And I got to the point where I thought, "Somebody is really lying in a giant way, and maybe both are lying in a big way..." And in time it came out both were really lying.

These things are so frustrating in life, when people can't get along. You know, the exact opposite of what God says we're to have in the Church, we're to have unity and peace. Why be in the Church if that's not what we want? Why be in this environment if that's not what we want? ...if we don't want to have peace and happiness and fullness of life in *all* relationships within the Body? And if that doesn't exist then we've got something to deal with in *our mind* – maybe not in any other person's mind! Why is *your* mind prejudice toward someone? What happened in the past that caused this, that created this, that you can't let go, that you can't get past it, that you can't truly love them?

I think mainly in times past – thankfully as time has gone on we are maturing more, growing more, but things still pop up in life and we need to know how to apply these things so that we know how to work with people in the future, how to deal with matters in the future God’s way and how to teach others.

So again here, **verse 20 – For where two or more are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.** Because it’s a matter of looking to God, asking for God’s intervention, for God’s guidance and direction in a matter. Certainly we do that individually in our lives anyway, but when it’s a matter of bringing something together and seeking to establish everything that’s said, striving to do it, to come to the truth – that’s the purpose of it all – to deal with it then according to whatever God has given judgment in.

Let’s continue on here. Some of these things become clearer as we go along. **Verse 17 – And if he shall neglect to hear them,** the one or two others that have been brought into this; it may just be one, but as a whole, as time goes along here there will be more than one as a whole as most often involved in these matters, it’s just how it works, especially the way we’re structured today. **And if he should neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an 'heathen' man,** the word is ‘foreigner’, like a Gentile, a non-believer, **and a publican.** Back then tax collectors didn’t have a good reputation, by how they dealt with people and worked with situations, and that’s how they were to be thought of, in that respect, in mind and spirit. In other words, nothing to do with them, nothing to do with their approach, their way of life, what they do and how they do it. We’re not a part with them; we’re not a part with non-believers.

So, I’ll be candid with you, until this sermon series I’ve always believed that this verse here was basically when it says, **tell it unto the Church,** that this was when somebody goes to the ministry, and I never have really understood that. The verse before this, it never made any sense until God has, candidly, shown here what it means, ‘that every word is established’ and what it means ‘that two or three are gathered together in My name’, and making it very clear here that this is another step in the Church, of something that happens that you hope and pray never goes this far. But sadly it does.

So again, when is something told to the Church? I think of what we’ve already gone through, Romans 16:17; we’ll look at some of these again here in this context so that you can understand them more fully. So when you’re talking about the Church we’re talking about the Body of Christ. So if something is told to the Church it’s more inclusive, it’s more serious, there is something far more serious involved here and that’s what this is about.

**Romans 16:17 – Now I beseech you, brethren, mark those who cause divisions and offences, stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them/turn away from them.** That’s a horrible thing when things go that far, when individuals will not change, will not respond to someone having gone to them alone, which sometimes hasn’t been applied in times past – often times, candidly – and then by the time a minister gets involved a person has been doing something for so long, it’s so much a part of them that they can’t receive the minister then when they come to them. That’s why it’s good that if these things can be done speedily the way God says to do it...if it’s done exactly the way God says here it’s going to happen quicker! It’s going to happen more speedily. It won’t be a matter of leaving something go and saying, “Well, ministry surely knows about this; they know what’s going on and they’ll take care of it...or whatever.” I’ve heard that a lot in times past. And by the time the ministry gets involved in it the person is so deep in what they’re doing that when they’re visited they can’t receive it because they’re too far gone, they’re too far removed and can’t deal with the matter, can’t repent, will not repent, will not change, become angry at the ministry that “...you would even have

the gall to come visit me about my sin or about this matter..." whatever it is. So it's horrible when it goes that far because then you can't gain your brother.

To me that's one of the most painful things to experience in the Church – experienced it a lot in God's Church. That's why I quote that Psalm that we used to sing, 'Twas not a foe, who did deride, for that I could endure...' in other words, if it's someone else, a foe who comes at you and hurts you and causes hurt to you, someone who is an obvious enemy to God's Church, God's way of life, then you can deal with that. But then the song goes on and talks about, '...walking to God's house side by side, council blending sweet...' with someone that you've shared this way of life with, and *they* then become the foe. And that's what hurts! Those are the things that cut deep. But we learn from that too, sadly.

Again, if these things are done God's way, speedily... Why speedily? Because the longer someone is in a sin, the longer they begin to cut themselves off from God's spirit the weaker they become, and the longer they're in that state the less ability there is to help them. And so if we just kind of 'wink an eye', let something go because it's, "Well, I'm just going to let it go for a time longer here..." These are hard things. I think of some situations I've got to deal with that I don't look forward to dealing with because when people begin to cut themselves off from the Body, when they begin to let down, when they begin to be lukewarm – horrible, horrible thing - when *others* should be addressing some of these things themselves *first* and not letting it go to a point where it's so far gone that by the time the ministry is involved there is no ability to help anymore! That's a shame, and God doesn't want that! He wants us – exactly what this sermon is entitled - gaining a brother. We should not want to lose anyone in the Body of Christ. Our desire should be that we love each other, that we want to see each other succeed, that we have that patience and mercy because we know what we've gone through to get where we are, how merciful God's been with us.

Sometimes the more you recognize how merciful God's been with you in your life and your calling, throughout that period of time you've been called, if you can really know that that makes you far more effective if you can respond to God in that spirit and that attitude of mind, to realize what you've been given. You full well better be giving that to others because that's what it's all about, really is.

So again here, **mark them**; it has to be pointed out. There are times that others, maybe in a local area, need to know, sometimes the entire Church needs to know if somebody, if someone's done something and it's hurting others within the Body, that it has potential of hurting many others. I think of times past when these things have had to be done in the Church, when ministers have had to get up and talk about...and generally the ones that when it comes down to this point – ministers, district superintendents, evangelists, Mr. Armstrong's own son – had to be announced to the Church that we're not to have anything to do with them. If they approach you, if they contact you, they're not a part anymore right now and they need to understand. It's good for them to understand they're not a part of the Body. If they won't learn it now the day will come when God will help them to understand and to know why that was done, out of love.

So when it's told to the Church as a whole, not to any more than have to be told. There are writings of Paul here where there are certain individuals who are named by name because the Body needs to be aware. I remember when I first resigned from Worldwide, and we began to have some of the things happen in the Church that were taking place, and especially when I began to write some things, and even in some sermons, to make comment about certain individuals, what they had done in the Church, individuals that had cause hurt, like Dr. Hoeh. To mention a name like that, some responded like, "Well, you're just angry with what's happened to you and you shouldn't talk about other people, you shouldn't

mention their names. That's just not right to talk about a minister or to mention ministers of the past." And I think, "What planet are you from? Because Paul set that example in scripture, that there are times... If you know where something comes from, if you know the source is from someone who has been teaching something wrong, why would you use them for an authority, like Dr. Hoeh, as an example? Because this happened early on in United, that there are a lot of ministers out here that had him as a teacher and they were teaching some of the same things that he taught. And so if you begin to hear of something he's taught wrong, maybe you ought to be a little suspicious about other things he's taught, *maybe* you shouldn't use him for an authority, like one evangelist still does out there, doesn't he? ...on that telecast?

I think of one group out here that still speaks of him in a good light, and you think, "Don't you know the damage, the hurt and the suffering, the pain he caused within the Body and the false teachings that were out there? 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Passover, just one that's hideous enough by itself?" Anyway, if you don't know who they are, you don't know what... especially back in Paul's time, because they weren't able to have the kind of communication we do today, and so if someone came to an area with those doctrines and those beliefs from those individuals, or those individuals themselves came through, they wouldn't know what to do. But if they're told who they're to avoid, that this individual is teaching something that's hurting the Body then that's a healthy thing. It's not an enjoyable thing, but it's a healthy thing.

**1 Corinthians 5:1 - It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.** It wasn't his individual's mother, it was another woman, but needless to say here it's sick, distorted. **And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.** In other words, they knew who it was. The whole congregation knew who it was and they were allowing this to continue on. They were not addressing it. And Paul said, "You're to address this. They should not be in fellowship with you. They're not a part of the Church – to live like this?... to do this?"

He says, **For I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him who has done this deed.** It doesn't take rocket science here to deal with such a matter. You don't have to be very intellectual. It's a matter of just...this is very basic in God's way of life, that when someone is doing something of this magnitude, they're not to be a part of the Body, they're not to be around the Body because they're not living this way of life. So why play the game with them, that they're a part of the Church, because that ends up hurting them. That ends up hurting the other person even more, let alone the potential of hurting others and other people letting down their standards and thinking that certain things – young people growing up in the Church and seeing this and thinking, "Well, fornications not so bad! Pre-marital sex is really not so bad." And that's the kind of world we live in.

**Verse 4 - In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, In the name of – the authority here, see, of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan;** What does that mean? You formally follow through with what they're doing in their life anyway. They have already cut themselves off from God and the flow of God's spirit in their life and they need to be cut off from the fellowship of the Church as well to make that clear for both parties, for the Church and for the individual. And literally, to understand the seriousness, the soberness of this for the Church, to realize if such sins are practiced and done that you have turned yourself over to Satan, you are a part of the world, you're *not* a part of the Church, you are part of the world and you no longer have God's protection. You no longer *have* God there to fight your battles for

you. You no longer *have* God there to intervene in your life, to work with you, to mould and fashion you.

**...to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh**, it's not going to go well. When we don't have God there to mould and fashion us, to guide and direct and lead us, to help us to grow, to give us understanding of what we're going through in life... life is difficult, life is hard, life is not easy, but when we understand what we're going through and why – God reveals those things to us as He moulds and fashions us, to give us strength, to give us encouragement, to give us boldness, purpose, direction. But when you don't have those things, what a horrible life! ...to just live life out here and Satan and demons, the demonic world, have ability to attack you, to come at you – because when you're cut off from God that's what happens, they have full sway in your life. They have control in your life. You don't have control of your life. That's what happens when people leave the Body.

Bet I've got a bunch of people out there today just really happy to hear this, to say this, "Well, that's what you're saying about me?!" Well, yeah, I am, but it's just... I'm sorry, you made choices. A lot of people who made choices to not be a part of the Church anymore, who hate the Church, who hate Mr. Armstrong because they've made certain choices and so their focus in life now is the hatred toward God's Church. Where does that come from? It comes from that world. They don't even understand what they get caught up in.

**...to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** So again, the desire is that in time, whenever God begins to work with them, whether it be in the Last Great Day or at some point now between Christ's return, to bring them down, to bring them ...in the sense of humility, to take the pride out of them, whatever trial, whatever battle they have to go through. If God deems that He's going to begin working with them at that point, to begin calling them, perhaps calling them back, drawing them back, that He will do so and He will help them to see what they have done. He'll bring them to that point through a process of humility where they will learn to cry out to God for help or something else will happen.

Let's notice the book of Jude here. Interesting how some of these things are stated over there. So again, this is not a pleasant thing and that's why, isn't it so much better if it's dealt with at the very beginning, if it can be handled at the very beginning, at the very onset in the smaller areas of life rather than something getting bigger and bigger and bigger and just getting worse and worse and worse and the person getting weaker and weaker and weaker to the point that other sins begin to come into their life and engulf their life? Because that's what happens. If you begin to get cut off from God's spirit the mind begins to lose the truth of God, it begins to lose the confidence, the boldness, the understanding that this is the truth, and you can lose everything! You can lose everything! We have witnessed that in God's Church, where people lose everything. The only way that you are guaranteed that it stays is by God dwelling in you. That's the only way we can hold on to what is true, otherwise we may hold onto certain knowledge but to understand it spiritually, to have it anymore? It's not there, because when God's spirit is gone the spirit of it all, it's just not there anymore, it just becomes maybe protestant, whatever, but God's gone.

Jude 16 - A lot of things brought together here; talks about different problems I didn't think I'd have time to go through all of Jude here, but it's a powerful book in what's being stated here. It talks about **These are murmurers**, a word that means 'to grumble', 'to mutter'. It's talking about things that happen even within the environment of God's Church. Things that happen in the world, but when they happen in God's Church how wrong and how bad, how evil it is, and so it talks about **There are**

**murmurers, grumblers, mutterers**, I've seen this in God's Church, in the environment of God's Church through time, people who weren't *happy* with the way things are going, they want something to happen in a different way, this muttering that goes on sometimes behind the scenes; **complainers**, this is a word that has more to do with complaining of one's fate, feeling like life isn't fair – well, guess what, it isn't! And thinking that their life in God's Church isn't fair... anyway

**...walking after their own lusts**; the word means 'selfish desires', in other words, just totally turned inward, become totally selfish. When people begin to mutter, complain, feel life isn't fair, don't see God in the picture anymore, something horrible has already happened spiritually in their life. Either they didn't have it before or they've started... some sin is there that has cut them off from the flow of God's spirit.

And it says, **and their mouth speaks 'great swelling' words**, I like this in the Greek where it says, the Greek, about 'great swelling', it's a word that just means 'excessive weight'. People put too much weight on their words. They are the authority, what they see, what they know is so weighted down that nothing is going to change that because they put great weight on it. Another word for it is just 'arrogant' in the Greek. **...their mouth speaks great swelling words, having men's person in admiration because of advantage**. That's a very awkward translation.

The Phillips says, make it very simple; **They talk big**, to lift self up to feel more important, **but will pay men great respect if it's to their own advantage**. Isn't that amazing how human beings will do that? ...to pay someone else great respect if they think they're going to get something back out of it. Not a good trait.

**Verse 17 - But, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you that there would be mockers in the last time**, and so in other words, **you've been told this already by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, how that there would be 'mockers' in the last time**. And this word here doesn't just mean people who are going to mock when they're gone or not a part of it or from the outside, or when people do leave and they begin to mock individuals in the Church or the Church or whatever. That's not how this word is being used here. This is a word that implies 'a false teacher in the sense of not living this way of life truthfully', in other words *mocking* this way of life by not truly living it. In other words, supposedly a part of the Body but not living this, and because of that they are *mockers* of God's way. God's way; that's why a person goes to a brother alone. Because that's not God's way; God's way is to have peace and fullness and unity in the Body, not divisiveness, not false doctrine, not passing around these things, but being truthful. And so that's what it's showing here, live this way of life in spirit and truth, but just to go through the motions of it, it's called what it is, it's mocking God, it's mocking God's way of life, it's making a mockery of, if you will, it's not truthful. So somebody says, "And see all that, that's the way the Church is, this person did (so and so) and that's just the way you all are!" And that makes a mockery of God's way of life; it's not true, that's not how we are, that's not what reflects God Church.

**Verse 17 - But, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that [they told you] there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts**. In other words their own selfish desires; that's always the motivating force behind it. **These are they who separate themselves**; they separate themselves. If you don't live this way of life in spirit and truth, you begin to do something different, it's a lie what you're living, you're just kind of going through the motions, then you separate yourselves from God, you separate yourselves from the spirit of God.

**...these are they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the spirit.** Worldly, not having the spirit. In other words, they may be around the environs of the Church but they're really worldly. This way of life isn't what motivates them, they don't have God's spirit, because to live the way that they are you've got to be void of God's spirit, you have to be cut off from God's spirit because it's sin to make a mockery of God's way of life, to not live it, to not obey the things that God says we're to obey.

That's why I think of some of the most basic of things that still go back to Sardis: the name of the Church, the Sabbath, how we live the Sabbath, and tithing. How that that one there still sometimes pops up in life. You think, how can that be there? How can a person say they're a part and they don't obey God in one of the most basic things that God says we're to do. He *knows* what we do! He *knows* what we're faithful in and what we're not faithful in and that one there is the most basic of them all! And to not live that faithfully before God? That's making a mockery of God's way of life; it's mocking God, it's mocking the truth of God.

**Verse 20 - But you, beloved, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith,** so it's something you have to build at, it's something you have to work at. We desire to grow, we desire to continue to be a part of a building process and yield ourselves to it. It says **...on your most holy faith,** what God has given us to believe and what we want to live by. This is what worshipping God in spirit and truth is all about. It's the desire you have to live and to grow in, to be built upon, if you will, the truth you have and to make it become stronger and stronger and to live it. **...your most holy faith;** that's what God calls it, it's what sets you apart. What sanctifies us? The truth. Jesus Christ said you're sanctified by the truth; and you choose to live by it, that's what faith is, it's the truth that God has given to you. And God says it's *most holy*, because God has to be in it. The relationship we have, the truth we have is only there because of God's spirit, it's not there because of anything we have, it's because of what God has given us.

**...and praying in the holy spirit. Keep yourselves in the love/agape of God,** that's what God desires, that we keep ourselves in His love, **looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have 'compassion'**, it's a word that means 'to show mercy'. So he's saying here there are situations that come up, that goes back in context to murmurers and complainers and people who walk after their own selfish desires and people who speak great swelling words, things that happen within the Body, that when it's a matter of sin... because all sin really comes down to some of these things here, whether it's about someone else, whether it's a matter of gossip and talking about someone else – certainly fits into that area of when it talks about grumbling here and there are things mentioned previous to this as well. And this thing about speaking great swelling words, sometimes this thing of pride, arrogance; when, if we're not careful as human beings, we lift ourselves up in an uncanny manner by tearing someone else down. That's such a perversion of the human mind but that's what human beings tend to do, we tend to do that. It's a sick thing of human nature, it really is, and only when we come into God's Church can we begin to see that sickness, because it's in us as human beings, because it's a part of human nature, it's a perversion of human nature, and if we can understand that then we refuse, we reject that, and we repent of it and we learn to loathe it and hate it and not be a part of us and we're more at one with God then.

**Keep yourselves in the agape of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion,** show mercy. When? Well, sometimes when you judge that they've been foolish, deceived, not malicious in a matter – like going to a brother alone – the way someone responds, they just got up on the wrong side of the bed and you're ready to have mercy on them, but you're not going to have them talk to you that way, to say certain things to you that are wrong, that are

sin, that's not right, it's not done in love. If something is not done in love...it says, **Keep yourselves in the agape of God!** Sometimes we have to be a part of helping others because we don't want the other to happen where someone begins to mock this way of life. If you let something go, a person by what they do can start living it falsely, which is what this word is about up here, about mocking it.

**On some have compassion**, show mercy, obviously especially when someone has repented and they're sorry for what they've done, they want another chance. You give that to them, you're ready to, you want to. That's what binds you closer together. I'm amazed sometimes in life of how those are the very things that can endear you to individuals, because when you say something, "Oh yeah, I'm sorry." And they feel sick for what they've done and you see that in them because they deeply repent because they don't want to hurt you but they got caught up in something, a spirit, whatever it is, an attitude, something else bothering them, whatever it might be, and they took it out on you. That's the way human beings are too often, far too often.

So, **on some have compassion, making a 'difference'**: that word 'difference' is 'to judge', 'to distinguish', it's a compound word that actually means 'to judge through'; to judge through a matter, **on some make a difference, have compassion**, show mercy because you judge through it, you've seen the right way to deal with it, how to handle it, and the attitude you should have toward the other person. So indeed, show mercy, be merciful.

**Verse 23 - And others save with fear**, This really becomes very strong here in what it's talking about because it has to do with 'very stern warning', perhaps given time to show fruit of repentance. Sometimes within the Church they're even suspended for a time. Fear, whatever it takes to help a person, because if a person doesn't fear they'll just continue in what they're doing. There are times that people need to be brought to fear, fear to sin, fear to have gone so far that a minister has to come and talk to me about it. Who wants that? I can tell you the minister doesn't. But out of love, if that has to happen, so be it, and prayerfully the response is going to be good and right.

And so again, **And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire/the burning**; So if there is any way to help someone, go to a brother alone, then do it. If there is a need to go and include a minister in it, then do it, if that's the next step, if you have to do that – because you love your brother, because you love your mate, because you love your child, because you love your parent, because you love the other member of the Body of Christ; whatever it is, then do it in order to gain your brother, because you don't want them lost... you want to do this like the one and ninety-nine. If the ninety-nine are fine, your relationship is fine with them, that's great, but you don't want to lose the one! That's the attitude God says we need to have. ...**pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.** Just hating sin. We don't want that, we don't want that in the Body and we should be fearful when those are brought around the Body.

**Verse 24 - Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.** So again, all coming back to God, that this is how we're able to have the unity and the oneness, that we do things God's way and not bypass any of these steps; if there is a need to stir up fear, than so be it. So there is a time to do, to follow through and do the things God says to do it His way, because it is truly a way to gain your brother.

Let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 1 – How much do we truly treasure true fellowship? That's what it all comes down to, true fellowship in marriage... you know, there is no more beautiful thing than for people

to grow and grow and grow closer and closer through time in unity and oneness, of one mind, as you do with God, in marriage. And certainly within the Body of Christ, the same thing is true, it just grows and grows and grows, and that is what is to expand more and more, these same principles, these same things that are applied in life.

I received an email yesterday that made this point. I got a charge out of this, of what we need to grasp in this matter of true fellowship and understanding what God is offering us and why we're going through this series right now. But this individual made a comparison with what we're going through politically in this country, what we have for many, many years now anyway, and a statement that was made many years ago about, "It's the economy, stupid!" and that expression that's used from time to time by people, one that I've used in times past as well in writing. But the individual went on to say...

"...I've also been dwelling on this current series, 'Going to a Brother' quite a bit. It must be really important if the Eternal is spending four weeks on it. Then last week it hit me clear as day, "It's about the relationships, stupid!" Our Father got through to me."

So I got a charge out of that, and it's about the relationships and a desire to have right relationships, the desire that we be together in the Body as one, unified and so forth.

But again here, I do want to make comment so I don't forget it, if I go through the whole sermon not mentioning this; but truly, some of the things we've gone through, if you go through all this story here of going to a brother alone, of things that are done in the Church, especially when the ministry has to become involved in the matter, the thing that is repeated most often, the thing that is the most serious before God that comes out more than any other in all the scriptures we've read is the matter of a spirit of divisiveness toward truth, toward doctrine within the Church. That is why those things need to be nipped in the bud very quickly. Those are the most damning, the most damaging, those that have caused the most *harm* to God's Church of anything that's ever happened.

There are sins that people have in life, there are situations and struggles that people have in life. Someone may have trouble with alcohol, some sexual thing, there are common things that happen with human beings that affect different ones in the Church at different times. Those are things that, as a whole, don't ripple in the sense of causing greater damage throughout the Body, those are more confined, those are things that can be dealt with within individuals. Certainly if something is allowed to exist for a long time in a matter of the use of alcohol, by or in an area, then that can hurt, that can cause people to let down standards. But the primary thing I'm talking about here, the bigger thing, is this matter of division of doctrine, the matter of division of things, because these are the things that have swept through congregations, swept through the Church, especially when it's done by ministers even more so, more damage has been done.

So when you go through and look at these things, that's why it's important for anyone out here to understand that is one thing you deal with quickly in your life that God holds you accountable for, that of all the things that are done in the Body is anything that is spoken against God, because God has given us truth, He's given us that which unites and brings us together as one with Him, and there are plenty of other bodies out there that people can be a part of if they want to go searching and doctrine hunting. But if a person is convicted this is the truth and this is the way of life, we are to be at one in that and God holds that so awesomely as a matter of importance for His people, because it goes back to Satan, it goes back to what happened in the very beginning of time. And that's the thing we must come to

understand – anything spoken against God, against God’s way, is to be dealt with quickly, speedily, with... powerfully so. Those things are *not* to be tolerated.

That’s why if something comes up in a conversation it’s best to say, “Now, wait a minute. That’s not what we teach in the Church.” It’s out of love, and if it’s done around a lot of people, if someone has the gall, if someone has the *audacity* to say something divisive as far as doctrine is concerned in a group of people, then you need to be as strong and to say, “Now, wait a minute! That’s not right!” amongst that same group of people. Do you understand what I’m saying? There is a high responsibility that God holds His people for to be unified in doctrine, because it has to do with being unified at one with Him. Our relationship with Him and the truth He’s given to us is of supreme importance above all else.

These are the things in life, the refining areas of life, of relationships and things that have to be worked out in going to your brother alone. That’s one matter, and sometimes you may have to say something to someone alone if something is said divisively or against doctrine. You have a great responsibility in doing that and doing that quickly, because of anything else that spreads in the Body, that is the one through time in this book, in this Bible, that has caused more problems, more difficulty, more damage to the Body, to the Church than any other single thing...it’s not being at one with God in doctrine and in truth and that’s what God desires that we be first and foremost, and then to work with everything else accordingly; worshipping God in *spirit* and *in truth*. They go together hand in hand, you can’t separate them.

So again, this thing of how much do we truly treasure true fellowship? I want to read some verses here. **1 Corinthians 1:1 - Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the Church of God which is in Corinth, to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. Sanctified! Through the truth, sanctified in Christ, Jesus, called to be saints with all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours. Grace be to you and peace.** That’s what God desires for His Church – peace! Unity and peace; peace comes through unity, a unity of spirit with God, unity in doctrine and truth and what we believe, and that attitude then of that. That’s what produces peace, to live the same way.

**Grace unto you and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.** And then a little farther down in **verse 9** it goes on to say – **God is faithful, by whom/through whom you were called into/unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** And so we have this unique fellowship in the Church with Jesus Christ, with God, with one another, that God has brought us into a fellowship in the Body of Christ when we’re called out of the world. Perhaps we’ve grown up in it and able to continue on with that and grow with it as we become more convicted of it.

**Verse 10 - Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name;** it’s amazing how often he uses this, again **of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing,** in other words, that we be in the spirit of unity and oneness. That’s a beautiful thing to God, because to be in unity and oneness with one another is a matter of being in unity with Him first and foremost; **and that there be no divisions among you;** it only takes a little bit of division, and these are the greater things, these are the things that are the most important of things in that respect, to understand how division begins and if it’s not living God’s way of life and why we go to a brother alone and why we want to gain our brother; we don’t want to lose someone and to recognize how far this can go, what it means.

**...but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.** So something we grow in to where we’re truly unified with God in everything we do. It’s our goal, it’s our desire, it’s

what we've worked toward, it's something we grow in. We're ever growing in that, we're ever learning how to evaluate and grow and judge, and this is the beautiful process.

Just like this sermon series we've gone through – I look at my history and what I've gone through to learn these things, and where I've seen it applied and where I've ached when it hasn't been applied, and growing through understanding of these things as far as health of the Body and a relationship with God that we're able to have, and I think, what a marvel to be able to grow in that process, just in this one area alone, and yet this is multiplied many times over in every area of life we go through. We're ever growing and ever learning more about God and to be at one with God.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10, just a few chapters farther. Paul addresses this over and over again, matters of fellowship, matters of unity, matters of oneness, how important it is.

**1 Corinthians 10:14 - Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.** And that really has anything to do with something we raise up above what we're taught. If we do *anything* different than the way we're told, *anything* different from the doctrine, from the truth that God has given to us then God calls it idolatry. Anything we raise up like an idol, that we hold up, that we do, that doesn't agree with God's way of life.

It says, **I speak as to wise men; judge what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless**, and he's talking here now about taking the Passover. So he's leading up to the very process of taking the Passover and what the Passover means, and so he's talking about this cup we take and the bread we break on the night of Passover. And he says, **The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?** Awesome understanding that comes from this! He's showing from this very thing here, talking about this fellowship. What do we think of when we think of fellowship? First of all its fellowship of God, that we're able to have with Jesus Christ and God because of the blood of Christ. That's the very reason Jesus Christ died. Jesus Christ died so we could have our sins forgiven so that God could dwell in us. It goes beyond just having our sins forgiven, but for the *purpose* that God could dwell in us, of a relationship, a fellowship, and we with God and Jesus Christ. And so that's what this is about, very much so about the blood of Christ. It's about what makes possible this unique fellowship and that's what he's saying here.

**Is it not;** and this word 'communion' means 'fellowship'. **Is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ.** That's what this fellowship is, it's with God. And then it goes on to say, **The bread which we break**, that unleavened bread, **is it not the communion/fellowship of the body/Body of Christ?** It's understanding what Jesus Christ went through in both His blood being spilled to the earth and what He died for, literally a physical body, giving His entire body, a sacrifice, lived a perfect life, no sin in His life, broken for us in that respect to bring us into the Body, the Body of Christ. So something physical in Christ that leads us to that which is spiritual, fellowship with God through the blood of Christ, fellowship with one another through the bread; that's what it's talking about here, understanding the importance of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, what we're able to have.

**For we being many are one bread**, one bread, **and one Body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.** That which we're able to partake of, the unleavened bread of life so that we can have this fellowship, so that we can live this way of life. It's really a beautiful thing but it's all about fellowship, relationships. I like that expression, "It's about relationships, stupid!"; if we could just get that picture, you know, it's about fellowship, relationships. That's what it's about. God desires right fellowship always into eternity, and into age lasting life.

I think I have time here, and if I go over a little time, I'm going to because I'm going to go through a situation of something that was addressed to show you what happens sometimes when going to a brother alone. And the individual who sent me this email, I don't think they would mind me going through this because it was a private matter, no one else is going to know it save one minister as a whole, two, my wife, and because there are things we discuss amongst ourselves in order to help to deal with, to make sure every word is established, to indeed serve the Body, to help the Body in the best way possible.

Here is an individual who wrote me because he felt moved and motivated to address a matter in an area with someone and he's asking for advice and he's asking for correction as well here and guidance in this. And interesting here that this came some time back but I've known for a long time here that eventually this is where God was going to lead us, we were going to go into a sermon here about going to a brother alone. So a lot of things happen in our lives sometimes – isn't it amazing – to bring us to a point to address certain things.

I am amazed how many times here recently in the last few several weeks, had different emails addressing this desire to hear more about or to have more information about – even before we got to this, but especially during this period of time - thankful that we've finally addressed some of this in the Church, but it's because of how God works with us. He brings us to the point of focus in our life of situations that happen where we need this and we know what we need to do and how to do it in a better way.

Anyway, this individual stated...and I'm not going to read anything that would give away anything here, but it says:

“I'm not sure if you're able to give me advice in a matter but I wanted to consult you concerning a particular situation.”

Well, if I can't then you've just got to wait. I'm just kidding – that'd be a reality. There are some things in life we have to wait until... there are some things you just have to put away until God's time. We don't know everything; we don't have everything in life yet.

“These things can be difficult at times because of learning as you go that we're still human and sometimes we get differing views on some things, of how to approach them.”

Which is unfortunate, and hopefully the more and more we grow, indeed the more we grow in unity, but I understand. You hear different things from different people in how to address something, especially in this matter of going to a brother alone. There have been all kinds of things that people have felt about this. Goes on to say...

“I am sorry if I'm too strong in some of my statements that I make as I'm still growing and learning to apply mercy, yet trying to be as strong as possible about being firm in God's way without being harsh.”

Well said. That's great motivation in the sense of being able to see that. Doesn't mean we can always do it but that's what we should strive to do. Going on it says...

“It's recently come up that there is someone...”

And I'm going to read part of this...

"...in God's government who..."

So it means that it has to be... at first I misunderstood part of this, didn't realize a part of the story here of what was going on, but regardless, the same guidance is given. But this means that it has to be someone who's ordained, okay? So here's an individual wanting to know how to address someone who is a matter of God's government, someone who's ordained. And I'm not going to go through all the story of what it is because that would give too much in that respect, but it basically has to do with certain things that are done on the Sabbath this individual felt were not right.

So again here, this is good for the ministry to realize our example. Everyone to understand the importance of example in the Body and how much it can hurt others, because this is from a babe, as this individual says later on, they acknowledge they're a babe, they're just learning, but they want to do this the right way. And so it's so important within the Church, within the ministry, all those who are ordained, that they set a right example because there are others *watching you all the time... all the time in the Body you are being watched*, and especially if you do something wrong or give the appearance of something wrong, that can be hurtful to someone else. So you're never going to be able to do it perfectly but in essence we should strive to do so in the best way we can, to be a good light, to be a good example, to recognize that, and that's a healthy thing.

It goes on to say:

"I also know from one person that this has been brought to that person's attention, that this might not be something they should do."

Now, I hope you understand here something that was done in error, okay, as I pointed out to this individual. Why was somebody else involved in this? Why were two people talking about someone else? See, that's a mistake first of all there – I'm just pointing these things out as I did to the individual because they wanted guidance in it anyway, but this is a really helpful thing because these are common. These are *very common things* that have happened in the Church. This is the *most common* thing that happens I'd say 90% of the time when these matters occur in the first place – someone else has talked to someone else. And from what I understand in this letter, this wasn't something that this individual even knew about except through someone else's conversation. They wouldn't even have known about this! They wouldn't be bothered by this. They wouldn't be writing me this if someone else hadn't talked to them, if someone else had done what they were supposed to do – and maybe, maybe they did, I don't know the full story. I guess I was told even that they did, but why bring others into it? *Why* bring others into it that can hurt them, especially someone newer in the Body? Anyway, going on...

I'm going through this for a purpose, to show error and to show a right spirit too, a right desire, because there is a right desire here to do it the right way, but there are mistakes we make even as we grow, but at least to strive to grow and at least to strive to do things the right way, to apply something that God says is foremost. And that's what we should be doing. So, I commend this individual for doing this but I'm using the examples here to show mistakes that we make along the way as well.

The individual says...

“I am angry because it isn’t a small thing for something like this to happen or to be taking place. ...I am young spiritually but I am pretty sure I’m seeing things mostly right. So for someone who is older? ...and in the government of God? And that’s where I am battling to deal with God’s mercy. The truth is they either don’t see it or they were cut off long ago.”

You have to be very careful of such judgments, see, and especially when someone else is giving you this information. How do you know this is true? How do *you know* what’s gone on? If you haven’t already talked to this individual, how do *you know*... that the other person who has been ‘so kind’ to share this dirt on someone else with you, which may be the truth, but why do that in the Body? And I’m pointing these things out just to show you the common error that is so often made by people in God’s Church.

Don’t ever include anyone else. Don’t include the friend that you confide in, because most of us have friends that oftentimes we confide in. Don’t do this over somebody else’s weaknesses or problems or sins...if it is a sin. See? I’ve found a lot of time that things aren’t even a matter of sin. A lot of things are a matter of miscommunication or a matter of misinterpretation because of the parents – see? And so judgment that comes out of that.

But I think of how this individual here has already been made to stumble because of...and I pointed out to them, they have already been made to stumble several times in this. They got angry. They shouldn’t have gotten angry. Rarely have I ever seen righteous indignation in human beings in God’s Church. Anger is anger and anger is not a healthy thing. And then the judgment that comes of it as a result as well; the person has already been *judged* because of what somebody else told them. It’s not a question mark here in many respects, okay?

So we have to be very careful how we judge things and God holds that to a very high standard for us. We have to learn how to judge righteous judgment. And again, I’m mentioning these things because these are *common mistakes* made by so many. Going on here... then this is also said...

“I was also told from elsewhere...”

Here is another source, another ‘loving, helpful source’ in the Body of Christ. In other words, this is somebody else that’s told me this, not the other party that told me this other matter, but now here is someone else telling me this matter about the same person. It just gets better and better.

“I was also told from elsewhere that this individual after the 27<sup>th</sup> didn’t believe PKG was being led by God’s prophet. So, big pieces that paint a grim picture.”

Well, maybe they do and maybe they don’t. It’s these things we want to avoid. These are the things that cause others to stumble. *You do not have the right to go and share what you think someone else has done in sin with another member of the Body, for the day you do you have committed murder before God.* Spiritually that’s *exactly* what you have done! So the individuals that shared this information – which I hope some of you are able to remember some of this because you need to think about it, that you shared this information with somebody else, or any of you others out here who have shared something of recent time with someone else about another brother, about *their* sins, about *their* weaknesses, about *their* problems, and you shared it with another brother, *you have murdered a brother.* That’s what God calls it. In 1<sup>st</sup> John He says it’s murder! It’s a spirit of hatred, which God says is a spirit of murder. It is not love. It is not practicing the love of God, okay, it’s just sin and it’s wrong.

And candidly, gets to the point where *their sin* becomes far more *dangerous* and *harmful* so often than what they *think* the sin of someone else is. And if only we could see that, that sometimes the very thing we do by sharing what we think we're sharing – which I don't know why we would do that – that that in itself is sin! And the next time someone comes to you and wants to 'share' with you someone else's sin *please stop them dead in their tracks by applying Matthew 18:15* and go to your brother right then alone and say to them, "Wait a minute. Why are you telling me this? We've just had a sermon...that's wrong to do, that's sin on your part and it hurts me and I don't want to have a wrong attitude toward my other brother now either." Okay? Be *honest*! That's love! That's love. To ignore it is not love. To ignore it is, "I don't care about the love of God and God's Church." That's what we're saying to God! "I don't care about exercising Your love in the Church, because this is uncomfortable, I don't want to have to do it!"

There are many of times, matter of fact it's made up too much of my ministry at times in caring for the Body, where I've had to go to brethren and talk to them about matters. I would far rather never have to do it, but for the sake of the Body and for the sake of the individual, the one in ninety-nine, I do it because God says to do it. It isn't something you enjoy doing; it's a painful thing to have to do, because my experience has been, sadly, that most don't receive me when it comes to that point. My history has been in God's Church, when it's come to that point, when we have to get involved in it most are not able to be helped, most are gone. See? And when it's done God's way people are able to be helped and saved.

The individual went on to say; I just want to make this for sure here...

"I would appreciate any guidance, correction, and direction of any or all of this."

Great attitude to have, and then realize:

"I don't know how to do this. I don't know what to do. I'm stirred up..."

And you think, how did they get stirred up? By this other party that unloaded on them. It's just like having... it's like having a giant manure spreader. I had an uncle one time that went up the street in a large city with a manure spreader on Halloween and spread it all over...all over the city, all over the street. They found him and him and his friends got to clean it up. Well, that's the way it should be in life. You want to go dump on somebody like this, big time, to hurt somebody else? You better clean it up and make it right before God, that's for sure. You better not do this kind of thing again. That's a stupid thing to do, to hurt somebody, to dump on somebody, to do something like this. Because candidly, that's what it's akin to, that's what it smells like to me.

I want to read some of my response so we can learn from a part of this, to learn part of the process here, to see the spirit of what we've just covered in this sermon series. I apologize for going a little bit overtime here but I think it's needed because we'll end the sermon here today.

Made the comment...

"It's evident that you're troubled. However, I do not live in your area and I cannot take hearsay as absolute evidence/witness in a matter."

Remember what I said, every word is to be established? I can't take that. I can't receive that and it's in another area.... and anyway.

“Judgment that is used in matters concerning the Church must be exercised wisely. I will state a few things to you in reply and then direct you to some steps you need to take in resolving this.

Evidently you have gone to this individual before and have not received a satisfactory response.”

I’m not sure by what was said there, I don't know if that happened.

“I get the feeling that others have become involved in some of this by way of this being discussed with 'friends' (sometimes we have to really ask are they really friends), or some who are in fellowship concerning who it is that you’re telling me about. If that is the case this may itself be sin.

If you are aware of something that you believe to be fully true and you have judged it as error or even sin and have gone to your brother alone – not involving anyone else other than the ministry...”

Sometimes we go for advice to see how to do it because we don't know how to do it. That's fine.

“...then you have done as you should have. Yet you may not have everything right even then, because people often communicate with misunderstanding.

If, after going to someone alone, without involving anyone else in fellowship, and you do not see a change and you think...”

In other words, no repentance from the individual.

“...and you think sin is still involved...”

In other words, it's still there.

“...then you are to take it to the ministry.

Perhaps I misunderstood what you were saying in all this but that is often the problem when trying to communicate with someone by email in such a matter, since better communication in such important matters can only be done on a more personal basis via phone or face to face. That's the very reason that the system of government in God's Church has been set up as it has; your first step should have been to go to your elder [mentioned here] in that area.

After I send this to you I am going to forward this letter and my response to you onto him as he is best suited at this stage to hear what you have to say and deal with this as a matter of God's government. After this has been given to him and you have had opportunity to discuss it more fully with him then your responsibility is over.”

Something we all need to understand from this. Your responsibility from that point is over unless the minister brings you back into it.

“...and you will have to deal with the ongoing situation in a converted manner toward your brother(s) spiritually in the Church. That means you will have to treat them with love and a

forgiving spirit, because after this has been handed to the elder your responsibility is over and it will then be a matter of God's government to deal with, and that is whether you may or may not agree with how this proceeds forward, because after such a point you will not *know* what is taking place or being said with the parties involved. And candidly, from this point it would not be any of your business to do so and it would be a sin on your part if you insert yourself any more into the matter."

I hope we understand that. See, this covers a lot of area here of things we need to think about when we go to a brother alone, and especially if the ministry gets involved, then we're done! Our part has been done, we have done our duty unless the ministry brings us back into it. It's done and you need to treat the other party as a brother, because it will become clear if something happens and they're disfellowshipped or suspended, that they haven't listened to the ministry, and that will be communicated, then you will know it.

But again, these are very awkward things but they need to be done God's way because it's a matter of a desire for close fellowship and ability to save, an ability to *gain* a brother. Going on in the letter:

"This is a spiritual matter to be resolved spiritually within God's government and not by any individual in a congregation after this point. That means that any conversation from you or others between yourselves over these matters after this has been fully given to the elder would be taken as gossip, divisive and without love toward others in the Body. Nor should such conversations be taking place anyway.

If such were to happen then that would become as great of sin as what you have described in your email originally.

Indeed, many of your words in this email come across as strong, too strong in condemnation. You even mention anger and being riled. You may consider it righteous anger but I have rarely seen that in baptized members. Anger is generally a result of our own indignation because rarely does a person have everything right. You need to be careful in your attitude and spirit toward others in the Body. You have likely gone way too far by judging that "someone has cut themselves off from God." That can be a very harsh judgment and one that you cannot know unless God gave it to you and I'm going to tell you that God did not give it to you as you are a babe in the Church. That is why God directs brethren to go to one another alone, and then if they believe nothing has been resolved, they're to go to the ministry where God will give such spiritual discernment to His ministry. That's how God works.

You have stated, "I was also told from elsewhere that this individual after the 27<sup>th</sup> didn't believe PKG was being led by God's prophet." I ask, did you go to your brother alone? Did you hear this from them? If not, then sin is involved here. Did the person who told you this go to his brother alone? Perhaps you don't know. If they did not then sin is on them. So, who of the two is better in obedience to God in such a matter? ...the one who may have made such a statement about God's prophet or the one who didn't go to his brother alone? Hearsay or personal perceptions of others can be very dangerous spiritually and can lead to very unjust and sinful judgment. Furthermore, if the individual made such a statement in weakness..."

Which happened during that period of time! I *know* what happened! I know of some ministers who had those battles! And I didn't insert myself into their life, I gave them time, as God gives us time to go

through this process. Others handled it speedily. But we're not all the same. But the point is is that we handle it, and then the fruit in time reveals what is in a person, because God will make it all come to the surface and it'll all come out in these situations like this, especially when it involves something direct and I'm aware of it.

"Furthermore, if the individual made such a statement in weakness or whatever, do you know if they have repented before God?"

You don't know if someone has gone and repented before God in a matter! Maybe they said something and maybe went home on the 27<sup>th</sup> afterwards, after digesting the sermon and hearing a few others talk - because this happened - and repented and changed and got a hold of themselves that day - *still* on that day! But you might have heard something earlier and you're holding something against them, which you should have gone to them alone *if* you were the one involved in it, but you weren't even the one involved in it, *somebody else* told you, someone who is 'loving and caring' told you and shared it with you and spread it around to others in the Church, and now others have this attitude toward a person who may have repented!

And that's the point, if they have repented and been forgiven of God who are *you* to judge someone else? ...whoever it was that started this, that first heard it, supposedly. I don't know if they heard it or not! And if they did they should have said something to the other brother right then and there, not to other brothers.

"Are you aware of their prayers in such a matter? And if God has forgiven them where are you in your relationship with God at this time?"

I hope you're beginning to see that what you are dealing with can be of great harm to you spiritually if you don't handle this correctly...and so far..."

Well, anyway...

"...toward the end of your email it becomes..."

I don't need to read some of this, I think I've mentioned enough here. I'll mention some of this...

"So be careful how you go forward in this matter."

We all need to be careful how we go forward in these matters. In any part of a reply we need to strive to do it the way God says to do it, truly. I've made comment here...

"You likely do not have all the facts though you may think you do..."

And that's a big part of our lives too, sometimes we think we have all the facts and we really don't yet because we haven't communicated it. When you go to someone alone, you very possibly, and oftentimes my experience is, people have very likely miscommunicated - maybe haven't heard something right?

I think of some meetings we've had, important meetings in the Church where there was one occasion where there was something of huge importance taking place in a meeting of ministers, and both my

wife and I heard something one individual say and someone else heard the same individual and they heard something different. Now, I don't know what was going on and what happened but something wasn't right, what was taking place there. I may not have communicated that totally there even, but anyway, close enough. But the point being is that you have to be careful, that you actually need to talk something out.

Sometimes I've given sermons and there are times when I know what I want to say, I know what I *think* I said and something else came out of my mouth. I might have mentioned somebody else, some other name, some other scripture, sometimes have it totally lopsided with something else I've stated. I was stating something the other day and had to edit it out; I stated something about a certain Holy Day...and I guess that's what I thought I made the mistake in. Yeah, 35 weeks... The point being is that's why you go to someone alone. Not to condemn! Unless you're definitely on the receiving end of something and you know exactly what happened.

But sometimes going to a brother alone is a matter of talking it out, of saying, "This is what I've seen. This is what I believe has taken place here. I may not know everything but I just feel that I have a responsibility here and I feel very awkward about this and I'm coming to you as a brother alone and I hate this but I feel like I have to do this and this is what I heard." And they can say, "No, that isn't the context of what was stated. This is how this was stated." Those things happen all the time because maybe we only hear a portion of something, of two people talking or something, but because you know of something that was said you still have a responsibility. But again, it's a matter of making sure you have everything right and not be so quick to judge. Be willing to talk things out and to listen. Listen!

"You may not have all the facts, though you may think you do, and brethren should not be talking about this among themselves in such a manner as I detect from what you have written."

Anyway, I've read enough of that. Hopefully that will give us some extra guidance and direction there to realize that these are serious things that are to be taken in consideration in going to a brother alone. It's not an easy thing, it's an awkward thing, but it is a thing to be done out of love, it is a thing to be done because we care for one another, because we desire that we all make it, and we hope that someone... You know, if any one of us were to say something, do something wrong, wouldn't you want someone to have the guts to tell you and to say, because they love you?

It's like someone who maybe has some B.O. some day. Wouldn't you want someone just to be honest with you and tell you? Or if you have something hanging down from your nose area, wouldn't you rather someone say, "Hey, there is something here that..." Because you love them. Because otherwise they're just going to go around and everybody is going to see it and... maybe not laugh, and maybe laugh, I don't know.

But the point is, if you love someone, you're going to do something that maybe isn't as enjoyable to do, but because you love them and you want sin to be covered God's way and you want us to remain as one, as a Body of one.

That's beautiful thing when done God's way, it truly is. So hopefully we profit from that in a big way in God's Church.

~~~end