

What is the Government of God? II

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A lot of people are confused today about what is the Government of God. People have gone through an awful lot of things at the hands of the ministers, who come and are beating up on them and brethren beating up on the ministers, sometimes literally, verbally, and all this sort of thing.

Then the exercise of authority of ministers over people. There's a great controversy about makeup or no makeup. Of course, that is a great and tremendous spiritual problem! *I'm joking, of course!*

It is not a great and tremendous spiritual problem. There are a whole lot of other problems associated with what is the Government of God, and how it is that the Government of God should really work. Is it the structure within the Church? Is the minister supposed to be taking all of that to himself, to run peoples lives, in the first place?

A lot of people have told a lot of sad and sorry stories about how the ministers treated them, how they disfellowshipped them, excommunicated them, kicked them out, didn't serve them, didn't help them, didn't preach the Word of God, are all part of: **What is the Government of God?**

I think today we're going to learn some very interesting things concerning the Government of God, the church ministry and how it should be done. Let's start with the first and foremost and basic, fundamental thing that is important in learning and understanding what the Government of God really is.

I'll say right out here that the Government of God rests upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ. ***The ministry is not the Government of God!*** We're going to see certain things that ministers should do and ought to do, *but there are certain things that they ought not do!* There are certain things that the ministers have done to create a lot of work for themselves, create a lot of problems and difficulties for themselves.

I know that when I was in Worldwide we had to go out and visit people and help them with everything under the sun. A lot of that was really not our business to do, but in order to keep control of the Church and congregation we had to go out and do all of these visits. We were told that if you had only 15 visits a week that you were a no good minister. But if you had 30 visits a week, you're really a great minister. What happened? *The ministers went out and they had 30 half-hour visits.* What did that accomplish? *Really not very much!* They used to have a thing on visiting that you write up a little visit card: who you visited, the name and address, what

you talk about and then you'd send that into Pasadena. Then someone would sit there and work this up on a report, and then you'd get a ministerial report coming out every week, which would list the major problems with the people.

That's how so many things got into many negative things and negative sermons, because the head of church administration would write out and say that these are the problems of the brethren, you'd better preach on these things.

This was the Government of God! Then it worked out to where people would come along and they would talk to the minister, and the minister would operate on that and go visit people and say, 'I heard...'" Then it really got to be kind of wild and difficult that way.

What we need to do is back away from all that sort of thing, and we need to understand what it is about the Church. Let's begin with the Head of the Church, Who is Jesus Christ. We need to go along so that we understand that one of the most important functions of a minister is to teach people to look to Jesus Christ. Rather than having faith in the ministers to do things, everyone is to look to Jesus Christ. The ministers and the people!

I think we're going to see some very interesting things in relationship to the Government of God in our lives and how it ought to really work.

Ephesians 1:17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge of Him."

Too many times churches like to create in people a spirit of dependency, that you depend upon the minister and that your life revolves around *his* counsel, what *he* says. You can't make decisions for yourself, you must check with the minister.

It got down, in some cases, that if you wanted to buy a car you had to check with the minister. It was even said—jokingly, but kind taken seriously—that God chose Plymouths because that's what all the ministers got. They got us all Fury 3 Plymouths because God would come in His fury. Well, it ended up that the ministers would come in *their* fury. All of these silly little things! Think about it!

- Do you take vitamin C?
- Do you eat white flour?
- Do you use brown sugar?
- Do you use honey?
- Do you take aspirin?

All of those things are not even relevant in the government or ministry of Christ! Have not relevance whatsoever; yet, all of those things took place.

Needless to say, I don't think I got into doing that very much, I had too much traveling to do seeing people way out in the boonies. We're supposed to have "...*the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge **of Him.**"

What happens in too many churches, the structure of the corporation becomes the thing that is important and is worshipped.

Verse 18: "*And* may the eyes of your mind be enlightened in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling..." If we're constantly pointing toward that, then we're going to eliminate a lot of difficulties and problems that people would have.

"...and what *are* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the inner working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from *the* dead, and set *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named—not only in this age, but also in the *age* to come; for He has subordinated all things under His feet, and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the *Church*, which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all" (vs 18-23).

Christ is the Head of the Church. Too many times *a man* is put as the head of the Church. That should never be! To do administrative things; to be in charge of an office or something, that's fine. But he is not the head over spiritual matters to the people; **Christ is!**

Let's look at a couple of other Scriptures that goes right along with that so that we understand.

1-Cor. 12 talks about Christ being the Body of the Church; He is the Head. We're all a part of the Body of Christ! What church era are we? It's kind of like you go down the road or wake up in the morning, or you're thinking of something and all of a sudden DING! the light goes on! This morning the light went on! I was thinking, because a lot of people ask which church era they are in. But I think if you look at the state of the Church and all the literature that I get from the Church, the Church is in the Corinthian era.

- one is speaking in tongues
- one has a prophecy
- one is living in adultery
- women are preaching in some others

- one is following Apollos
- one is following Paul

All that sort of thing!

It dawned on me that the Church today is more like the Church at Corinth than anything I can think of. So, put that in your 'church era pipe and smoke it' if you will, because that pretty much destroys it.

So, we have here that it's talking about the Church; 1-Corinthians 12:4: "Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit." I think we need to take a broader look at this than we have in the past. When this was read when we were in Worldwide it was that within WCG there were these different things. But within the Church of God—everywhere in the different congregations—there are different things. That's what it's talking about.

Verse 5: "And there are differences of administrations... [ministries]...but the same Lord. And there are differences of operations, but it is the same God Who is working all things in all" (vs 5-6).

If there's any one thing maybe we can come to understand with the Church being scattered as much as it is, that maybe finally there will be some ministers with a like mind who will be able to work together *without*:

- beating each other up
- getting jealous
- taking power
- stealing tithes
- trying to enrich themselves

Maybe through it all something like that can finally be worked out. I have hopes that it may be. Very possible, if we're all looking to God and realize that God is the One Who is doing it.

Verse 7: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for *the* benefit of *all*. For to one, a word of wisdom is given by the Spirit; and to another, a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit" (vs 7-8). The whole Church is to grow in grace and knowledge! So, these things can all be put together by the Spirit of God.

Paul is making the very important thing here is that these spiritual gifts that are there, unless you have the love of God **none of them are worth anything!** That's why we all need to keep looking to Christ, Who is the Head. *Let Him give the wisdom! Let Him give the knowledge!*

Verse 9: "And to a different one, faith by the same Spirit... [it all has to come from God] ...and to another, gifts of healing by the same Spirit; and to another, *the* working of miracles; and to another, prophecy; and to another, discerning of spirits; and

to a different one, various languages; and to another, *the* interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit is operating in all these things, dividing separately to each one as *God* Himself desires. For even as the body is one and has many members, yet, all the members of the one body, though many, are one body; so also *is* Christ” (vs 9-12).

This covers an awful lot! There’s a directory of Sabbath-keeping organizations. In there are many, *many*, **many** different Churches of God. I was talking to a man from Detroit who said, ‘All these Protestants and denominations...’ I said, ‘Yeah, but who would have ever thought that we would have had all these Churches of God?’ Now we have hundreds of them. Why? Why is that happening? We’ll answer that question, because it is very relevant to our faith.

- What is it that God says He’s going to do with our faith?
- What is going to happen to our faith?
- *Increase it, yes!*
- How is our faith going to be increased?
- *We grow and increase by the power of the Holy Spirit!*
- What circumstances are we going to be in to try it?
- *The trials we go through test our faith!*

None of us have really ever had a trial that we have really anticipated. Almost all of mine are those I’ve never anticipated. It’s very important that it be tried. We don’t like the trials when they come, sometimes they’re difficult. But why? *That’s the whole purpose, whether we’re going to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and being*, so therefore, all the circumstances that we go through are going to put us through whatever is necessary that we know that we’re going to.

God has given free choice. Here’s the whole key thing, and it begins with the Spirit of God! A lot of people doubt whether they’re converted or not. I got a letter one time that said, ‘I’ve been in the Church a long time and I really don’t know whether I knew or understood,’ and all this sort of thing. The way you understand is that you start out basically and you receive the Spirit of God. You’re to grow in grace and knowledge and to go forward.

Verse 13: “For indeed, by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free—and we were all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body *of Christ* is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ would this then cause it not to be *part* of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ would this then cause it not to be *part* of the body?” (vs 14-16).

Paul draws this analogy and he says, v 18: “But now has God Himself placed each one of the *members* in the body according to His own will.”

Are there those parts of the body—we can say different Churches of God in this case—who have different degrees of knowledge, conversion and understanding? *Yes!* God calls them and places them where *He pleases!*

Let God work it out! That’s what it has to be! God has got to work it out. He’s got to bring it all together. He has got to make it fit. He has got to make it work. God is the One Who can do it, *if everyone is looking to Christ!* Then it can be worked out; it can’t be worked out any other way.

- there are going to be difficulties along the way
- there are going to be some things where it is going to be difficult to make it work

But as long as we’re looking to Christ *it is going to work!*

There are people way out in the middle of nowhere, and the only thing that they have are the CDs they receive. Are they still part of the Body of Christ way out there? *Sure they are! Because whoever has the Spirit of Christ is part of the Body of Christ!* If we can help them with it, which we have been able to do—and recently a whole lot more than we have in the past; God is giving us growth and increase that way—and we’re very happy about that with some of the things we’re able to do to help these people.

Remember, you go back when you felt cutoff, to when you were way down at the bottom of the rung and felt as though there was nothing left in the world, then God was able to help you. If we can help them at this time, then we can help and serve and bring them along, too.

Here’s the whole thing concerning the Church. I want you to listen to this in relationship to access to God. I think this is the most important thing in writing *The Christian Passover* book, about having access direct to God the Father.

- *no one* is between you and God
- no minister
- no church organization
- no corporation
- nothing
 - you’re as close to God as your knees.
 - you’re as close to God as your next prayer

No one is between you and God! No one is going up to the judgment seat of God for you, and you’re not going up to the judgment seat of God for anyone else. That’s why this becomes important:

Ephesians 2:18: “For through Him **we both have direct access by one Spirit to the Father.**” No one can take that from you. No one can deny that from you, even in your own sin and misery and rottenness that you may have to go through to really come to full conversion. Through the trials and difficulties that you go through, you all have access to “...by one Spirit to the Father.”

That is the Government of God ***between you and God!*** Collectively altogether if Christ is ruling in our lives, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit from the Father, can we not then all get along? We ought to be able to. What if we have some little difficulties that come along? Can we handle them? *We ought to be able to!* That’s why we have nicknamed ourselves *The No Hassle Church*; we’ve been able to do that.

Remember that the key most important thing concerning the Government of God is ***we all have access to God the Father!***

Verse 19: “So then, you are no longer aliens and foreigners; but *you are* fellow citizens with the saints, and *are* of the household of God. You are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being *the* chief Cornerstone” (vs 19-20).

God’s work is magnificent, because whatever it is with whatever little group, God is going to give them the choice: Are they going to follow God or not? Then it all comes down to each individual in whatever group or Church of God that they are”

- Is that individual going to follow God?
- Are you going to follow God?
- Am I going to follow God?

We all have human nature and weaknesses enough that there are times that you have great difficulty with your own human nature, that is true.

- Does that mean you’re rejecting God? *No! You’re not rejecting God!*
- So you lose your temper; do you feel bad about it after a while? *Sure you do!*
- Do you want to change it? *Yes, you do!*
- Does that mean it’s going to be easy? *Not necessarily!*
- Does that mean you’re rejecting God? *No, you’re not! It just means you’re overcoming!*

Verse 21: “In Whom all the building, being conjointly fitted together, is increasing into a Holy temple in *the* Lord; in Whom you also are being built together **for a habitation of God in the Spirit**” (vs 21-22).

1-Cor. 11 talks a little bit about the Church,

a little bit on how to follow a minister, and what a minister ought to be doing and should be doing constantly.

1-Corinthians 11:1: “Be imitators of me [Paul], exactly as I also *am* of Christ.” What is the emphasis on? *One following Christ!* That’s what it is; the emphasis is not on ‘follow me.’ The emphasis is toward Christ.

Verse 2: “Now I praise you, brethren, because you have remembered me in all things, and you are keeping the ordinances in the way that I delivered *them* to you. But I want you to understand that the Head of every man is Christ...” (vs 2-3). No man is the head of anybody in the Church.

- What is a minister to be? *An overseer!*
- Is it not so much better to emphasize that the Head of every man is Christ? *Yes, it is!*

For those who are married, “...and *the* head of *the* woman *is* the man...” (v 3). That’s about all there is to the Government of God.

The next statement is not one that has been preached very much, but it’s very profound, “...and *the* Head of Christ *is* God” (v 3). So, it goes:

- God the Father
- Jesus Christ
- to the man who is married
- to his wife
- then all the way back to Christ and God the Father

That is the sum totality of the Government of God with a Christian’s life. That is it!

The ministers fit in there to help, teach, inspire, uplift, direct, correct and all this sort of thing. But *not* to run, *not* to govern, *not* to dictate in people’s lives. That’s quite a bit different than most people thought.

Let’s see how this operates; let’s see that it can be very powerful. Yes, it can, by the Spirit of God. This doesn’t take from preaching or from the power of preaching. This actually adds to the power of preaching. This actually adds to the faith and belief, because another basic principle is that God’s government functions at the simplest level, which *everyone is responsible to God for himself!*

Therefore, all these things that have happened to brethren in the past, ministers prying in their lives, kicking them out of the Church and checking up on them. Go back years ago in WCG when people first decided that they would go here, another man who left WCG, they sent a van over there with a camera in it, with a man from the Church—a deacon—to take photographs of the license plates and pictures of people who went to the meeting so that they could go back and correct them and talk to them about it.

That is not the Government of God!

What they're trying to do is be Gestapos; they're trying to spy! That's not the Government of God. And some people are still going through those things, believe it or not. God wants it to function at the simplest level. There are times, in power, God did certain things.

Acts 4:33: "And with great power the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."

What is going to help solve a lot of those problems and difficulties is everyone looking to Christ, loving God and receiving the grace of God then everyone is like-minded. If you're all going to be like-minded, isn't that going to solve a lot of problems? *Automatically!*

They decided for the temporary emergency to go ahead and pool all their money, but we need to notice the emphasis of what's going on here:

Acts 5:1: "Now, a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price *for* himself, his wife also being aware of *it*; and he brought a certain portion *and* laid *it* at the apostles' feet" (vs 1-2). They said, 'We're going to do this, that and the other thing.' It turned out that they lied.

Verse 3^[transcriber's correction]: "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why did **Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit**... [he didn't say 'to lie to me'] ...and to keep back *part* of the price of the estate? Before it was sold, was it not yours? And after you sold it, was it *not* in your own authority?... [you didn't have to do any of this] ...Why did you contrive this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.' And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all those who heard these things" (vs 3-5).

- Who was it that did the authority?
- Who was it that did the executing?
- *God did!*

He doesn't do it all the time; He does it when there was a foundational thing that was beginning, which at this time it was. So, we're looking at the extreme at the other end.

Just think of what would have happened in WCG if God would have acted this way with the different ones who lied to us. WOW! There would be dead men all over the place.

Verse 6: "Then the young men wound him up, and carried *him* out *and* buried *him*." Same thing happened to his wife:

Verse 10: "And she immediately fell down at his feet and expired. And the young men came in

and found her dead; and they carried *her* out *and* buried *her* by her husband. Then great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things. And many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles; (and **they were all with one accord** in Solomon's porch)" (vs 10-12). Why? *Because they were looking to Christ and filled with the Spirit of God!*

That's how a church is able to have peace and harmony, by being of one accord. You don't beat them into it, you don't force them into it. You don't make anything happen; you all trust in God. He'll take care of it.

Verse 14: "And believers were added all the more to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, insomuch *that the people were* bringing out the sick into the streets and putting *them* on beds and stretchers, so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. And a multitude from the cities round about also came together to Jerusalem, bringing sick ones and those beset by unclean spirits; *and* they were **all** healed" (vs 14-16).

Then comes a very funny part: the apostles were arrested and thrown in prison to be tried the next morning. An angel came and let them out and said to go early in the morning and preach in the temple. They came to get them out and guard said that they're gone and not there. Someone came running in and said that they were out preaching.

So, they brought them in and said, 'What are you doing here? You're turning Jerusalem upside down. You're going to bring the wrath of God upon us by preaching in His name; don't preach in His name.'

Verse 29: "But Peter and the apostles answered *and* said, '**We are obligated to obey God rather than men.**'" That's the principle on which the whole structure of the Church ought to be based upon, *obeying God rather than men!*

Verse 30: "Him has God exalted by His right hand *to be* a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. And we are His witnesses of these things, as *is* also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him" (vs 30-31).

Through all of this, did Peter at any time say that he had powers near like unto the pope? *No!* Every time what did he say? *We ought to obey God, we ought to follow the Spirit of Christ, we ought to do the things that God said!*

Let's look at some other things concerning the way the Church ought to work.

Acts 11:20—talking about the Church being raised up in Antioch: "But certain men among them

who were Cypriots and Cyrenians came to Antioch *and* spoke to the Greeks, preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. And *the* hand of *the* Lord was with them, and a great number believed *and* turned to the Lord. Now, the report concerning them was heard in the ears of the Church that *was* in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced; and he exhorted *them* all **to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart...**” (vs 20-23).

Notice that the whole emphasis all of the time is to Christ. Why? *Because He’s the Head! Because you have direct access to Christ and God the Father, directly, continuously all the time!*

Verse 24: “For he was a good man, and was filled with *the* Holy Spirit and with faith. And a large multitude was added to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul; and after finding him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass *that for* a whole year they assembled together with the Church and taught a great multitude. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians” (vs 24-26).

Again, all the way through they were pointing to Christ, pointing to the Lord, pointing to God the Father!

Then Paul goes out and he starts preaching (Acts 12-14). He went around and raised up churches and different congregations, preached in the synagogues and all of that sort of thing.

Not once in all of this did anything come about that we experienced in WCG where it was made a corporation. *Not once!* So, I think God scattered the Church and doing things to the Church because He’s going to try every person whether they’re going to love Him, follow Him, really seek out His way *or not!*

- What better way to do it than to test them with false doctrine?
- How are you going to know what you believe unless you can tell right from wrong?
- How are you going to know who to follow?
- How are you going to know what the doctrines are?

When they raised up the Churches, we find in Acts 14:22: “*Where* they established the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *declaring* that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.” Paul can preach that with conviction here, because he just nearly got stoned to death.

Verse 23: “And when they had chosen for themselves elders in every church, *and* had prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord, on

Whom they had believed.” Again, what is a minister/elder supposed to do? *Constantly point the people to Christ!*

We have a little better opportunity to do it now, because we have the full New Testament. Back then they were struggling along until it was written.

Acts 15—what many people call the ‘ministerial conference.’ We’ll cover just a little bit there to understand one thing that is very important: ***church congregations, church boards, church members did not vote on doctrine!*** Even the apostles *did not vote* on doctrine. They had a great difficulty to try and resolve, which is should the disciples be forced to be circumcised or not.

Acts 15:1: “Now, certain men who had come down from Judea were teaching the brethren, *saying*, ‘Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” We know the whole background of it; what was decided on the Word of God.

Verse 4: “And when they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all the things that God had done with them.”

(go to the next track)

Notice that there were troublemakers there. Same ones bothering the Church of God today, which is really amazing when you come to understand it.

Verse 5: “But there stood up certain of those who believed, who were of the sect of the Pharisees, saying, ‘It is obligatory to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses.’”

There are people going around who have been in the WCG saying that Jesus was an Orthodox Pharisee; that we have to follow the authority of the Pharisees; that we ought to follow the oral tradition of the Pharisees. *There’s nothing new under the sun;* it’s all recycled back!

Verse 6: “Then the apostles and the elders gathered together to see about this matter.” The elders here are the older ones in the Church, not elders who have been ordained as ministers but are very young men. Elder has to do with age because of wisdom, of experience, of knowledge, because hopefully, by the time we get a little older we can think!

Guess who was left of this? *The Pharisees!* I’ll bet that rubbed them the wrong way. They weren’t there.

Verse 7: “And after much discussion...”—heated discussion. Not where someone stood up and proclaimed everything and said this is the way it’s going to be. They were talking back and forth, discussing it, a heated discussion.

“...had taken place, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Men, brethren...’” (v 7). You know the whole story there, so I won’t go back and rehearse it all.

After Peter and Paul both gave what they gave, telling what God was doing and so forth. Let’s notice how James—the brother of the Lord—answered them, and what he based the agreement on:

Verse 13: “And after they were silent, James answered *and* said, ‘Men, brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited *the* Gentiles to take out a people for His name” (vs 13-14). Who did the calling? *God did the calling!*

Verse 15: “And with this the words of the prophets agree...” What was it based upon? *The Word of God!*

- it wasn’t based upon voting
- it wasn’t based upon a committee
- it wasn’t based upon numbers

It was based upon *the Word of God!* So therefore, we can learn from this that all doctrine must agree with the Word of God. Is that simple enough? *Yes, it is!*

For those of us here, we’ve done it for so long that it seems self-evident. But there are many people out there who are just coming in contact with what we are doing, and they don’t know, because they’ve been put through the meat grinder. What we’re trying to do is help them pick up the pieces of their life that is left from the meat grinder and put it back together.

“...as it is written. ‘after these things, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen; and its ruins I will build again, and will set it up; so that the residue of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My name is called, says *the* Lord, Who does all these things.’ Known to God are all His works from the beginning of the world. Therefore, my judgment is *that* we do not trouble those of the Gentiles who have turned to God” (vs 15-19). They had to keep all the Ten Commandments. How did the Gentiles even know about God? *They went to the synagogues!*

Verse 20: “But *that* we write to them to abstain from pollutions of idols... [Where is that contained? *Ten Commandments!*] ...and *from* sexual immorality... [Where is that contained? *Ten Commandments!*] ...and *from* what has been strangled and *from* blood.... [those are contained in the lesser commandments] ...For from *the* generations of old, Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him in the synagogues, being read every Sabbath Day” (vs 20-21).

What we are talking about is all the Ten

Commandments, the clean and unclean foods that they were following. What we have is nearly the same doctrine as what we are doing today. How are you going to know what was being read in the synagogue on the Sabbath Day unless you went there on the Sabbath Day. It shows that they were keeping the Sabbath, without a doubt!

Once you have a congregation, a minister, elders and so forth, how then do you handle the difficulties between brethren and the church? How do you handle heresies and so forth as they come along? ***First of all, you handle it at the lowest level possible!*** That’s how you handle it.

Matthew 18:15: “So then, if your brother sins against you...” First basic lesson on how to handle it. One of the great and primary violations of a hierarchical ministry were that people go tell the minister and then the minister go tend the offending person. That is completely wrong.

The first question a minister ought to ask if someone comes with a problem is: “...if your brother sins against **you go and show him his fault between you and him alone...**” (v 15). That’s handling the problem at the lowest level possible first, face-to-face. That’s how you solve the problems.

If they’re constantly being taught to look to Christ, they’re constantly being taught to overlook things—you may have your ups and down, your problems and faults—but given all the way through that you’re going to resolve them. They don’t have to become a public thing. If you solve it at that level, nobody else in the whole congregation even needs to know.

Isn’t that nice? *Yes! That’s the way God wants it to be!* That’s how the Government of God is to function. Between you and God, and between you and the individual who may be offended. You go to him *alone*.

“...If he is willing to hear you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not listen, **take with you one or two others...**” (vs 15-16)—*not go to the minister, yet!* We’re going to see that you’re not to go to the minister really at all! It doesn’t exclude him, but we’ll see in what context this comes.

“...so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he fails to listen to them, **tell it to the Church...**” (vs 16-17).

Why does He say “...to tell *it* to the Church...”? *Because if it has to become public knowledge, the whole church should know*, not just a little group over here so that you can build a little power base and gossip against this little group over here. You “...tell *it* to the Church...”!

“...But if he also fails to listen to the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the tax collector” (v 17). So, the whole Church decides.

They had something in Michigan where this man was coming in preaching and trying to bring in doctrine secretly unawares. So, finally, one may went to him face-to-face and said, ‘Look! I believe you are doing this...’ And he finally got the minister to admit that, yes, he was doing it. The minister did not quit doing it, so the man brought someone else with him and they established everything and the minister said, ‘yes, I’m doing this.’ Then had to bring it before the whole congregation, and the they decided that they didn’t want him preaching anymore.

- Solved the problem!
- Stopped the power play!
- Stopped the behind the scenes movement!

This is solving at a basic level! That’s where all the problems need to be solved. They can’t be solved way off in a city a thousand miles away by someone reading a memo. *Never happen!* Let’s see how that is applied. The disputes within the Church—with difficulties and problems—once it becomes so notorious, then the whole Church has to get involved. You sit down and say, ‘All right, brethren, we’ve got a problem to solve. Here it is...’

- How many people want all of their problems brought before the whole Church? *Not very many!*
- Do you think they’re be willing to listen—if they have Christ in them—at the first level? *Yes! Sure!*

They didn’t in here, Paul says because of the problem that they had, 1-Corinthians 5:3: “For I indeed, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged...” So, there are certain judgments that ministers must make based on the Word of God, as Paul did.

“...concerning him who has so *shamelessly* committed this *evil deed* as if I were present: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together... [the whole Church] ...and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such a one to Satan for *the* destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (vs 3-5).

Whatever is done is to help bring repentance and bring that person so that He can be saved. He was committing a pretty dastardly deed; either incest or adultery, one or the two and openly bragging of it.

1-Cor. 6 shows how the function and structure of the Church—the whole Church—body in relationship to solving problems. That doesn’t

take away from what a minister ought to do. A minister is to oversee. Sometimes if the whole church is so bad and gone so far astray—which is possible—the minister will just have to say, ‘Here’s what the Word of God is. This is it.’ If a minister has gone so far astray the congregation needs to come to the minister and say, ‘Here’s what the Word of God says...’

1-Corinthians 6:1: “Does anyone among you who has a matter against another dare to go to a *court of law* before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Don’t you know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy of the most trivial of judgments?” (vs 1-2).

Here they were not taking people at the lowest level possible. That’s precisely what’s the matter with the whole welfare problem in the United States. They collect all this money to help the poor and about \$2 out \$10 gets back to help the poor. Why? *Because they set up a whole bureaucracy, a whole hierarchy to administer it! All the money is gobbled up!*

Solve it at the lowest level possible. That’s the Godly way and the Godly principle to do. That’s what they’re doing here, the smallest matter.

Paul says, v 3: “Don’t you know that we shall judge angels?...” Don’t ask me about that because I don’t know how it’s going to be. You can ask me about it when we’re spirit beings and God tells us about it, then I can answer the question; *not now!*

“...How much more then *the* things of this life? So then, if you have judgments *concerning the* things of this life, *why* do you appoint *as judges* those who have no standing in the Church?” (vs 3-4).

In other words, don’t set up your favorite political person. Set up someone you consider the least esteemed. Why? *Because you’re probably going to get a pretty good judgment out of that person!* They can see things from a different perspective.

That’s why when we talk about things everybody has some input, no problem. Sometimes we have to compromise and do things one way or another way. But as long as we’re all serving Christ and looking to Him, we can work it all out.

Then Paul says, v 5: “Now I say *this* to your shame. *Is it* because there is not a wise *man* among you, not even one, who is able to decide between his brothers? Instead, brother goes to a *court of law* with brother, and this before unbelievers” (vs 5-6). Hauling them off to the lawyers and courts of this world! Sound like something that we’ve heard of in

the past? *Yes!*

That's how the Government of God should function within the Church! Every member of the congregation is responsible to God and to the congregation. What about the ministers?

Now we'll look at some of the qualification for a minister and what he is to do.

1-Timothy 3:1: "Faithful *is* the saying, 'If any man aspires to *be an overseer*... [not bishop, not overlord] ...he desires a good work.'" Why? *Because:*

- he's to lead people to Christ
- he's to teach them about God
- he's to keep peace within the congregation
- he's to lead them always in the Word of God

Verse 2: "Now then, it is obligatory *that* the overseer be blameless, *the* husband of one wife, vigilant, serious-minded, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching." Teaching is perhaps the most important thing in relationship to bringing people to the knowledge and understanding of God's Word; *being able to teach!*

- a minister is not there for his own vain benefit
- a minister is not there for his own reputation
- a minister is not there to have people waiting on him hand and foot

I remember one time after we left Salt Lake City, we went back the following Pentecost and that whole Church had been turned around into a service organization for the ministers and deacons. They had a feast, and they had the ministers and deacons setup on the stage; all the brethren had their tables setup down on the floor. They sent deacons to get the best of the food, the best of the desert, the best of everything, and put it up on the table for the minister. All of his haughty vanity and everything...

Needless to say, he ran it like an iron fist, and that man is no longer a minister, he ran off and committed adultery and two-timed his wife and re-married someone else. All of that was just carnal vanity.

It felt so bad about it I stayed down in the line and chatted with the brethren and made sure not to make myself better, but so that the brethren would know that I didn't agree with any of that sitting up there in the great august and 'we're going to rule over everybody and take the best of everything.' I made sure that I got toward the end of the line and stayed with the brethren and sat down and ate with them. I didn't want to visit with him, because there

was nothing to visit about. I wanted to visit with the brethren. Boy, did I get my little 'fanny in the ringer' over that! Woowee! So, all of that's a bunch of carnality.

Verse 6: "Not a novice, lest he become conceited *and* fall into *the same* condemnation as the devil"—because the devil has many little things that he can do to a man to make him 'little lord Fauntleroy.] That's part of the problem with the Government of God.

Verse 7: "It is mandatory that he also have a good report from those *who are* outside *the Church*, lest he fall into reproach and *the* snare of the devil." So, there are two kinds here: It talks about the devil in relationship to coming after a minister. You might want to ask: How many want to become ministers? *Think about it first!* We can tell you some harried stories, but we have to put all of that in the past.

- our faith is going to be tested
- the minister's faith is going to be tested
- everybody's faith is going to be tested

Then it talks about deacons, who are there to help and serve. We see in Acts 6 that the whole congregation had input as to who the ones are who should be the deacons.

In WCG what happened? *One day you spring it on this poor guy that you're going to ordain him a deacon!* He's been a good little political whatever. I had one man that we ordained that way, as a deacon, and he just begged off and just said, 'No, no, no! because he really didn't want to be a deacon. Can a man not want to be a deacon? *Sure he can!*

So, you take all of this stupidity out and you get down to what God really wants in a congregation.

Let's see some other things concerning the ministers and so forth. You're not to despise them! You're not to hate them!

1-Timothy 5:17: "Let the *ordained* elders who are leading well be counted worthy of double honor... [double remuneration. I don't know what they were paying them, that's neither here nor there] ...**especially those who are laboring in the Word and doctrine.**" There's a special responsibility for doing that. It says in other places about not being greedy of filthy lucre.

This doesn't mean, on the other hand, because a minister is not supposed to torment the brethren, that the brethren come along and torment the minister either.

Hebrews 13:7: "Remember your leaders who have spoken the Word of God to you..." This

has been misapplied by saying to remember them that have the ‘rule’ over you. *No!* This means the ones who are leading you; the leaders among you, not to *rule* over you.

“...considering the outcome of *their* conduct; *and imitate their faith*” (v 7).

Verse 17: “Follow your leaders...” Certainly there’s to be peace, order and leadership, but how is that leadership going to be done, and how is it going to be followed. What is the example going to be of it, and what is going to be required.

A minister cannot come along and ask you to do anything contrary to the Word of God. A minister does not need people waiting on him hand and foot as if they are his private servants. But they are to teach the Word of God; they are to be leading the congregation. There are things that have to be followed and obeyed.

“...and be submissive, because they are looking out for your spiritual well-being, as *those who must be* ready to give an account *to God* in order that they may do this with joy, and not *with* groaning because that *would be* unprofitable for you” (v 17). That is if they do it with grief.

So, there’s the other hand. You don’t setup a lay board of people that just meat-grinds the minister through every little thing. The minister is not to setup and be the dictator and meat-grind the brethren through every little thing either. There has to be peace and order.

2-Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” That has happened in the Worldwide Church of God! It happened! It happened in other churches and it will happen again.

Verse 2: “And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed.” It talks about these people again over here:

Verse 10: “But particularly those who walk after *the* flesh in corrupting lust, and hold in utter contempt *the* lordship of God...”—and despise government. You’ve probably heard this thundered from the pulpit about those who despise the government, and the ministers are the Government of God, and you’re despising the ministry.

That is not what it means! This word means *the lordship*. Of whom? *Of Christ in their lives!* ***That’s what the Government of God means; God ruling in your life.***

- you’re following God

- you’re following Christ
- the minister is pointing you to Christ
- Christ is ruling in your life

That is the Government of God! That solves a lot of problems. Again, it brings it down to the lowest level possible between you and God.

- the minister is here to help
- the minister is here to counsel
- the minister is here—*mostly*—to teach you to follow Christ

That is the Government of God!

Jude 4 talks about the same thing: “For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I myself want to remind you, though you once understood this, that the Lord, after saving a people out of *the* land of Egypt, the second time destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their own original domain, but deserted their habitation, He is holding in eternal bonds under darkness unto the judgment of *the* Great Day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah—and the cities surrounding them, in the same manner as them—having given themselves over to sexual debaucheries, and having gone after different flesh, are themselves exhibited as a *perpetual* example of undergoing *the* punishment of eternal fire, in the same way also, ***these dreamers of filthy dreams are defiling the flesh, and are declaring as invalid the Lordship of God, and are blaspheming the Divine powers***” (vs 4-8).

They despised dominion, the Lordship of God! That’s why they’re rebelling! That’s why they take unto themselves all these things and call it *the Government of God* when it’s not the Government of God at all! The Government of God is

- ruling in your life
- ruling in mind
- ruling in your heart
- ruling in your soul

You’re going to make choices. Some of your choices aren’t going to be too ‘kool.’ Some of them are not going to be too great. You’re going to have your ups and downs, but ***you’re going to be looking to Christ in everything!***

Here is the rule of God; here is the Government of God most fully and completely applied:

Colossians 3:15: “And **let the peace of God rule in your hearts...**” That’s the most important

thing to do; let God rule in your heart and in your mind.

- Do you have the Spirit of God? *Yes, you do!*
- Is God dealing with you directly? *Yes, He is!*

“...**let the peace of God rule in your hearts...**”

- to guide you
- to lead you
- to go forward

“...to which you were called into one body, and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...” (vs 15-16). That’s why you need to study the Word of God:

- so you *think* with the Word of God
- so you *act* with the Word of God
- *your whole mind functions* with the Word of God

Why? Because it is Christ in you! (Col. 1:27). ***This is the Government of God!***

This makes each on responsible to God. Then we’re all responsible to each other. That keeps it simple. That keeps it peaceful. That keeps the whole Church from being disrupted by some person running around claiming this, that or the other thing.

Colossians 1:27: “To whom God did will to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**”

- Can Christ rule in your mind? *Yes!*
- Can Christ rule in your life? *Yes!*
- Can Christ in you keep the commandments of God? *Yes!*

That is the Government of God!

It’s not a church hierarchy by any stretch of the imagination. When we all come together, the larger the group the more we need to have order and things pertaining to just the physical necessities of getting together. The more people there are the more chances there is going to be a difficult or conflict between one person and another.

But how is it be solved? *At the lowest level possible!* Go to the brother *alone*, and speak to him *alone*, and let the problem be solved *alone!* Then you win a brother and you love each other more and you know you haven’t broken a confidence by bringing it to the whole congregation. Or you’ve gone to the minister and he comes and says, ‘I heard...’ You say, ‘How did you hear?’ *Someone told me.* ‘Who told you?’ *I can’t tell you.*

That doesn’t work! That’s not the way of God! Notice what the Apostle Paul said, some of he very closing words to demonstrate this:

Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in *the* Lord always. Again I will say, **rejoice!**... [Constantly pointing the people to Christ!] ...Let your moderation be known to all men; the Lord *is* near. Do not be anxious about anything...” (4-6).

Don’t get nervous and upset. It’s hard to say not to be nervous and upset in a trial. I try and tell myself that, but it doesn’t work. Afterward it yields the ‘peaceable fruits of righteousness,’ but going through it is turmoil. It doesn’t help for someone to come along—and I do this and my wife gets mad at me for doing it—and tell you not to worry. I tell her, ‘Don’t worry.’ *We haven’t got it solved.* Does she have a right to worry? *If she wants to, yes!*

Then she comes to me when I’m going through a trial and says, ‘Don’t worry, everything is fine.’ I came home with my wrecked car the other night, and the only thing she could do was laugh when she saw me. I mean, what else are you going to do? Here’s this white dust all over and I get out of the car and it’s all smashed up and looks miserable. I get out and she just laughs and said, ‘You look like the ghost of Christmas past from Scrooge.’ Just all covered with this white dirt.

That’s one way of telling me not to worry. I was all worried. What am I going to do? I just got my Isuzu ready for the next 300,000 miles, and I went and cracked it up; I’m stupid! She tells me not to worry!

That’s what the Apostle Paul says here after it’s over and done okay. Here’s how to handle the problems, instead of being nervous and anxious:

“...but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God in everything” (v 6).

When you first come into the Church, you pray because you’re told to. Then after a while, you pray because you ought to. Then after a while you find yourself repeating your prayers all the time, then you wonder if our ought to pray. Then you come to the time when you don’t pray at all.

Then you go through some trials and you know you need to pray. Then it comes around the other way, once you really understand that you have to pray to God everyday

1. because He loves you
2. because you can’t run your day without God

Therefore, *you are going to pray because you want to!* Is that not what God wants you to do, because you desire to. Do you pray a half-hour a day by the clock because you heard the minister say to pray a half-hour a day. You set your little clock and run in and pray and have your little list. ‘Bye, God!’ Click off the alarm and leave.

Now, once you've gone through enough trials and experience you go to God and say, 'O God, I don't know. God, help me! God, I'm a miserable mess of a person!' It's entirely different!

- God, give me Your love
- God, grant me Your understanding

I would have to say that you're going to end up praying—just like I end up praying—more because I want to, more effectively than I did when I first started because I had to.

Verse 7: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

That is the true Government of God! Christ in you, the hope of glory!

Let God rule in your life! I know just as sure as anything that I'm going to go out and do something this week where I'm going to forget what I preached here today. I know that maybe you are. But that doesn't mean the words of God are not true and that we can't come back to God.

That's the whole purpose in it! So, let's let Christ rule in our lives and in our hearts and minds, and ***let the Government of God have it's free and loving exercise between you and Christ and God the Father!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 1:17-23
- 2) 1 Corinthians 12:4-16, 18
- 3) Ephesians 2:18-22
- 4) 1 Corinthians 11:1-3
- 5) Acts 4:33
- 6) Acts 5:1-6, 10-16, 29-31
- 7) Acts 11:20-26
- 8) Acts 14:22-23
- 9) Acts 15:1, 47, 13-21
- 10) Matthew 18:15-17
- 11) 1 Corinthians 5:3-5
- 12) 1 Corinthians 6:1-6
- 13) 1 Timothy 3:1-2, 6-7
- 14) 1 Timothy 5:17
- 15) Hebrews 13:7,17
- 16) 2 Peter 2:1-2, 10
- 17) Jude 4-8
- 18) Colossians 3:15-16
- 19) Colossians 1:27
- 20) Philippians 4:4-7

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Also referenced: Book:

The Christian Passover by Fred R. Coulter

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