

## How We Conduct Our Lives & Forgiveness

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Luke 7:31: “And the Lord said, ‘To what then shall I compare the men of this generation? And what are they like? They are like little children sitting and calling to one another in the marketplace, and saying, “We have piped to you, but you did not dance; we have mourned to you, but you did not weep.” For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you said, “He has a demon.” The Son of man has come eating and drinking, and you say, “Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners”’” (vs 31-34).

So, Christ on the Sabbath would go eat with publicans and sinners. They weren’t even keeping the Sabbath, because He came to call those who were lost.

Verse 35: “‘But wisdom is justified by all her children.’ Now, one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him. And after going into the Pharisee’s house, He sat down *at the table*. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that He was sitting in the Pharisee’s house, took an alabaster flask of ointment” (vs 35-37).

I think the parallel account shows that this is on the Sabbath.

Verse 38: “And she stood weeping behind Him, *and knelt* at His feet, *and* began to wash His feet with *her* tears and to wipe *them* with the hairs of her head; and she was ardently kissing His feet and anointing *them* with the ointment. But when he saw *this*, the Pharisee who had invited Him spoke within himself, saying, ‘This *Man*, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what the woman *is* who is touching Him because she is a sinner.’” (vs 38-39).

So, we’re dealing with all these outward circumstances. What you do is *judge the heart*, just as they did here, saying that this woman is a sinner.

That’s why God says that we’re to love our enemies, because we were once enemies of God and He loved us, when we were still enemies of God. He called us and forgave us, so we are to love our enemies because who knows whom God may call. None of the Jews ever had any idea that God would dare call Saul who became Paul. If we did the selecting we certainly would have excluded him. After all he caused the death of many in the Church.

God does things and judges differently than people think. I’ll guarantee you this: nine times out of ten, when you look at someone and you make a judgment on their heart—based on their

appearance—you’re going to be wrong!

Example—and I can say this myself because I was suffering with a great deal of pain: My face and my countenance and my visage is very serious anyway, just naturally. **But** when I’m suffering from pain and grimacing because of it, I look downright fierce! A person could say, ‘Did you see that look on his face? How could this man have the Spirit of God?’ There are some who have said that of me.

***You can never judge the heart by the outward appearance!*** You can never judge whether a person is close to God by how tall they are, how short they are, how fat they are, how thin they are, how well-dressed they are. James says that if a man comes in ragged clothing, and you put him out there in the back room, *you’re judging his heart by his exterior appearance!* But if a man comes in fine clothing and gold falling all down around him, then you take him up and given him the front seat; and chances are he’s a plant and you never knew it, *because you judge by the exterior appearance; you can’t judge by that!* This is what was happening here.

This Pharisee was rejecting Jesus as a prophet and the Messiah because He allowed this woman to touch Him.

Verse 40: “Then Jesus answered *and* said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he said, ‘Teacher, say *on*.’” *Here’s this intelligent Pharisee, and now he’s going to get a chance to show his stuff!*

Verse 41: “Jesus said: ‘There were two debtors of a certain creditor; one owed five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. But when they did not have *anything with which* to pay *him*, he forgave *them both*...’” (vs 41-42). *Forgiveness is the important thing!*

Do you want God to forgive you when you sin and then repent? ***Yes! Then there also needs to be forgiveness for all those sins that people commit, which are not sins unto death!*** God also said that ***‘if you do not forgive—from the heart—your brother their sins, then neither will God forgive you.’*** That’s important to really understand!

Matt. 18 has to do with all kinds of relationships. This has to do with:

- child-rearing
- husband/wife

- brother to brother
- people in the world

There's one way you can love your enemies the very best. If they're really vicious and cruel, you pray, 'God, I love them, but keep them far away from me.' You can do that, but you still have to forgive them. You have to pray for them. You have to ask God to intervene and change their heart and mind.

Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'"

The whole world is based upon this. All competition is based upon this. When a team loses and they don't have enough of what they call 'spirit' then what they try and do is work up hatred in the minds of the participants of one team against another team. So, you get all of this carnal competition and this is natural in the world. It is:

- *my* home
- *my* family
- *my* father
- *my* mother
- *my* children
- *my* relatives

*Everything else is in a different category.*

- if I like you, then I'll like you
- if I don't like you, I'll hate you

Verse 44: "**But I say to you, love your enemies...**" That's the hardest thing in the world to do; but everyone who is a sinner is an enemy of God. Who leads them to repentance? *God does!* Why? *Because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life!*

- Who *knows* when an enemy may change and convert?
- Who knows what's in the mind of a person, except God?

Just to give you an example: I see a lot of it when I do my water-therapy, which is really beneficial to me and gives me great exercise. I generally strike up different conversations with different people. You find out that some of those people are really suffering terrible things!

I talked to a woman and I did the very thing that I said not to do; I looked at her and said to myself *she's stuck on herself*. Anyway, I talked to her and found out that she's got a really bad hip that that's so bad that it becomes disjointed very easily. She's got back problems where the disc is getting

thinner and thinner, and she's only 34-years-old.

Did I misjudge her? *Yes!* She's only there trying to get some exercise and therapy so she doesn't deteriorate any further. Why am I there? *For the same reason!* I imagine that she looked at me and said, 'He's stuck on himself; he comes in a turns off the music.'

When I came in yesterday, I went over to turn off the music and she said, 'I enjoy the music, can you leave it on?' Didn't even say 'please.' It's common thing that we do all the time. What we need to do in these things is ask God to help us to have true understanding of that person, because you never know, the person you may think is your enemy, in the time of trouble and difficulty may be the very one who is going to help you when you're in trouble.

Another thing concerning Sabbath-keeping: If you are driving to Sabbath services and you have an accident, are you not happy that the highway patrol and ambulance people are there? *Yes, indeed! You sure would be!*

If the whole world were keeping the Sabbath, there would be no need for them to be there, nor would you be traveling. You can walk out the door of your house and walk a couple blocks down to wherever church would be, and that would be it. I imagine then, at that point, it would be very easy to have a whole thing where you just have a very easy potluck, everyone knows ahead of time what to bring, the table is there and you just lay it out and there's no work and you all fellowship. I imagine that we'll have an awful lot of that during the Millennium. *Our circumstances are entirely different!*

What if your house catches fire on the Sabbath? Are you going to be like the Jew that you can't carry anything out of the house? You have to stand there and let it burn down? *NO!* You call the fire department. Aren't you glad that they are there? *Yes!* Is a fire on the Sabbath, an emergency? *I can't think of a greater one!*

Back to loving your enemy; "...**bless those who curse you...**" (v 44). *The normal reaction is to be angry and hostile and curse those that curse you, and say, 'If that's the way that it is, you go blankety-blank yourself,' and turn and around and walk away and shake the dust off your shoes as if you've done something righteous. But you haven't! You've sinned against God!*

"...do good to those who hate you... [because you may turn their heart ...and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (v 44).

That's hard to do! Why? *So that their mind*

*might be changed!* How many times have you had difficulty with someone where you really ‘kiss and make up’; or you’ve had a misunderstanding—on both sides—and neither one of you were able to give in until some little circumstance changed and you found out, ‘That’s not what I had in mind at all.’ *Oh, you didn’t, well, it sure looked like it when I looked at your face.’*

There is a requirement, v 45: “So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust.”

God loves the sinner as well as the righteous. He loves them in a little different way, but He still loves them. Otherwise, God would be killing sinners every time someone sinned. The ‘wages of sin is death’ and they would be gone and the world would be filled with corpses and God would be righteous and no human would be left alive.

- What has God done?
- *He hasn’t accomplished anything with that, no!*
- Is that God’s plan? *No!*
- Does God want us in that same spirit? *No!*

*Especially when you consider that God gave them the law of sin and death and they can’t help but do what they do!.*

Who knows, if God would lead them to repentance, maybe they would do better than you. That you never know because God has called the weak and the despised; all of us have problems, and that’s why God called us. We all need to understand that. We all need to realize that as far as human beings go, being sinners that we are, we all are damaged goods to a certain degree. Especially those whom God is sending to the Christian Biblical Church of God have been put through the ‘meat grinder’ once, twice and maybe three times.

That’s why I liken what we do to the ‘dung beetle.’ It takes that which no one wants. An elephant passes through the jungle and they have these huge dung piles; they are mammoth. Within 20 minutes that whole dung pile is gone, because the beetles come and take that which no one else wants. They wrap it up in a ball and lay an egg in it, so it’s going to generate new life.

Likewise with what we’re doing here. God is taking us, the ‘skubalon’ of the world and He’s putting life within us, just like the dung beetle laying an egg in a ball of dung. That ball of dung to a dung beetle is so precious that they fight over it. As soon as he gets it big enough, he turns his head down and puts his feet up backward and rolls that thing off

until he finds a little hole, digs a hole if there isn’t one, and buries an egg in it.

It’s kind of like us! So, the next time you get to really feeling hatred toward other people, keep that in mind.

There are two functions that are involved in this question: What if someone murdered one of your relatives? You’re dealing with two things in that case. You are to forgive him for what he has done, but also there’s the effect of the law. The law is that that person will stand trial for murder. What the law decides on it that still is applied to him, *though you forgive him.*

You can have two emotions there! With God’s Spirit it’s possible to do so. Or you can forgive but not trust. They have to then rebuild the trust. You can forgive a person for thievery, but don’t put them in the middle of the treasury. God says, ‘Let them steal no more, and work with his hands.’

Verse 45: “So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?*” (vs 45-46).

In other words, it’s just like a cloistered ‘good ole boy/girl club’ and you love each other and you care nothing about any other person, nothing about redeeming anybody, bringing them back to Christ, what have you done? *You’ve done the same thing as the world!* That’s exactly what you’ve done. That’s very important in all relationships.

Verse 47: “And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing?* Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect” (vs 47-48). *That’s the whole goal of what this is about!*

- Are we not to grow in perfection? *Yes!*
- Grow in grace? *Yes!*
- Grow in knowledge and understanding? *Yes!*
- How are you going to develop the character of God unless you have some trials and difficulties come along?

William Tyndale says, ‘*If God sends you on a journey across the sea, He is going to send a tempest on you to test your faith whether you love Him or no; whether you trust Him or no.*’ If we have everything good all the time, we would be thankful to God and merciless toward our enemies.

Yea, you would be without understanding. Then he says, ‘Joseph saw in the vision the 11 stars worshipping him. But before that took place they sent him off and saw neither sun, moon or star,’ and that for a long period of time:

- to humble him
- to try him
- to meek him
- to make him Godly

*So that when he did come into his place, he would do it after a Godly manner!* That’s what God is doing to all of us. We would all love to not have any trials. But we would never learn anything! That’s just the way human beings are.

Tyndale said that ‘God sends trials to those that he loves and who are His friends. We have been called that we may suffer with Christ.’ Not only is that a true statement, but that was also a prophecy of his own death. He said, ‘God is no patcher’; He will build on no other man’s foundation. God will not share His glory and honor with any man.

The glory and honor that God has here, we just read, that He let’s His sun shine the same on the righteous and on the wicked and sends the rain on the just and the unjust, and provides food for the sinner and the righteous alike.

You might even know some people who don’t know of God or keep the Sabbath, and they may be fantastic growers of food. Who makes it grow? *God does!* How does it grow? *By the sun, water and soil, and by the seed that God has created!* In that sense, God is no respecter of persons.

This is why it’s so important that *we forgive, brethren!* When there is forgiveness, then there also has to be some action to back it up.

Matthew 18:21: “Then Peter came to Him *and* said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?’” *If you put Peter’s life together, after the seventh time he would bring out the sword!*

- How would like to be forgiven just seven times in your life?
- How quickly would you use up those seven times?

*I think most of us—if we were good—might last a week!* But chances are the majority of us could not last from sunrise to sunset. That is:

- you do not go through the day and evil thought
- you do not say a wrong word
- you do not accuse anybody of anything

- you do everything perfectly
- you have no accidents
- you break no Law of God, not even the law of gravity

*We’d never make it!*

Verse 22: “Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven’—*which is a type of infinite forgiveness!*”

With real forgiveness something happens. When the other person is really convicted that he or she has done wrong, then they realize what a blessing it was to be forgiven, and they love you the more. That’s why God wants it that way! That’s why God doesn’t want it like it is in the world, because the world will give just a little forgiveness and then out come the guns.

Verse 23: “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a man, a *certain* king, who would take account with his servants. And after he began to reckon, there was brought to him one debtor who owed *him* ten thousand talents” (vs 23-24). *That would millions of dollars today; maybe into the hundreds of millions!*

Verse 25: “But since he did not have *anything* to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.” *Forced into bankruptcy and to be thrown into jail!* To be sold means to be made an *indentured servant*.

- How many years would this man have to be an indentured servant to pay off a debt like that?
- How much to do you make as an indentured servant?
- Thirty cents a day?
- Fifty cents a day?

Let’s be generous, \$10/hour or \$80 a day! Figure out how long it would take, with interest, to pay \$300-million. You would have a total lifetime of servitude.

Verse 26: “Because of this, the servant fell down *and* worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And being moved with compassion, the lord of that servant released him, and forgave him the debt. Then that servant went out *and* found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred silver coins... [a couple of bucks] ...and after seizing him, he choked *him*, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe.’ As a result, his fellow servant fell down at his feet and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ But he would not *listen*; instead, he went and cast him into prison, until he should pay

the amount that he owed” (vs 26-30). *The great lesson is coming:*

Verse 31: “Now, when his fellow servants saw the things *that* had taken place, they were greatly distressed; and they went to their lord *and* related all that had taken place. Then his lord called him *and* said to him, ‘*You* wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you implored me.... [just by asking he forgave] ...**Were you not also obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?**’” (vs 31-33). *That is the key!*

There’s another place in Eph. 4 that says, ‘Don’t let the sun go down on your wrath.’ If you don’t forgive, not only does it hurt the person that you do not forgive, **it hurts you even worse**, because you are contrary to the Spirit and the love of God!

What happens with forgiveness when there’s a lack of it? *It builds up in your mind and you never forget!* God gives us a promise. Our sins and iniquities are removed ‘*as far from us as the east is from the west, and He will remember our sins and transgressions no more forever!*’

One of the things that is very important in husband/wife relationships is *forgiveness!* It’s vitally important with brethren. Part of the difficulty that we have in the Church overall—regardless of where the Church may be—is that *brethren have been pitted against brethren and minister against minister because of:*

- the confusion of Satan the devil
- the lack of understanding of the love of God
- the lack of mercy
- the lack of doing Matt. 18 properly  
—*which is what this is all about!*
- the lack of coming to the person
  - ✓ whether it be in the Church
  - ✓ whether it be husband/wife

If you don’t go to the person and you let it build up, it’s going to build up into a volcano! If this goes on for years and years, then you’re going to find yourself in a position where you think everyone on earth is against you, and it’s not them, **it’s you!** Their attitude toward you is reflective of your attitude toward them!

You cannot live in a world of hate. Never happen! It will pickle you with bitterness that there will be nothing left of you but hatred. God does not want that. It’s one thing to see the error and problem that a person has and understand it and forgive them for it, and remember the lessons by it; like we all have with Herbert Armstrong.

We’re thankful that God used him to do

what he did. God called us through what he was doing, but God was the One Who was doing it. When did Herbert get himself in trouble? *When he thought he was the one who was doing it, rather than God!* Then God let him have all kinds of errors and problems that I’m sure he repented of.

- Can we learn the lesson of that? *Yes!*
- Can we still love him? *Yes, we do!*
- Can we still appreciate all the good that he did? *Absolutely, no question about it!*

*But:*

- Should we condone all the evil that was also done? *No!*

One other thing I’ll just mention along that line: Some people are mad at me because I don’t pronounce Herbert Armstrong with every other breath, and because I try and find in the Bible things that were greater than what Herbert Armstrong learned. Not because I’m trying to set myself up, because I figure that if all there was to the Word of God were the 18 things that Herbert Armstrong restored, then we would know everything that God knows, and Herbert Armstrong knew everything that God knew! **NO!**

There are thousands and thousands of things that God has for us, not just 18! Am I putting him down by making this comment? *No! I’m just realistically appraising the situation!* I knew Herbert Armstrong well enough that if he were alive—and he and I had excellent relations—that I could sit down with him and talk over these things with him, and I think he would agree with every one of them **because it’s found in the Word of God!** Not because I would bring them up; I’m incidental to the knowledge of God. I’m only a conveyer of information to you.

When I was on a trip to Opp, Alabama, there was a young teenaged girl whom I gave a ride to services. She said, ‘What is it like to be the head man of the Church?’ I said, ‘I never thought of that.’ I have never thought that, brethren, and I don’t consider that. If Christ is not the Head then we’re in the wrong place. Christ is the Head of every one of us. We are all brethren.

Christ told Mary Magdalene, ‘Go tell the apostles that I ascend to *My* God and *your* God.’ God is no respecter of persons. Even if He calls you, that doesn’t mean that he has respected you above any other person. That just merely means that you responded to the call of God and He led you to repentance.

Matthew 18:32: “Then his lord called him *and* said to him, ‘*You* wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you implored me. Were you

not also obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?' And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him.... [here's the lesson]: ...Likewise shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart" (vs 32-35).

With that kind of repentance and forgiveness, there's not going to be a continuation with it. If there is then there are other means available. If after the second and third admonition, reject him as a heretic and 'turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord' (1-Cor. 5)

That doesn't mean that we tolerate evil in our midst by being forgiving of those who sin. If they want to lead a life of sin, iniquity and come like so many do and feign repentance—want to have all the good things of God but never really change—put on a show so they can continue in their way of doing things. Such as one evangelist who committed all kinds of adultery and fornication for years and years, and every time he'd get caught it would be boo-hoo, 'forgive me.'

Then he'd come back and it was just one thing after another. Well, more problems were caused in the Church because he wasn't rejected when he should have been. That's playing respecter of persons. It doesn't matter what a personality is; the greatest personality in the world can end up being the worst sinner. That's also important to understand.

Luke 7:40: "Then Jesus answered *and* said to him, 'Simon...'" *Jesus could read the thoughts.*

God is a heart-knowing God; when Christ was here in the flesh He could know the hearts of people. So. He knew what Simon was thinking:

Luke 7:40: "Then Jesus answered *and* said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he said, 'Teacher, say on.' 'There were two debtors of a certain creditor; one owed five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. But when they did not have *anything with which* to pay *him*, he forgave *them* both. Tell *Me* then, which of them will love him most?' And Simon answered... [thinking to himself: *this is an easy question*] ...*and* said, 'I suppose *the one* whom he forgave the most.' And He said to him, 'You have judged rightly'" (vs 40-43). *I imagine you could almost see the phylacteries and rise up on the border of his garments!*

Verse 44: "And after turning to the woman, He said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman?... [now He got him] ...I came into your house, and you did

not provide *any* water to wash My feet; but she has washed My feet with *her* tears and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. You did not give Me a kiss; but she, from the *time* I came in, has not ceased to ardently kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil; but she has anointed My feet with ointment. For this cause, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven because she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, he loves little.' And He said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.' Then those who were sitting with *Him* began to say within themselves, 'Who is this, Who even forgives sins?' But He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace'" (vs 44-50).

So, it shows that with true repentance, there has to be true works of humility, because you desire to have these things forgiven. Not only with this kind of repentance, but you desire not to continue in it. That's what's so important concerning forgiveness.

Matthew 5:23: "For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you... [tie that in with Matt. 18; you have things you need to do] ...leave your gift there before the altar..." (vs 23-24).

God is saying that He does not want you coming to Him and expecting Him to do anything for you if you have got some big problem with other brethren, or husband and wife, or children. You cannot be in a right frame of mind or really exercising the Spirit of God the way you ought to if you have all of these things going on, and the hatred, strife and bitterness that goes with it. That always follows.

"...and go *your* way; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (v 24).

- Why? *Because you'll have a pure heart!*
- Can you have a pure heart if you have hatred toward someone? *No!*

*That's why God says to love your enemies!*

In the first part of Matt. 5 are all the beatitudes, and all of these are blessings from God. Some translations translate 'blessed' as *happy*. But that is not a good translation, *because happy is a condition of mind that you can be in...*

(go to the next track)

*...whether you're blessed or not!* Blessing is a condition that you are in before God regardless of your outward circumstances.

Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

If you could go back and look at the proud where Satan will say, 'Blessed are the proud that worship me, theirs is the kingdom of this world.' **You have the Kingdom of Heaven coming.**

Verse 4: "Blessed *are* those who mourn..." Can you be happy if you're mourning? *No, but you can be blessed if you're mourning for sin!* (Ezek. 9). *That God will put a special blessing for those who mourn for all the sins going on in Israel!*

"...for they shall be comforted" (v 4). When you're down and out and need help and comfort, doesn't it feel good if someone comes and comforts you? *Yes!*

Verse 5: "Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (vs 5-6).

That shows more than 18 points, I would suggest! *To be full of the knowledge of God, because you hunger and thirst after it!* That's why, brethren, whatever we do, we never, never want to get into a position at all whatsoever that we are ever satisfied with what we now know and understand.

- that doesn't mean that we get rid of it
- that doesn't mean that we neglect it
- **that means that we build our future spiritual life upon it**

*That we may be filled!*

Verse 7: "Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy." *That's why God wants us to forgive one another!*

Do you want mercy? *Oh yes!* Even the movie producers understand that. What happens when the most vicious criminals are caught? *Don't shoot! Don't shoot!*

If you want mercy, **you give mercy!** You think of that the next time something comes up and you need to give mercy to someone, **give it to them!** If they abuse it, then help them to understand.

Verse 8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart... [that's what all of these things are for so that you are pure in heart] ...for they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God. Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (vs 8-10).

We've been persecuted for that, no question about it. Not by the world, but we will be. But we've been persecuted by those who are supposed to be in the Church of God.

Verse 11: "Blessed are you when they shall

reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake. Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven; for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you" (vs 11-12).

- this is the whole attitude that God wants us to have
- this is what we need to grow into

After all the troubles and difficulties that you find in 1-Cor. 1-12, and all the things that they were seeking after, what they were doing in Corinth was trying to turn God's way into a 'religion' and political factions, and different careless attitudes. They were striving one for another to see who was the greatest, who would have the greatest gifts, who could speak in tongues, and so forth.

So, Paul says, 1 Corinthians 12:31: "But earnestly desire the more *edifying* gifts; and yet, I show you a way far surpassing *all these*."

The excellent way is this: ***IF you have the gift of God and you love God and you love the brethren, you have the greatest gift of all!*** You don't have to feel as though you have no gift because you don't teach, or that there's nothing you can do because you're a woman, or that you're a child and God has no respect unto you. That's all a bunch of carnal nonsense.

1-Corinthians 13:1: "If I... [Paul is talking about himself!] ...speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge..." (vs 1-2).

If people have that, they figure, 'My, I'm really blessed,' **but you're not if you don't have love!**

"...and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, **I am nothing**" (v 2).

Though you have faith to have any miraculous thing done that's necessary, and you don't have the love of God, *you're nothing!*

Verse 3: "And if I give away all my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but do not have love, **I have gained nothing.**" ***You have gained absolutely not one thing in the world!***

Verse 4: "Love is patient *and* is kind... [that also implies *forgiving*] ...love envies not, does not brag about itself... [how great I am] ...is not puffed up. *Love* does not behave disgracefully, does not seek its own things..." (vs 4-5).

God is able to provide for you regardless. You have to be prudent and things like this, but you're not seeking just your own; you're seeking others.

"...is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth" (vs 5-6). *This is the whole attitude that the beatitudes of Matt. 5 that are intended to bring out; that you have the love of God!*

Verse 7: "Love bears all things..."—*regardless of the circumstances, you still bear it! Did Christ do that when He went to the cross? No question about it!*

"...believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (v 7). *There's always hope even in the worst situations, because all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose!* Always look at the bright spiritual side on it, because there is something that will help you.

Verse 8: **Love never fails...** Don't ever forget that! It is an absolute sure thing!

"...But whether *there be* prophecies... [of men, not of God] ...they shall cease; whether *there be* languages, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away" (v 8).

How many of you remember what you learned in the second grade? *That's all been vanished to the knowledge of an adult!* So likewise, when you become a spirit being, all that we've learned as human beings will just be a foundation and the knowledge and everything will expand so much that it will be like it vanished away.

Verse 9: "For we know in part... [we only know in part] ...and we prophesy in part; but when that which is Perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be set aside. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I set aside the things of a child" (vs 9-11). *That's what we need to do spiritually!*

Verse 12: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then *we shall see face-to-face...*"

We've got the greatest, most fantastic future ahead of us: to become the spirit sons of God the Father and Jesus Christ, and see Them face-to-face and live forever! Which means that none of the things that we're going through in the flesh—trials and difficulties—are going to count for anything, unless they build the character and love of God.

"...now I know in part, but then I shall know exactly as I have been known. And now, these three

remain: faith, hope *and* love; but **the greatest of these is love**" (vs 12-13). *That's what all of these things are about!*

Back to the original question regarding the Sabbath: I think in love to us, in our circumstances that we have today, God has given us that one allowance, that's it. If we understand that and realize that it's not going to be that way in the Millennium, and also understand we're not living in the Millennium now, things are going to change drastically. Right now what we need is the love of God and the forgiveness that God wants us to have with each other.

- that's going to help more than anything else
- that's going to help give you the character of God, more than anything else
- the mind of Christ more than anything else

*Really keep that in mind.*

We've been talking about William Tyndale and how he was used of God, and different ones that God has used, even Herbert Armstrong and we're thankful for what he did that was right. We're sorry for all the things that he did that were wrong, and in the things that God used him to do, that is fine.

But no man, *no man, no man* that God uses is to exalt himself over anything! That's what's so important, and that's one of the fruits that you will see with someone that God is using. If God is using someone then he is going to be very willing to accept whatever difficulties or corrections that need to come along, because he does not want to do that which is wrong.

Likewise in things that people bring up to me. That's why if someone brings something up to me and I have done something that is not correct, I need to know that, I need to change that, and I need to repent of it.

It's like I said before, I consider myself a teacher, and that's what I want to be—a teacher, minister and elder—and that's it! I don't want anyone to praise me or exalt me, because criticism comes from one side of the mouth, and praise comes out of the other side of the mouth. You can't let things destroy you by praise, and you can't let things discourage you because of criticism. I just got criticized and lumped into all the 15<sup>th</sup> Passover-keepers! Need I say anything? *No! Nothing! I don't have to say anything!* Let God take care of them. There are certain things, when it's doctrinal, that needs to be said. Certain persons who are put up on pedestals and idols need to be exposed for that.

We can become superstitious about men and idols very easily because people are given to that kind of thing. That's the way human nature is. Part of the problem that we have today is the carnality carried over into the different Churches of God because I think we're finally getting to the point that people are beginning to understand that God doesn't want us to be 'religious.'

The world can view us as 'religious'; they can look in their Webster's Dictionary and say that it says: 'Religion is the worship or service of God.' So they view us as being 'religious' and belonging to a 'religion.' But let me draw a comparison that is very important: ***We are called into a family relationship with God!*** Christ said that God the Father was His God and our God—equally. If we're called into a family relationship, then we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ is going to praise God in the great congregation of brethren, and 'He's not ashamed to call them brethren.'

The point is this: You do not call your family a 'religion.' No you don't! A family is a created relationship beginning with husband and wife, mother and father, and then children. Children are in a created relationship. Are they in a 'religion'? *No!* So, for us to say that we are to have a *way of life before God*, in a family relationship—and that is the important thing—is the whole focus of what we need to be concentrating on with the love of God to accomplish the purpose of God. This is what Paul is trying to bring out here.

1-Corinthians 3:1: "And, I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to those who are spiritual, but as to those who are carnal—even as to babes in Christ." *Babes in Christ behave like this:*

When they have some knowledge, they think they know everything. Then they get ideas, and those ideas are not rooted in the Spirit and the Word of God, then they go off on carnal tangents and create 'religion.' That's precisely what they were doing here.

Verse 2: "I gave you milk to drink, and not meat; for you were not yet able to receive spiritual meat; and neither are you able now, for you are still carnal. For since envy and contention and divisions are among you, are you not carnal? And are you not walking according to human ways?... [carnally] ...When someone says, 'I am of Paul,' and another one says, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal? Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? *They are* but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one" (vs 2-5).

Notice what Paul thought of himself, though he came with the authority of an apostle, he didn't get up there and be all mad and shake his jowls and

say, 'Don't you know I'm an apostle?' *NO!* He said, 'Who are they but ministers to serve, to do what God wants, because God has a work that is greater?'

Verse 6: "I planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." *Just like a seed!* What work do you do when you put a seed in the ground and water it that makes it grow? *Nothing!* What God contained in the seed is what does all the work. I'm continually amazed at all the different flavors and tastes and things that can come out of seeds, out the same ground side-by-side.

In our backyard we have two orange trees, two apple trees, one plum tree, two apricot trees, two pomegranate trees. Then we have a garden space to plant in where we can get tomatoes, carrots, radishes, onions, and all these things out of the same ground comes all these different tastes.

It's the same thing with what God is creating. We are all different, but we are all in the ground of Christ. *That's the foundation!*

Verse 7: "Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for it is God Who gives the increase." *That's what's important, brethren!*

- Christ is the Head of the Church
- God the Father gives you of His Spirit
- Christ in you is the hope of glory

*All of those things is where it needs to be!*

Verse 8: "Now, he who plants and he who waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." *He's talking of the ministry: himself, Apollos and so forth!*

Verse 9: "For we are God's fellow workers; and you are God's husbandry, even God's building." *All the brethren belong to God!*

- Who called the brethren? ***God did!***
- Who gave them the Spirit? ***God did!***
- Who opened their minds to the understanding of the Word of God? ***God did!***
- Who led them to repentance that they might be baptized? ***God did!***

He may have used a man to be a preacher, *but God still did the work*, because the words of God are Spirit and Life! *That is what convicts your mind and soul!*

Verse 10: "As a wise architect, according to the grace of God that was given to me, I have laid the foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each one take heed how he builds upon it." *Now it gets down to us!*

- How are we building on our Christian lives?
- What are we really doing?

Verse 11: “For **no one is able to lay any other foundation** besides that which has been laid, **which is Jesus Christ.**” *You can’t do it!*

Verse 12: “Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble... [I hope we’re building the first three and not the last three] ...the work of each one shall be manifested; for the day of *trial* will declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire...” (vs 12-13). *1-Pet. 4:12 is the fiery trial that we go through!*

“...and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one’s is” (v 13). *God will put us through it one way or the other!*

Many times at a time we least expect, and in a way we don’t realize that it’s going to come. If we knew how it was going to come, and if we knew what it was going to be, would we not then fortify ourselves so that we could withstand the trial? *Yes!* But then who would be doing the work? *We would!* So therefore, God gives us trials of a different sort, rather than what we expect; and it comes!

Verse 14: “If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward.” *That’s why we need to be careful how we’re building!*

Verse 15: “If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet, as through fire.”

I think that’s where a lot of those whom we viewed as brethren, when we look back and analyze about brethren, we know that we had true brethren who were converted; false brethren who never were, as Paul talks about false brethren. Also amongst us we had tares. I think we can begin to understand the difference between true brethren and false brethren, and tares and the wheat. That is they are always ‘religious,’ which appears good. *Even Satan himself appears as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness, but they’re not!*

God is going to be merciful in the end, and I think this is talking here about that he himself shall be saved even though he loses a certain amount. I think a good example of that is Sardis: ‘You have a name that you are alive, but you’re dead. Nevertheless, if you hold fast to a few things you’ll be in the Kingdom of God.’

Verse 16: “Don’t you understand that you are God’s temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?”

We all need to know that, brethren and really understand that we do. That doesn’t mean

you’re going to be perfect. That doesn’t mean that you’re going to be without weaknesses. *NO!* You’re going to have weaknesses.

Verse 17: “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy... [that’s going to the unpardonable sin: defile it with wrong works] ...him because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are.”

Now Paul starts getting into some strong things here, because he built up to this point and the rest of it goes into 1-Cor. 4.

Verse 18: “Let no one deceive himself...” That’s what everyone is subject to; that’s why everyone needs to have someone who is going to come and iron sharpen iron, and look them in the eye and say what about this, that and the other thing. I need that as well as anyone else.

Just like you don’t want to be treated like a fly and exterminated with a canon, neither do I. I’m willing! I don’t want to keep anything that is not right. I don’t want my human nature. I don’t want my way. Unless my desire is—and your desire is—**to let God have His way with us through Christ**, then we may be found fighting God. We don’t want to do that!

“...If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world...” (v 18). *Worldly wisdom is not going to bring spirituality!* That’s what Paul is saying.

“...let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God’s sight*. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God for it is written, ‘He entraps the wise in their own craftiness.’ And again, ‘*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*’ Therefore, do not let anyone boast in men...” (vs 18-21).

I don’t want anyone to glory in me; I don’t want anyone to glory in any man, except the man Christ, risen from the dead, the Son of God!

“...for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or *the* world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours” (vs 21-22). *The whole Kingdom of God!*

Why are you out there striving over who is controlling this and that. ‘I follow this one. I follow that one.’ If you’re not taught the Word of God it doesn’t matter who you follow, because you’re just following a man. But if you’re following Christ and are taught the words of Christ, then that’s what you need; that’s what I need. I come under the same rule as you do. Paul says, ‘You that teach another, do you not teach yourself?’ And with the help of others, learn! That’s the way it needs to be.

Verse 23: “And you *are* Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

1-Corinthians 4:1: “So then, let *every* man regard us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

The apostles had something special beyond that no other man had. That is, they were given by inspiration, the mystery of God revealed to them to be written for us and the rest of the Church, and they had to be faithful in it.

Verse 2: “Beyond that, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful.”

- faithfully handling the Word of God
- faithfully doing the things that God wants them to do

Verse 3: “But to me it is an insignificant matter that I am judged by you, or by man’s standard; and neither do I judge myself.”

Rather, he uses the judgment of God on him. That’s what we need to do: take the Scriptures of God and judge yourselves by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. That way we don’t have to be judged and condemned with the world. That’s what Paul is talking about.

In saying that he doesn’t judge himself, he’s also saying, ‘I’m not looking to what I have done.’ That’s the way it needs to be with all of us. What we have done, we have done. If it’s good, that’s great! If it’s bad, *repent!* What we did yesterday is fine, but we can’t stand on that and say, ‘Hooray! I did this yesterday, look at how good I am today.’ *Then you’ve just sinned!*

Verse 4: “Now I am not conscious of anything against myself...” The Greek here is ‘eke’: *out from himself*. He’s not preaching himself, and that’s the hardest thing for anyone who is a teacher, to not teach himself. That is the easiest temptation to get into. Then with that carry human authority and say it’s God’s authority, when it isn’t.

“...yet, I am not justified by this; for the One Who is judging me is *the* Lord. Therefore, do not judge anything before *the* time; *wait* until the Lord comes...” (vs 4-5).

Don’t be thinking you you’ve got it made is what he’s saying here. If you judge things before the time, chances are you are *misjudging* that person! Without a doubt!

“...Who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the motives of *all* hearts; and then shall each one receive praise from God. Now these things, brethren, I have

applied to Apollos and myself for your sakes; that in us you may learn not to think *of men* beyond what is written, so that no one among you is puffed up on behalf of one *of us* against the other” (vs 5-6)— *which means that coming along ‘don’t anyone of you go puffing up Peter or Paul or Apollos and set them one against the other.’* That’s just politics; that’s what Paul is saying here.

- Paul knew!
- Paul understood!
- Paul realized!

Verse 7: “For what makes you superior *to others?* And **what do you have that you did not receive?....**”

This is one verse that I myself have personally taken as one that I really keep in mind everyday. ***I have nothing I didn’t receive!***

- nothing physically
- nothing spiritually
- any understanding of Scripture comes by the Spirit of God
  - Did I receive it? *Yes!*
  - Could I have done it on my own? *No! No way!*

This is what God wants!

Like this one teenaged girl asked: ‘What does it feel like being the top man in the Church?’ I never even thought of it until she asked it. I told her that. I said, ‘I never even thought of it until you asked it, because Christ is the Head of the Church. *And if He’s not the Head of the Church, then we’re all in big-time trouble!*’

- Christ is the Head of me
- Christ is the Head of you
- Christ is the Head of everyone

We are called into this family relationship. That’s why Sabbath-keeping is so important. Not to make it a social club that we get together because we particularly like each other.

I hope we all like and love each other, but why do we come together? *Because God puts His special presence when we gather together in His name!* When we ask God to bless what we do in the name of Christ, we are asking God to put His presence here. So therefore, that’s the attitude that we need to have when we come, so He can put His presence here so God doesn’t have to fight against all kinds of carnal attitudes.

- Can we not be all inspired more when we understand properly?

- When we have the right relationship with each other?
- That any of you can come to me and talk to me about anything at any time?
- I can come to you and talk to you about anything at any time?
- Isn't that the way it should be? *Absolutely!*
- Why should it be any different?

I love and respect you, and I know all of you love and respect me. I don't expect to be treated any differently than you expect to be treated yourself. As a matter of fact, I don't expect to be treated in any particular way, that is of myself because I am me. Otherwise, that would be expecting something for my carnal self, wouldn't it?

That's why Paul said—and I'll include myself—if *I talk too much about myself then it becomes foolishness! After all, all the glory goes to God and Christ!*

“...you have that you did not receive? But if you also received *it*, why are you boasting as if you did not receive *it*?” (v 7)—*meaning that you have inheritantly in you!* ‘Look at who I am!’ *NO!* Then Paul really gets to them:

Verse 8: “Now you are satiated. Now you have been enriched...” *If that's not the Laodiceans, I don't know...*

“...You have reigned without us.... [You've made it into the Kingdom of God already] ...And I would that you did reign, so that we also might reign with you. For I suppose that God has made us apostles **last**...” (vs 8-9).

Anyone want to be first, let them be last; anyone want to be the head, let them be the tail. That's what Paul is saying here.

“...as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We *are* fools for the sake of Christ, but you *are* wise in Christ...” (vs 9-10).

They were saying that they knew more than Paul, Apollos and Peter. That they had all the carnality striving with them. ***This is an incredible book! It is so powerful!***

“...we *are* weak, but you *are* strong; you *are* glorious, but we *are* without honor. To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and wander without a home” (vs 10-11).

All of us have the blessing of knowing where our bed is, knowing where our houses are. That's why I say and have tried to reiterate so many times, if, while the tree is green, we do not work, what will we do when the tree is dry?

Verse 12: “And we labor, working with our own hands. When railed at, we bless; when persecuted, we bear *it*; when reviled, we entreat; for unto this day we are as *the* refuse and *the* off-scouring of the world. I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but as my beloved children I warn *you*” (vs 12-14).

He's warning them because they are getting away from Christ and getting into 'religion'; getting into all these carnal things that human beings get into.

Verse 15: “For you might have ten thousand tutors in Christ, but *you do* not *have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I did beget you through the Gospel”—***by God the Father!*** That's what it's referring to.

Paul was not saying that he was a father who begot them; he begot them in the Gospel by God the Father! Not by Paul's work.

Verse 16: “Therefore, I am exhorting you to be imitators of me.” And he says in another place, ‘As I follow Christ!’ (1-Cor. 11). Followers means to be *imitators*. ***We have nothing that we didn't receive!***

Notice how Paul is building up to the biggest problem that they have in 1-Cor. 5—that great horrible incestuous relationship in the Church. And walking in and out of the Church and parading about it, bragging about it, and being puffed up about it. Thinking to themselves that they're wise and spiritual.

Verse 17: “For this cause I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in *the* Lord, who will remind you of my ways that *are* in Christ, exactly as I teach everywhere in every church.”

He's not saying ‘*follow me as I follow a man, but follow me as I follow Christ, as Christ has inspired me to teach in the Churches.*’ If someone wants to run off and go on false doctrine, based on what they do—and we've seen it time and time again, that if we're not focused on Christ and not truly living the very words that Paul has written, as he lived them; Paul wrote what he lived—then we are people most miserable!

Verse 18: “Now, some of you are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you; but I shall come to you shortly, if the Lord wills; and I will know not *merely* the words of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the Kingdom of God *is* not in words, but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness?” (vs 18-21).

What do you want? *He laid it on the line!* It's better to come in the spirit of meekness. But there has to be reciprocity in the spirit of meekness on both sides. Otherwise, what would you have? *A carnal knock-down drag-out!* What does that accomplish? *Nothing!*

Then Paul says, 'Get rid of this problem! Put him out of the Church! 1-Cor. 6-13—where Paul talks about love—he brings out all their difficulties and problems.

I remember years ago I started a series in 1-Cor. and was sitting here with about ten of us, and when I got up to chapter six, it finally dawned on me: 'None you here have these problems, so we'll go on to something else.'

There was even one minister in Worldwide, years ago before there were a lot of problems in the Church, who said he could not understand why 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. were in the New Testament, 'We don't have any of these problems.' Well, he was almost like a prophet in reverse. *Lo! They are coming!*

That's what it has to be with all of us. Brethren, this is what God wants all of us to project to other people. That's what He wants. If we do that and we love each other, and do the things together that we need to do. If you can help sharpen me, *help me*. If I can help you, *I'll help you*. We put it all together, and with God's Spirit and He blesses us, then what more could we desire. That's what's important.

There's another thing that affected our children and affected other people in the Church. When you first came to the Church of God, what did you expect? *You expected that it wouldn't be like any other church, because it was the Church of God!* Why should it be like any other church?

Then over a period of years, lo and behold, it became like any other carnal church in the world. That turned off a lot of people! A lot of people that maybe God was working with and was perhaps calling, or at least they were there evaluating whether they wanted to take the dip or not, were discouraged and turned away because of the behavior of people within the Church, and the behavior of the ministry. That is tragic!

Look at all the things that God has put us through! If we could learn the lessons from that, wouldn't that be great? If God can help us help other people see their way through all this, and out of it, won't that be great? ***And all the glory goes to God!***

Also, I didn't realize it, but a lot of the young ministers were giving double standards. They had one standard for the adults and one standard for the teenagers. I didn't know that until I took the

basketball team and the cheerleaders from the Monterey Church down to Pasadena and they had a dance. It was the raunchiest, loudest rock music. It was just beyond belief.

I wouldn't let those from Monterey participate! The former minister from Monterey—who was a young suave up and coming political climber within the organization—was in charge of it. The music was so loud that I went up to tell him what I thought of it, and I got within one foot of his ear and shouted as loud as I could and he barely heard me.

I could see that it was too much to try and fight as one person. I told him what I thought and just walked out. Those things are designed to scramble the brain and to get people so they won't know how to think. Right in the Church!

***When you see the world in the Church, then you better know we're in trouble! God help us!***

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

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Luke 7:31-41-42
- 2) Matthew 5:43-48
- 3) Matthew 18:21-33, 32-35
- 4) Luke 7:40-50
- 5) Matthew 5:23-24, 3-12
- 6) 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- 7) 1 Corinthians 3:1-23
- 8) 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Ephesians 4
- 1 Corinthians 5
- Ezekiel 9
- 1 Corinthians 1-12
- 1 Peter 4:12

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