

Our Personal Challenge To Become Unified (Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—March 29, 2024

This is a follow up on a sermon I gave back in February of 2023, about spiritually being unified. I'm going to expel on that a little bit further today and how important it is, especially as we come to the Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread.

Do you like to be personally challenged in your life? *Of course, many of us would answer that in a different way!* Some would say very positively, 'Yes, I like to be challenged.' Some would say 'no,' depending on what their past experiences in life has been like.

I can tell you to be challenged in our lives actually is good for us. Coupled with faith, which is the thing that makes us grow, we will have challenges both physically and also spiritually. We can look at challenges in our life as being good for us.

We realize after we go through the challenge and we defeat that challenge it was actually very good for us. I remember the first time I was asked to give a sermonette and it became fairly regular, I was terrified. That was a real challenge for me to get through.

I dreaded it every time I had to get ready for a sermon or a message to give and present to the brethren. It was a real challenge for me, but for others it's not really that big a deal. So, it varies from person to person.

Another challenge that many of us have is like putting a mirror in front of ourselves sometimes. After hearing a message or reading an article or having a conversation amongst ourselves, we actually sometimes come to see something about ourselves that we've never seen before. That happens quite regularly. It's something that we realize that we do need to change our lives. ***We can only accomplish that by staying close to God!***

It is encouraging when we have a challenge come and we face that challenge, we need to dig deep into our inner mind and souls to meet that challenge. That is part of our conversion process in a spiritual sense, to rise and meet the challenge that we are faced with. It changes who we are in our hearts.

Overcomers meet challenges all the time, and that is who we are to be, and that, of course, is to overcome. That is the whole purpose of our calling to overcome and become totally converted and receive the mind of Christ.

We look at the world today and we see, for instance—looking at the leaders of the United States and the bigger countries—having a challenge to try and unify the country. It's quite a challenge and the success rate of that has not succeeded.

Ever since the Civil War in the USA, the USA has been a divided nation. That relates to every nation out in the world today. *But:*

- How about spiritually?
- Can we not say and see that spiritually we are a divided people?

Some believing in some sort of a God, and some not believing in God at all. President Lincoln was dealing with these two sides very predominantly.

We are likewise today. It is just blown up from there, and we basically are divided people. More specifically at a spiritual level, even within the Churches of God.

So, without some type of commonality, unity for any nation, any group of people, is virtually sometimes a mission impossible. It is not usually going to happen. ***The only thing that could save mankind is national repentance!***

That's what would need to take place to have any sort of unity in the nation, and with us in the spiritual family realm. We sit back and see the challenges of others before us and sometimes can be thankful that we do not have near those challenges being dealt with by many of the higher officials.

But the question really is: Do we really personally have that challenge? *In principle, although we are not the president of the country, we do have a remarkable challenge in our lives!* Many of us who have been within the Church of God Body have seen many things in our spiritual walk with God, and moreso have been faced with many personal challenges related to that journey that we are taking.

Many ask:

- Will we ever see a large group of brethren come together again to congregate as God's people? *I know it's been asked of me:*
- Will the brethren of God ever be unified again?
- Has that ever crossed your mind? *I'm sure it has in the past!*
- With all the differences, we can wonder and we can think, will that ever happen again?

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I can say that based on the differences between our leaders' challenges and ours, namely having faith in God or not, ***the simple answer is absolutely yes, there can be a unified group of people!*** We are going to be challenged internally, into our own thought process, not into someone else's thought process, *but it's into our own!*

That's the purpose of me saying this is a personal challenge. It will be good and it will be incredibly positive for us all. This time of year, as we approach the Passover and the spring Holy Days, it is so critical to bear down and really assess where we are spiritually.

Have we succeeded in meeting all those challenges that have come our way, that have been set before us spiritually speaking.

So, let us begin by defining unity. Unity is the state of being unified or joined as a whole, brought together as one. In human terms, not from a spiritual perspective, that would mean all 36 states after the Civil War were able to come back together under one government; 12 of which would become states were actually territories at the time.

When we look back, brethren, at God's Church, for those that have been here a very long time, we came into one large organization or many of us did, that being the Worldwide Church of God. Not like today in many scattered groups of the Churches of God, the Worldwide Church of God was a large, large number of people. Many of us would sometimes hope that today our present organizations would all come back together to be one. I think that has crossed all of our minds at some point.

John 17:11. "And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as *We are one.*"

The plan was set in motion, brethren, where we are going to see that is God's intention for us, without question. *The plan was set in motion before the world was!* It required Christ's sacrifice to redeem us from sin and the death penalty, specifically so that we might be able to become one with Christ and the Father and with each other.

This whole Plan of Salvation was designed for the purpose of oneness. To make us one, just like the Father and the Son so that we could become one; ***have oneness all on God's own level!***

It should make it crystal clear in our minds that the oneness or unity among ourselves will take place. *It is a must!* The whole Plan of Salvation

revolves around this concept. The God Family is going to grow. *It is one family!*

- They think alike
- They act alike
- They do the same thing
- They exude love and it is inescapable

Verse 20: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word."

This speaks to our time; so did v 11. It applies to all of us at any time, but now He is making it specific, coming down the road.

Verse 21: "That they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, in order that the world may believe that You did send Me."

The love and the unity among God's people are to be so clearly visible to the world that they will know for sure that Christ was sent here by God.

Verse 22: "And I have given them the glory that You gave *to Me*, in order that they may be one, in the same way *that We* are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (vs 22-23).

You can recognize these Scriptures as they are read on the Passover evening. Christ says something very important in v 23; He says, "...**that they may be perfected into one...**"—***we are being made perfect!***

In other words, it is a growth process that we are going through. It's a maturing process. It does not happen all at once, *it is a process!* So, there is a tremendous depth of understanding that goes into what Christ actually said here; this concept of ***being made perfect in one!***

We are going to go deeper into this as we go along in this message. But the rest of Christ's point here is that through the development of this love and unity among us, it will become obvious to the world that God the Father has loved us as He loved Christ.

That is a profound statement. ***We are going to look and think like Christ!*** That is the oneness that we can look forward to and we can anticipate. So, let us understand and punctuate this in our minds with some exclamation points.

- this is a guarantee
- this is what is going to happen

The unity challenge is going to be met by the willing without question.

Why do I say the unity challenge? *It is a challenge based on each one of us personally!* It is not a group effort by the members within that Body. It is not a matter of if it will happen, but it is a matter of when and how.

John 13:34: “A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that *is how* you are to love one another.”

This was just a new focus of an old commandment given earlier. The commandments are never old; they are timeless. I hope you understand what I am saying. ***Obedience to the commandments produces the love that Christ had toward the disciples!*** We know that the commandments are exceedingly broad, and they encompass everything that we do in life.

We also know that because those commandments lived in Christ, ***He exuded this love toward mankind and toward the brethren!*** The new focus was to comprehend them, the source of Christ’s love, and to make sure that their focus remains in how to treat one another. We are looking at a formula here in the direction to where unity actually comes from. ***Our life and our unity are to be an extension of Christ who actually lives in us!***

Knowing that unity is God’s expectation of us in His plan for His called out ones:

- Is unity discernible when all organizations come together as one big organization?
- Is that when unity is discernible?

we can answer that with another question

- Is unity discernible when all 50 states stay under the same government? *Of course not!*

On a spiritual level, not even remotely! Just being together in an organization does not equal unity on a spiritual level. Of course, we have talked about this many times in recent years, because it is so pertinent to our times. ***Really, the Church is not even an organization!*** It’s difficult to come up with a definition, but let’s consider it to be:

- a spiritual organism
- a spiritual thing
- an eternal thing

We were baptized into God’s Church—for those that have been baptized—we were not baptized into any organization or denomination of the world. We were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ***by and through the authority and power of Jesus Christ!***

That means something! That really means something substantial! Christ is the Head of the

Body, the Church, and it is pleasing to our Father. He, and He alone, made it so! ***No man has ever been made head of the Church of God, ever!***

This is Christ’s place, and there is no other. These are amazingly simple things to comprehend when you really sit back and assess everything. With that, we must do that at this time. Assess where we are at:

- Have we grown?
- Have we developed that path toward that one that we are all striving for?

They’re actually very simple things ***IF*** we know the Truth. *The Truth is inarguable!* Under Christ’s leadership as Head of the Church, how does He structure the Church?

We know that the physical family that God designed has structure within it, also the spiritual family that God is developing, obviously also has structure.

Ephesians 4:11: “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.”

Christ is the Head of the Church Who sets that structure within *His one Church*, that spiritual organism, as I have referred to earlier. *Christ did this!* What a wonderful thing. It is noticeably clear He has set them, and He gave us some positions to fill as servants.

So therefore, we can determine from this that Christ chooses perfect people for such responsibility. He only chooses perfect people. Well, brethren, ***that’s not true! Totally not true!*** Of course, ***He does not choose perfect people! There are no perfect people to choose from!***

Wouldn’t it be different and nice if there were perfect people in today’s society? But we know otherwise, as we are all still human, *and with that human element, that carnal nature!* So, let us bring back to mind what Christ said:

John 17:23: “I in them, and You in Me, ***that they may be perfected into one.***”

There is a process involved in achieving that. Christ gave and gives imperfect people leadership positions *so that they can be made perfect* by following Christ’s example over time. *It’s a maturing process!* What is Christ’s purpose for these imperfect people serving as they do?

Very familiar Scriptures. We hear this yearly at Passover time:

Verse 12: “When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those

whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them” (vs 12-13).

As these individuals whom Christ has placed there learn and grow, they are going to teach others within the Body of Christ the same lessons, until we all come to that unity of faith as Paul makes mention of here.

It is not just those in leadership positions! Anyone who has been ordained will tell you that straight away! They have learned many, many things. Likewise, you have learned also many things. Corrective things, sometimes very hard things from brethren who were not ordained. Do not think that it only works one way. God works through all of us as a family. I want you to know that Paul talks about the unity of faith in:

Ephesians 4:13: “Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;

The unity that we so much desire does not have anything to do with any organization. Have you not heard in the past from many people saying:

Oh, if I could only find that right organization that thinks like me, everything would be just great. That would be wonderful.

Have you heard that from brethren? That is not the point, which is not what Paul said. He said ***it is the faith that unites*** coupled with ***the knowledge of the Son of God!***

What is that knowledge of the Son of God? *It's the mind of Christ!* Faith and the mind of Christ. That is what unifies us; that is where the unity comes from. Concerning faith, we know a lot about faith and we've heard many messages about faith. I won't elaborate more on this topic with this message. We know that by faith we know our Creator. We believe that ***He is our Head*** and not an organization.

So, our unity is based on the belief, in the faith and in the mind of Jesus Christ. That is what we're striving for constantly in our spiritual lives, in our spiritual walk with God. That is where our unity is. It is expressed in loving each other, just as Christ loved us.

Regardless, it doesn't matter what organization we; it doesn't matter what organization we attend with. There are many brethren who are meeting with organizations, and then there are many

that are not able to meet regularly within an organization. But realize that an organization generally is only formed for legal reasons, to be able to operate within a nation.

Yes, each organization is structured differently and people have many reasons to not associate with other organizations. There again, that comes upon us personally to realize that and to make that decision. It is no one else's, but us personally that have to make that decision to build on that unification that we are striving for. We must realize that organizations in themselves ***are not the spiritual organism that we all will become part of!***

Let us consider some facts here. We might say that all of us stand alone. That is that is absolutely true. What I'm really saying here, is let us look at some facts without adulterating. I will explain that term a little bit further on in the message. We are going to start at the grassroots levels.

Psalms 100:3: “Know that the LORD, He is God. He has made us, and we are His; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” ***God is our Maker!***

- we are what He produced
- we did not know anything about it
- we were produced
- we are being produced; made

We had no thoughts of any kind prior to our creation. We are compared to sheep in this verse. Why are we compared to sheep? *We are called a sheep because the level of work it takes to get us to really develop and thrive on a spiritual level!*

It takes a lot of work and we can all attest to that, I am sure. Sheep are very labor intensive animals. They need to be looked after. We are labor intensive people, people of God's creation. Sheep by themselves are defenseless on their own and they are prone to making bad choices.

Verse 4: “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; give thanks unto Him and bless His name.”

So, with this understanding, it's fairly recognized what we have read, we should be so thankful that God did create us. Let us have His image as formed and that He directs and guide us. God the Father called us; He's given us His Laws and all these things so that we can lead a successful life, including physically, but more importantly, spiritually.

When we do not adulterate the facts, we are pointed humbly and confidently to our Creator, Who turns out to be our Head: Jesus Christ.

1-Corinthians 6:19: “WHAT! Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have *within you* from God, and you are not your own?”

What is Paul saying here? Paul is not referring to mankind in general, because mankind in general does not have the Holy Spirit. He is referring to those whom Christ was praying for in John 17, to those whom the Father would call and who would eventually receive the Holy Spirit. Those would eventually become one with each other. At baptism we cease being our own.

Verse 20: “For you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

So, there again, we were bought with a price. basic facts! We were bought just like you would go out and buy a sheep. If you wanted to own one, you would have to purchase it.

We were not bought by money; we were not bought with silver or gold. Christ’s blood is really the only priceless thing that has ever come up out of this earth, the only thing. That in turn makes the life of each one of us that has been purchased by His blood, as represented on Passover, incredibly special. We are incredibly unique individuals.

- Can we comprehend that?
- Does that sink into our heads?

This fact in itself puts tremendous impetus on each one of us to glorified God in body and spirit. The knowledge that we have received, the calling that God the Father has given us, is such a blessing.

It should fill us with a deep desire to become just like Christ in every way, and develop His mind, that mind of Christ. That is the crux of what I’m talking about today. In terms of unity, ***we must become like Christ!***

1-Corinthians 12:12: “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. 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...*** [these facts are not arguable] ...For the body *of Christ* is not one member, but many” (vs 12-14).

Into one Body, which becomes part of the spiritual organism. What we can see here from what Paul has written, and what we know from our time today, there is great diversity among the people that God calls into His Church. We all know that.

God’s people come from many countries, different races, different religious backgrounds having come from extreme differences.

“...and **we were all made to drink into one Spirit**” (v 13).

Is that not remarkably unique, an incredibly unique thing that God is actually doing with all of us? This all tells one important thing about the Holy Spirit. It’s a miracle-working Spirit. To have so much diversity come into one body, and expect that it can come to complete harmony; complete unity! It’s actually a miraculous thing when you think about it.

There’s a lot of changing taking place within the Body, because of all the differences that we all started out with. We need to bear that in mind as we go along through this message.

We are just reading this from the Scriptures, and that is all fact! We are not trying to read anything to point to any organization. That is not what we are doing. We are pointing directly, ***strictly to the Truth! The Truth as expounded through God’s Word!***

Verse 15: “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? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would* the hearing *be*? If *the* whole *were* hearing, where *would* the smelling *be*? But now has God Himself placed each one of the *members* in the body according to His own will. For if all were one member, where *would* the body *be*? But now *are there* many members, yet, *they are* one body. And *the* eye is not able to say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’ Or again, the head *is not able to say* to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (vs 15-21).

If an eye or hand were arrogant, they could possibly say that, but then there would not be any unity within that Body.

Verse 22: “But much to the contrary, the members of the body that appear to be weaker are necessary; And those *members* that we regard as less honorable to the body, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable *parts* are treated with greater modesty. But our more presentable *parts* do not have *this* need. Rather, God has tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to those *members* that are deficient” (vs 22-24).

Paul’s reasoning here—inspired by God—is noticeably clear. He is producing potential things that could come to the minds of God’s people, as

they are called. Because very divergent people come into Christ's one Body, and all of this illustrates the concept of being made perfect. Christ directed our attention in the earlier Scriptures we read.

This is the process that we are going through. If we fail to grow in the understanding of how very interdependent we are on each other, as different as we are within Christ's one Body, we can suffer dysfunction within that Body. We need to understand that. God's reasoning is brilliant. How could the Body smoothly function if every single part did not contribute what was placed there to do?

Think about the Church of God today, the spiritual organism, and how fractured we actually are. How much we need to do what was written here.

Verse 25: "So that there might not be any division in the body, but *that* the members might have the same concern for one another."

Have we succeeded in that, brethren? I dare say *no!* God gives us every single thing we need individually. He gives us different parts, different body parts, so that no strife or divisions should develop. *None, except if we allow it!*

We know, of course, we are not perfect people. We are so imperfect and we must deal with that. That is the challenge that we have. No one else can deal with it. It must be us personally, each one of us.

Everything that we've gone through thus far, I think it's important that we go through this. Everything that we've gone through starting in John 17 to the present, is straightforward:

- it's humbling
- it's true
- it's unarguable

With the power of the Holy Spirit to make us comprehend and understand this, is so critical in our spiritual lives. *We do not:*

- adulterate God's words with an inflated view of ourselves
- read it out of pride
- see only the problems with other people, instead of focusing on ourselves

The challenge of unity within God's Church, the spiritual organism, is not a mission impossible to a humble mind. It is very doable. Unity can be an ever-present, comforting, growing reality, because it will be a growing thing.

It does not occur overnight. We know and realize that spiritual unity within God's Church is not as it should be. You could ask yourself, by our love—whether it is evident or not—for one another,

will all people be able to know that we certainly must be Christ's disciple?

- Can we honestly ask that question?
- Will they know that we are Christ's disciples?
- What do they see?
- What do our actions tell us or tell them about us?

All personal questions we must ask ourselves. It is evident from what Paul was inspired to write here that some could potentially see themselves as useless to the body, being unworthy. They may feel inferior or indifferent. They may be struggling. Whatever the case may be.

On the other hand, knowing our human nature as we do, because we have all fought it our whole lives, some might see themselves superior to others in that same body and have that attitude, that haughtiness, and say, 'I am part of the brain' or 'I am part of' whatever they think is the most important.

That, brethren, defines adulterating God's Word. When we look at Scripture from an inflated view of ourselves, it's not about ourselves. That's what wrecks the unity within the Body. Of course, we know this unity is not a new thing at all. It's been present for a long time. It's not something of our time, it was back in Christ's time and Paul's time. It has been in God's Church from the very beginning, because Paul clearly had to address it.

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."

Paul could not even connect with various of the baptized members on a spiritual level. That's what it says. That is not a good indicator of good things to come, is it? Not a good omen! It's not a good sign for the Church. There was a breakdown between Paul and some of the brethren there.

There needs to be a connection between us, because sound-mindedness comes from the Holy Spirit. We should always be able to connect with God's people. How can we not connect? It is a major part of what should be the unity of the faith.

What Paul is dealing with here in these Scriptures had to be super disappointing to him, just as it disappoints us today as we look at the state of the Church. It may seem harsh, but it's true.

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.... [yes, we are] ... For since envy and contention and divisions *are* among you, are you not

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carnal? And *are you not* walking according to human *ways*?" (vs 2-3).

It's spelled out clearly there! Paul is dealing with some extreme spiritual immaturity. After the initial response to God's call of faith—repentance, baptism, and receiving of the Holy Spirit—they were failing to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ.

It is a serious matter when we do not grow. That should be our awesome goal that we strive for, **to grow!** That brings us to this time of year. It's so important for us to really see this, assess ourselves.

- Where are we compared to last year at this time?
- Have we grown?

We must answer that personally!

When a person cannot receive spiritual meat, they become incapable of going deeper in their lives. They can only be on a shallow level.

Christ holds out much deeper things, many deeper things, to us continually as we go through life. If we lack that maturity—and it is maturity—if we are in that immature state, as we saw in 1-Cor., we realize that comes from more playground type mentality that one would expect at a much younger age as a child.

Verse 4: "When someone says, 'I am of Paul,' and another one *says*, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?"

We know that 'carnal' means that we still have a way to work towards conversion!

Today we have many splinter groups that have originally broken off from the Worldwide Church of God. At that time, the Worldwide Church of God was an organization that happened to have a large portion of the spiritual organism within it. Anyhow, that's my perception. That is not a fact. Do not take that as a fact.

But there is a much greater sense of unity among God's imperfect people, ***who are in the process of being made perfect in one***, and working toward that.

At that time, was easier for the world to see that there was really something different about these people. That was evident many times at the Feast sites. Yes, we were certainly not perfect people, but we were different. The people outside, in the world, noticed that we were different.

That is not entirely gone today, not by any means. I honestly believe that there are many brethren that are yearning within the spiritual organism that we would unite as part of that

organism and that many are thinking about it constantly, and hoping that something would develop to bring that to fruition. ***God's will be done!***

Certainly, it is something that our Father in Christ would fully expect of us to urgently develop in our mindset, as the only way we can grow in unity, ***and to deeply understand God's mind! With that, to develop Christ's mind. That is our purpose!***

Christ is our head, but never once presented Himself to be superior. Let us say to His Father, it is not even a thought in Their minds! We know it's an impossibility.

But this attitude—which was prevalent in Paul's time; he repeatedly had to address it within the Church—***of competition, for which there is no room of place in God's mind!*** It is never an us vs them, or a me vs you.

- that is not what is meant
- that is not our thought process
- that is not God's mind

That is exactly the attitude that ultimately ends in destruction, in war such as is coming on the earth and beginning to show major signs of coming much quicker today in this society that we live in.

There is only one place in God's Government for the completion of perfection. That is where the place is for as we learn to become one. It is a challenge that each one of us has to meet, which I honestly think that we can all begin to see.

The Apostle Paul said in Heb. 6 that we are to leave behind the elementary principles of Christ and go on to perfection. ***It is not that the foundation of:***

- repentance
- faith
- baptism
- the laying on of hands
- the resurrection
- eternal judgment

are not good; they are amazing! They're wonderful facts that we know and should know. But brethren, ***that is our foundation!***

We know and we need to realize that we need to grow each one of us. We must build on that and must go on to perfection. That in itself is a challenge for all of us. It's a personal challenge.

Perfection, among other things, is being at one with each other. That is perfection! If we could truly be one with each other, ***that means the mind of Christ dwells within us richly!*** We might ask, what is Christ's mind like? ***We are supposed to have that mind in us!***

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John 5:30: “I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father Who sent Me.”

We’ve read that so many times. If you look at the context around this first, you will see that some of the Jews wanted to kill Christ because they were trying desperately to get rid of Him, **because they saw Him as competition to them!** They were competing against Him. They wanted pre-eminence.

Unity was the furthest thing from their minds! It was the furthest thing from those individuals! **They wanted to compete with Christ!**

During this conversation surrounding this verse, Christ even goes as far as to identify Himself as God’s Son, and right on top of having said that to the individuals, He says **‘that I can of Myself do nothing. I am God’s Son, but I cannot do anything of Myself!’**

Christ at this time was human; He was on the earth. He was human, so we could easily relate to His attitude here, or we should be able to relate to that.

When our Father first called us, for the most part this is how we felt: ‘of myself I can do nothing.’ We saw ourselves as nothing. We had to come to that point and in need of help. We were seeking help. It was in the frame and mind of Christ, Who was **one** with His Father.

Christ did not need help in overcoming sin, because He was sinless, but He needed help as a man to endure the things that He was going to have to endure in His lifetime. He was going to have to give up His life and He was going to have to teach people many, many things.

Colossians 1:18: “And He is the Head of the Body, the Church; Who is *the* Beginning, *the* Firstborn from among the dead so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (vs 18-19).

Contrast this with John 5:3 that we read earlier. On the one hand, Christ’s humble attitude was this thing ‘of Myself I can do nothing.’ In the absence of pride, He had no separate interest. There were no advantages in His mind for him to pursue; nothing of the sort.

In the absence of pride, His mind was set on exactly what His Father’s mind was set on, which was the Plan of Salvation, unfolding; a family being developed and coming to love as one.

This attitude is certainly contrary to what we see in this world today. But because He was humble and therefore, in a loving attitude, God made Him Head of the Church, that in all things He might have pre-eminence.

God blessed humility. Christ was elevated to pre-eminence and the fullness of the Father. But the Father did not elevate Christ to such a place for some twisted kind of self-glory such as we would see in this world today.

Christ was elevated for a purpose. To become the perfect example to those sheep whom would be called, then purchase through His blood. We are part of that. His unity with our Father is our example to follow. It pleases God that in Christ all fullness should dwell in his humble mind, and in his humble being.

We can see concerning this thing of the fullness of God. That is Christ’s intention for each one of us as members of God’s of Christ Body.

Ephesians 3:14: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (vs 14-17). *That is what He did for Christ!*

Christ said He could do nothing of Himself as a physical man, and He could not. But He could be strengthened to do anything through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ—whom our Father gave to be our Head—can and will dwell in us in the very same way through his Holy Spirit. How does that one spirit strengthen the one family, the spiritual organism?

Verse 18: “*And* that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (vs 18-19).

It is the very same thing that God our Father gave to Christ. That is what we are being offered. It grants us understanding and depth so that we can know the love of Christ. The purpose of all this is that we may be filled with the fullness of God.

This is what happens to the humble. This is what happened to Jesus Christ our example. All of those who follow Christ’s lead and will be filled

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with the fullness of God, and they will be filled with much deeper understanding.

When we look at God's Plan and simple Truth, without an inflated view of ourselves, the organism takes on a whole new life. It is an amazing concept of what can and should be.

With all this said and what we have gone over, we should be understanding that ego and pride is what is destroying unity. If we want God to bless us:

- with understanding
- with the fullness of God in us
- with oneness

we must be humble-minded first of all, because we understand that we are part of each other and we need to be connected.

That is by God's design. We know how the physical body works. We do not want to lose a toe or an ear or anything. But on a spiritual level we must be together. If we cannot connect, the organism is going to hobble along, and there will be dysfunction, which is symbolic of the division that Paul spoke about.

It is the carnal playground mentally of 1-Cor. 3. That is what we are living in today. That is what we are going to come out of today. It is a guarantee. The understanding between us and them is that, yes, we are different each providing a special function, that we cannot mutually do without one another.

Is that how we see every member of the Body of Christ. We know some of the members because of the organization we may be in. But we cannot do without any of the members of the Body of Christ, whatever organization they are in.

Are we just here to ignore any real differences that exist? *Obviously, there are some big differences that exist within the organizations!*

That is a question we personally must answer. But more importantly, we can ask a much more direct question to answer that question.

Are we to ignore any personal spiritual abnormalities within ourselves? ***Of course, the answer is certainly not!*** That is unthinkable! We are each part of the Body of Christ.

As we will be taking Passover, we have been bought and paid for by Christ's blood. We are part of one another. We are part of that organism that I keep referring to. That is why it is so important that we examine ourselves as we come to these days.

When we see ourselves as we are according to God, we fully understand that what we need to do comes to the forefront. It affects every single one of us in the Body right now among all the organizations.

If it is an organization that keeps the commandments of God. I am not talking about the extreme ones out in left field. If we do not ignore sin within ourselves personally, we cannot ignore it within the Body either; we simply cannot.

If we follow our elder Brother, our Head; if we follow Christ's example... In Rev. 2 & 3 we see what Christ's expectations are of us as we view the Body. He praises those in Ephesus who could not bear those who are evil. He saw their good. They tested those who pretended to be apostles and found them to be liars. Christ expected that of them; they found something and they had to act on it.

He also reminded them of their own personal shortcomings. But they has lost their first love. It was expected of the membership that everyone was personally accountable in Christ's mind.

Then there were the doctrinal errors in Pergamos. The doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Christ told them to repent quickly, or he would fight against them with 'the sword of His mouth.' He gave them a space of time to repent and to overcome.

That is also a trait of God's mind, and Him coming to a righteous conclusion. You and I also must give people space from time to time.

Christ that expected those in Thyatira not to put up with the Jezebels of sorts, who was beguiling some to commit sexual immorality.

We could go on and on, but this is sufficient for us to see that we need to keep a pulse on our own spiritual condition as well as the pulse on the organism. We are a part of that organism; it all fits together.

Christ saw problems in the leadership, and He saw problems in some of the brethren. There would have been problems among every single individual, *because none were perfect!*

With Christ being our example, we cannot ignore any real differences that exist. Truly corrupt individuals, yes, should be avoided; no question about that. ***'A little leaven leavens the whole lump.'*** The wrong spirit NOT resisted *or* in other words, willfully standing has no place in God's Body. It has no place at all.

But looking at the messages that Christ gave to the seven Churches, you can notice in all of them

His overly concerned for them all. He was overly concerned, and He was very candid about it. He did not desire that anyone should fail. **Overcoming is the major theme of Rev. 2 & 3!** Overcoming, the conquering of self. Meeting that challenge.

The thing that separates us from God separates us from Christ, from each other and weakens the Body.

What this points to is that overcoming the carnal self, becoming literally like Christ, lies at the heart of becoming one with each other, with Christ and with our Father.

This way of life has nothing to do with us vs them *or* me vs you. It is about becoming small enough in our own eyes to be one together. To play our part in that Body, each of us functioning as a part of one another. **So that the fullness of God can dwell in us collectively and unified!**

That is what God the Father and Jesus Christ desires from us. They laid the Plan of Salvation out for us to become like Them. Where there should be no and could be no corruption! We know that if we are not one together, we will end up being one alone. **That is not what Christ died for!**

The world is full of people who are one alone. They want their own will. They want their own whatever apart from God! Being one alone is being self-centered, and that is one of the reasons why Christ must return the second time: **to stop human annihilation!**

This is all easy to understand, it is a simple truth with the knowledge and understanding that we have. But what may or may not be simple is how we interact among ourselves as we go through the process of being made perfect in one. **That being conversion!**

Because we know it is a process just like within a family. There are dynamics that go on continuously. We are a spiritual family.

Simplest and only way to walk among ourselves is with the same attitude that Christ had toward His Father. His attitude was **'of Myself I can do nothing! But what I hear from My Father, that is what I do.'**

That is how we should all be. What we hear from God's Word in Scripture, through Christ, is truly amazingly simple if we do not adulterate it with our own ego.

Ephesians 4:4: *"There is one Body and one Spirit, even as you were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in you all"* (vs 4-6).

Verse 1: "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, am exhorting you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called... [He's calling that out to us] ... with all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, **forbearing one another in love**" (vs 1-2).

The primary means by which we attain unity in Christ's Body is through His humble attitude, which allows us to utilize the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what God has given us to see ourselves as we really are. *That is the challenge! That is the personal challenge!*

But it is doable! We can develop that humble mind! The proud Pharisees and others were competitors *against* Christ, because He would not compete with them.

- Christ was not a competitor
- Christ is a completer

That is the question today as we approach another Passover. Which are we? A competitor or a completer?

Christ was not and is not one in Himself. He was one with His Father. That is why our Father gave Him pre-eminence. That is the fullness that dwells in Him. So, each one of us must ask ourselves personally:

- Am I a competitor?
- Am I a Pharisee in sheep's clothing?

That desires pre-eminence within the spiritual organism, within whatever organization we are in; or from an organizational point of view.

- Am I a Pharisee?
- Am I a competitor?

Humility allows us to ask that question of ourselves and be willing to see the answer. If we can see the answer, we can grow and overcome. We can meet that challenge of being unified as one.

With meekness, as Paul was talking about, we can clearly see the good gifts and talents of some of the other members of the Body, and not envy them in the least. We can be incredibly happy and grateful for what the member brings to the Body. That is how we function in one. With humility and meekness we can walk together, and we can be of one mind.

We know that perfection is a process; it does not happen all at once. We are all in different development stages spiritually. Sometimes, we need to have patience extended to us. Could be a bad attitude that we have. Differences of opinion over

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some matter. Could even be a physical matter or a spiritual matter.

I am sure that we can look back at our lives and marvel how long it took us in some cases to gain some important understanding that would change how we treat other people. I can certainly see it in my life. It is about how long it took us to overcome something. Without patience on God's part toward us where would we be?

All those former years—sometimes very former years for some of us—when we were thinking, when we were looking at the facts through an adulterated, egotistical mind, sometimes. Adulterating the facts.

Christ was being very patient with us, because He is involved. He is committed to our being perfected in one.

That is the very way we are to deal with each other. Without faith, doing it God's way, this is 'mission impossible.' But by faith, we know beyond the shadow of the doubt that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

As per Paul's instruction here, we bear with one another in love. What does that mean? *That means it involves forgiving one another and putting up with one another in patience!*

There may be things that irritate us about one another. We could put them aside, have patience and get beyond that. We can get beyond those things as we hope for absolute best. That does not involve ignoring sin; that is teetering on willfulness. We cannot ignore that.

None of us having children would encourage our little children to go ahead and play out in the street with the fast cars going by. We would not do that we would not even dream of that. We would show them a better way.

Sometimes that is what we must do as well with our spiritual brethren. The disunity that Apostle Paul saw within the Church in some places in his time is no different than what we see in the Church today. Remarkably similar in some cases.

Philippians 1:15: "Indeed, some are proclaiming Christ out of envy and strife, but some with good intentions."

Some priests preach Christ out of envy and strife, as competitors. As we saw in 1-Cor. 3, some competitively aligned themselves behind various preachers/teachers. Whether the teachers were being competitive or not, they aligned themselves.

James 3:14: "But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the Truth."

The only oneness that you will find here is the oneness of self: *Pharisee-style oneness!* In other words, only disunity and confusion will be there with that.

We have been called to the oneness of God and empowered to achieve it through a different Spirit. Not a demonic spirit, but from a different Spirit, the Spirit of God. A huge difference. We all understand that. **But:**

- Who among us has not been envious of someone within our group or some other group?
- Who among us has not been self seeking in some way?

If we are humble enough to be honest with ourselves!

A Pharisee apart from conversion will only see the deficiencies in others, and the superiority of self. Because we have all been in that boat of one time or another—even right now—we know how easy it is to submit to the wrong spirit from time to time.

That is part of our constant challenge that I'm speaking of. But we know how patiently Christ has endured with us, and how He works to bring us to perfection in oneness.

So, we must, with our yet imperfect selves, be this way among ourselves. That spiritual organism I spoke of and used prevalently in today's message is a diverse group of people. People who are at different stages of developing spiritually speaking.

James was speaking to the Church here. So, we know that demonic wisdom can and does rear its head in the Church.

Matt. 5—we will see how Christ describes how we should deal with this. What Christ is describing here is what someone who is perfected looks like through humility.

Matthew 5:38: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say to you, do not resist evil; rather, if anyone shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (vs 38-39).

If someone who happens to be a brother or sister in Christ is in a bad spiritual state, but has not obviously willfully rejected God, bear with them. Turn the other cheek. Go to them according to Christ's instruction in Matt. 18 and try to resolve it.

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Or in Luke 6:36: “Therefore, you also be compassionate... [merciful] ...*even* as your Father is compassionate”—*is the God Family way!*

That is so important for us all to remember in practice. Coming to the righteous conclusions. And how to bring perfection and oneness to the Body of Christ.

Matthew 5:40: “And *if* anyone shall sue you before the law and take your garment, give him *your* coat also. And *if* anyone shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to the one who asks of you; and do not turn away from the one who wishes to borrow from you” (vs 40-42).

As Christ did for us, as he does for us continually, we need to go beyond within that organism to be kind and to be loving. sometimes to be loving enough to be honest, just as Christ was, so we can help our brother and sister.

We can see from the past that it has failed many times. The love and unity that we all yearn for is not about someone else’s attitude. It does not have anything to do with that. ***It is about our attitude!***

Unity lies beyond the carnal self. It is found humbly filling our place in Christ’s Body happily. It is found by completing and not competing, regardless of how we are treated.

Yes, sometimes we’ve been treated poorly. But let us take this message and digest it. Realize the challenge that we constantly face can be overcome with the positive good of mankind and ourselves.

It is found by allowing the unadulterated mind of Christ to dwell in us richly. As for unity, we can be assured that the challenge will be met by the willing.

- let us be those willing
- let us beat the challenge and be unified in one
- let us take these days before Passover and really assess what I have covered today

Remember, God loves us all and He does not want to lose any one of us. ***Let us be strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit to stir us up and make us unified in one in the Body of Christ.***

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 17:11, 20-23
- 2) John 13:34
- 3) Ephesians 4:11
- 4) John 17:23, 12-13
- 5) Ephesians 4:13
- 6) Psalm 100:3-4
- 7) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- 8) 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 13, 15-25
- 9) 1 Corinthians 3:1-4
- 10) John 5:30-31
- 11) Colossians 1:18-19
- 12) Ephesians 3:14-19
- 13) Ephesians 4:4-6, 1-2
- 14) Philippians 1:15
- 15) James 3:14
- 16) Matthew 5:38-39
- 17) Luke 6:36
- 18) Matthew 5:40-42

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Hebrews 6
- Revelation 2; 3
- Matthew 18

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