

Being Spiritually Unified (Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—February 17, 2023

I want to begin with a little bit of an introduction and would like to try to assess and reflect upon the state of the Church of God at the present time. Not only for our own selective group here in CBCG, but all the Churches of God that continue to teach from the Scriptures and hold fast to the Truth as they have been taught and called by God the Father.

Let us reflect upon as we as a group of people are doing together. What we as a collective team representing God the Father and Jesus Christ are actually trying to achieve.

That will give us an opportunity to assess where we have been, where we are presently and where we want to go from this point forward.

Let us look at a like-minded group point of view. A group of like-minded brethren trying to achieve the same goal of achieving the overall purpose of us being here.

First let us look from a foundational point of view. The things that we look at must all lead back to that foundation upon which we stand if we are going to achieve that overall goal that all of us are seeking.

You have heard this countless times:

- Why are we here?
- What does it mean to be part of the Church of God?

and more specifically:

- Part of this organization, CBCG?
- Why does it exist?
- Why can't we all be unified as one group?

Not with the many scattered groups comprising the Churches of God!

- Why am I here in CBCG and not somewhere else?

These are all questions we can ask and are going to try to answer, and on a personal level as well.

Maybe we can answer some of these question based on the spiritual foundation, based on Scripture and not our thoughts and ideas, which many times get in the way. Our personal foundation spiritually must include three things:

1. calling
2. baptism
3. reconciliation

These three things are so important for us to realize and comprehend what they actually represent. We cannot have a relationship with God without these things. They all represent a timeline. They work together, but they work in order.

Today I hope to achieve a timeline effect that will take us from point 'A' and work through various points connecting these so we will arrive at a logical conclusion from Scripture as to why we are here, and more importantly *who we actually are!*

We all know very well from the Scriptures that in:

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me [Christ] unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him..."

We know this only too well, but do we actually understand and appreciate what that statement says? Today, I'm going to talk to each one of you on a more personal level, a conversation between you and me.

What does that mean to you, the Scripture I just mentioned? Christ said, "No one can come to Me [Christ] unless the Father, Who... [engages him] sent Me, draws him..."

We know that today, the general context is that we are living in an age of self-determination. It's the age of self. In the secular world this is very well represented and is happening around us daily. It all appears to be about self. Everything around us is emphasizing the self.

I will determine for myself what I'm going to do, not do, and determine for myself what is right and wrong.

That is the attitude that this society is living under now. *This self can water down an individual's appreciation that we have had a specific calling from God the Father!* It enhances the idea that:

I'm here because I chose to be here; I determined to be her. I am here because of me.'

We can be easily misled into that way of thinking. This has resulted and also contributed to the fact of the various division within the Church; *servicing to reinforce self-determination!*

We can appreciate that we all have been forced to make decisions over the last number of years as we were confronted with doctrinal error, and various other things on our journey. We had to make decisions, and *it's an extremely easy step over*

the line from being forced to make those decisions to continue to say:

I am here because I have chosen to be here!

We did not choose God! ***He chose us!*** He chose each one of us for whatever reason, ***but God chose us!***

I personally can't explain why He called me specifically, but He called me and I went through the very clear calling process that many of you have also gone through. Though I was introduced to the Truth through my parents, but needless to say, I was personally called. God the Father does the calling! Let us concede that God chose each one of us; ***we did not choose God!***

God extended an invitation to us, drew us, and as a rule He chose the weak of the world. Let us not get puffed up and proud! God preferred us, each one of us! God the Father decided to take you personally for Himself. He invited you! He preferred you to be an active participant in His unfolding Plan of Salvation.

What God is now doing with each one of us is a part of the Plan of Salvation. We must realize that. It will involve the rest of the world, but you and I have received—as Paul said to the Hebrews—*the heavenly calling!*

If we responded to God's calling, something significant takes place. It began with an invitation, so we did not have to be forced to accept. The Father never forced us to accept the calling that He's given us. I'm sure that many of us have different stories to relay on how we struggled initially, and maybe resisted, but then just let it go! So, here we are, we responded to the invitation and have come to this point in our journey.

Colossians 1:13: "Who [God the Father] has personally **rescued us from the power of darkness** and has transferred *us* unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love."

Regarding who we are is very important, because we have been delivered, drawn out from the "...power of darkness..."

When Paul is talking about the particular calling that he received, and it was an outstanding calling that we can read in the book of Acts, Christ said of that calling *that Paul's ministry would include turning people from darkness to the Light; from the power of Satan to God!*

When God called each one of us, we were totally under the power of Satan. Whatever way of life we had—however good or bad our family upbringing—it was still under the power of Satan, the god of this world!

We have been drawn out from that and transferred, as it says in the Scriptures, into something else. If you read all of Col. 1 we can see that we are transferred, not into the literal Kingdom of God—because flesh and blood does not inherit the Kingdom of God—we are still flesh and blood! We have been transferred *into the Church of God!*

Verse 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 pre-eminence."

Let us consider that we have been called, transferred into the Church. We've often heard in the past, years ago, that this refers to His 'embryonic' Kingdom, which is a concept to consider, but it is the development for a full sonship in the Kingdom, the Church!

We have been put into the Church, having been drawn out from the world. The Greek word for Church in the New Testament is 'ekklesia'; it is not generally a spiritual term. It did not derive from spiritual sources. It is a gathering or an assembly. It can be used in a secular form, or as it's become known in a more religious form, men have formed man 'ekklesia' over the years.

Men came from these, but with our calling, training and our background we can use the word 'ekklesia' in a spiritual application.

We've become used to that. But we can have man 'ekklesia'—many gatherings, assemblies—that have been called together. There's only one quality that makes the Body of Christ and the 'ekklesia' synonymous, and that is important for us. ***That is the spiritual nature of the Body of Christ!***

John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me" (vs 44-45).

Here's the beginning of a process that will end up in the God Family. Here's the 'Elohim' Family: the Father and the Son in the process of ***drawing people in their physical form into a relationship with Them!***

Verse 46: "No one has seen the Father except He Who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life. I AM the Bread of Life" (vs 46-48).

The Father brings an individual to Jesus Christ. Then a relationship is formed with the individual and Jesus Christ, which is the linkage that

takes them back to the Father.

The calling by the Father doesn't mean an automatic linkage to the Father; there must be a response! We must respond. It's very important to understand that! The individual must come to Jesus Christ and there must be a process that goes on with that individual such as 'eating the Bread of Life.'

Verse 62—*Christ speaking*: "What if you shall see the Son of man ascending up where He was before? It is the Spirit that gives Life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, *they* are Spirit and *they* are Life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from *the* beginning who were the ones that did not believe, and who would betray Him" (vs 62-64).

There is a process that an individual must go through, and of course, it leads us eventually to baptism.

If the Father has called you and you have responded, you've come to baptism because that's the formation of the relationship that involves the Spirit of God, a new life begins with the baptism!

God's calling will lead a person to that baptism, which is the formalization of the Covenant agreement between the individual and God. With this it also becomes a formalization of a person's place in the Church. Your position in the Church becomes formalized through baptism.

Romans 8:8: "But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness" (vs 8-10).

If Christ is in us there's a kind of merging that takes place between flesh and the spirit. We are not the same person after baptism. That doesn't mean that we walk away from the baptismal pool and there's a great aura around us or a glow. But there's something inside that's very different.

Verse 11: "Now, if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken **your mortal bodies** because of His Spirit that dwells within you."

The Spirit of God dwells within us! It's not just working *with us*, not just out there leading us from calling to conversion, it is a part of actually who we are. We carry a part of Jesus Christ within us from that point forward.

With baptism, of course repentance is

required. We must be careful that our mental state remains sound and true through that process of baptism.

Romans 6:4: "Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life."

That becomes a literal reality through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. We are not the same person we were prior to baptism. There is a new life now within us. It is a spirit life that deals with the flesh, that deals with the human side.

We are committed to the crucifixion of self. That life of crucifying the self goes on from the point of baptism. It is an on-going process, our old man was crucified with Christ when we got baptized, immersed in the water.

That's what we committed ourselves to do, each one of us individually. That indwelling presence now defines each one of us, who we are. We may look the same, but in God's eyes we are very different now carrying that Spirit of God. God identifies us as one of His sons or daughters. He sees us differently than others do. But this also helps define the Church.

1-Corinthians 12:13: "For indeed, by one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free—and we were all made to drink into one Spirit."

At that point you can call it 'ekklesia' and it's God's 'ekklesia,' not men's at this point in time. We eat the same Bread and that is the Bread of Life! Jesus Christ is the same Being within you as within me or this or that person. It's exactly the same!

Verse 14: "For the body *of Christ* is not one member, but many."

This baptism that we underwent is defining this for each one of us.

Verse 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."

This is looking at it from God's point of view. So, as we say very clearly and very accurately, the Church—the Body of Christ—is spiritual in nature. It's the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that you are carrying that places you into that Body and places that person into the Body and it comprises the Body of Christ, the Church! They're all carrying that same Spirit, and it's *one!* One Spirit, unity across the board in one Body and one Spirit.

The Church is compared to a spiritual organism. All the parts are mutually dependent. They all work together needing each other and relying on each other.

Ephesians 4:16: "From Whom all the Body, fitly framed and compacted together by *that which* every joint supplies, according to *its* inner working in *the* measure of each individual part, is making the increase of the body unto *the* edifying of itself in love."

We were all individually called, and through baptism and Jesus Christ's Spirit within us we become joint and called upon to supply something for the Body. Thus the concept of a spiritual organism.

The unfortunate part is that 'ekklesia' has been translated as *church* and the real spiritual aspect has become lost and confused in the world today.

You can go to an assembly, but that assembly does not necessarily mean that it is a part of the spiritual Body of Christ. Yes, the name 'ekklesia' can have a 'religious-sounding' name, but it may not be a part of the actual Body of Christ. That is reality! The Church is made up of individuals; Spirit-led people who have been reconciled to the Father. That is what the Church is made up of.

This is a process; conversion is a process! Now we can move one step further: *reconciled to the Father!*

2-Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

This is something we personally must assess. Are the old things passing away from us? Satan is a master of creating an environment that keeps the old things alive and keeps bringing them up front and center! You don't have to go looking for the old. It will present itself from time-to-time, because that is what Satan does so well. We must fight this continually, each one of us!

Are we passing away as far as the old is concerned and becoming new as instructed? We are a new creation. The Spirit of God in us is Spirit of transformation. Paul understood this very well; that is why the book of Colossians and Ephesians became so important for all us to read and understand.

Verse 18: "And all things *are* from God, Who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

Not only are we reconciled to the Father, but in that reconciled condition, as part of the Body of Christ, there is a ministry of reconciliation. There is something further that has to be done.

Verse 19: "Which *is*, that God was in Christ, reconciling *the* world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and He has entrusted to us *this* message of reconciliation."

Being reconciled then places a responsibility on each one of us, and that responsibility will ultimately entail the world. It will entail the aspect of a Gospel being preached as a witness to this world. That's a part of the reconciled state. These people no longer live for themselves.

Verse 15: "And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and was raised again."

We all know that we all live in a very toxic environment today. It's very toxic, probably as toxic as we would ever expect since the time of Jesus Christ's death, for somebody to be member of the Body of Christ and to accomplish what God fully intended.

Sometimes this environment today is more toxic than most of us actually allow ourselves to believe. Satan has produced a mindset, a society where everything is opposed to achieving what God the Father wants us to achieve. We're in this warm water that is getting warmer and warmer. How much are we actually seeing. We, on a personal basis, must think about these things.

How much is some of this stuff that's around us rubbing off on us? Whether it be an everyday exposure or not, it's rubbing off on us and changing the clarity of the view that we should have as God's people.

2-Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks *be* to God, Who always leads us triumphant in Christ, and manifests the fragrance of His knowledge through us in every place."

How might the fragrance of that knowledge be spread around in every place?

- by a Body that is one
- by a Body that is a spiritual organism
- by a Body that is a true representative of its Head
- by a Body that is at-one with the Father as
- by a Body that is a living witness to this world

The world has no idea of the concept of what actual unity really means. God intended the fragrance of His knowledge to be spread, a ministry of

reconciliation; people who are reconciled to the Father!

They understand that, they acknowledge it and they have committed themselves to this dying of the self, not living longer for themselves!

Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for sin on our behalf. It removes the barrier between man and God. Through Christ we are now reconciled to the Father and we move on in God's Plan as this new creation.

Ephesians 4:1: "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, am exhorting you to walk worthily of the calling to which you were called"

This reconciled relationship is a relationship of unity and oneness. It cannot be any other way! Since we are dealing with the 'Elohim Family': the Father and the Son!

That's takes us back to the beginning of this timeline when we were called. Paul is discussing the importance of us walking worthy of the calling that we received. That calling is part of God's intention to reveal Himself to mankind.

To this world and the Church this Body of Jesus Christ is involved in all of that! We're being encouraged—each one of us—ordered to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. It was the Father's calling specifically to each one of us and directly to us.

Verse 2: "With all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

These are not qualities that any human mind or a mind of flesh can generate by itself. These are qualities generated by the new creation, by the spiritual indwelling of Christ working in us. These are not typical, normal human qualities. This is what we must replace! This is the new that replaces the old: loneliness and gentleness in this world today.

Verse 3: "Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one Body and one Spirit, even as you were also called in one hope of your calling" (vs 3-4).

God did not call multiple 'ekklesia' or manmade 'ekkliseas'! we were called to God's 'ekklesia.' One Body!

Verse 5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who *is* over all, and through all, and in you all" (vs 5-6).

These are six very important verses! It implies and underlines the importance of unity and oneness!

In our Church experience, many of us can recall that unity was always spoken of, but unity as we understood it was not correct! Calling, baptism, reconciliation and the unity has to come from the unity of the Spirit dwelling within us.

Since the Church is considered a spiritual organism, this is the unity the Church is to have:

- one Body
- one Spirit

God's calling brings us to baptism, and that aligns us to develop the mind of Christ Who is perfectly aligned with the Father.

That can be a beautiful intellectual exercise, and it sounds so good, but is it a practical realistic exercise as far as our own personal lives are concerned?

This God Family relationship is best portrayed by the human marriage relationship. You can read it in Eph. 5:22-31. As God designed the institution of marriage from the very beginning the two were to become one flesh. That relationship is typified by the relationship of Christ and the Church, the Body of which we are all members.

Ephesians 5:32: "This is a great mystery; but I am speaking in respect to Christ and the Church."

There is to be one spirit as there is one flesh in a marriage relationship with Christ. Whether you want to call it an engagement type relationship, no matter.

There is a full-fledged marriage coming up as well, as we have all learned and understood. It portrays the one flesh of a husband and wife. It portrays one spirit of the member of the God Family! Christ is the Head of the Church, and in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead—the Father and Son relationship!

Christ is the Head of the Church to which we have been so 'lucky' to have been added to. God has a purpose for all of us. He didn't call us haphazardly. He called us for a reason. We may not be able to answer the question as to why, but He called us, each one of us, for a reason.

From this relationship flows the family style of governance. It is an especially important part of our relationship. We must also realize the family style government in the Church will only work if you have members who are prepared to commit themselves as being part of the family. ***It will only work by the indwelling presence of God's Spirit in an individual!*** A willingness on our part to give up the old self and to submit to all that God has to mold, to shape and to work with us.

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” (vs 14-16).

- Is that actually happening? *It should be!*
- Are we actually growing? *We should be!*
- Are we seeking to grow?
- Are we wanting to understand?

or

- Are we looking for loopholes?

These are all questions we can ask ourselves, and make a personal assessment; not judging someone else, but personally assessing yourself.

- Are we committed to being strengthened on the inside? *That life of Christ inside of us!*

Verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

We should be solid in our own mind about where God has placed us, and what He wants us to do and achieve! God has great plans for us all.

- Do you actually believe that God has placed us here?
- Do you believe that God is doing a work through you at this time in preparation for salvation for the entire world being able to comprehend God’s Plan?

With God’s Spirit working within us, we can comprehend these things that the natural mind would never be able to have knowledge of.

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. Now, to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us, **to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, even into the ages of eternity.** Amen” (vs 18-21).

Who is working in these individuals and representing the Father on this earth today?

Unity within the Body of Christ is provided by the unity of the individual components; a very basic concept to understand.

- Do we actually grasp that?
- Do we understand that point?

- Have we seen that in the past?

Unity in the Body of Christ is the unity provided by each one of us, every part, every individual must do their share! We might all have different responsibilities, but we all can contribute to the unity and the oneness of the Church.

Church unity is a personal responsibility. This is the timeline where we start with the calling, and we all come to this point.

Unfortunately, in our past we have not seen this, and the connection we have not totally grasped as we should. This is who we are, individuals called and placed through Christ’s sacrifice and baptism into the Body to provide unity within that Body. Oneness within that Body, building and growing into the image of the One Who created us.

This is who we are ***by the calling that we have received!*** What an awesome concept to perceive! Again, as we have heard so many times in the past, why are we here? This world desperately needs to know the Father, as we all know. Jesus Christ said that He came to reveal the Father. The world does not understand God. They don’t understand Who the Father is. They don’t understand the distinction between the Father and the Son, and how this all comes together. ***We are representatives of Christ and the Father to this world!***

John 10:30: “I and the Father are one.”

John 5:17: “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I work.’”

God the Father and the Son both work! They are creating. The work had not stopped; it’s not in a holding pattern. It is hard to grasp at times, but that is the fact that we must come to realize.

John 4:23: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father is indeed seeking those who worship Him in this manner.”

How is that achieved? ***Through the calling, the baptism and the reconciliation!*** A group of people who can worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth because they are eating of the Bread of Life!

Verse 24: “God *is* spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth.”

John 6:63: “**It is the Spirit that gives Life;** the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, **they are Spirit and they are Life.**”

God is working, Christ is working, and the Church is the focus of that work now. The Church is to become a living witness of the Father just as

Christ was. As we read in Eph. 4 the powerful words of unity. *The unity that represents Spirit and Truth!*

Ephesians 4:7: “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

We were not called because God needed us, because we have something to offer to God. It was *pure grace!* The Father extended His mercy to us!

Verse 8: “For this *very* reason, He says *that* after ascending on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”

It was through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice that “...He led the captivity captive...” The penalty was lifted from our shoulders and we had freedom to come to the Father.

Verse 9: “Now He Who ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He Who descended is the same One Who also ascended above all the heavens so that He might fulfill all things” (vs 9-10).

This is right after these sections of Scripture that we’ve already read, and it’s talking about one Body and that is the united Body. It is intended to fulfill all things through His sacrifice, through the calling of people into His Body “...**that He might fulfill all things.**”

These comments are made regarding the Church having given gifts to all men, taken from this quote:

Psalms 68:19: “Blessed is the LORD; He daily bears our burdens, the God of our salvation. Selah. Our God is the God of salvation; for unto the sovereign Lord belong the issues of death” (vs 19-20). *That’s the gifts He has given us:*

- the freedom from death
- the freedom from sin
- the freedom to worship God in Spirit and Truth

The natural mind doesn’t have that freedom! It can’t! We have that freedom; are we using that freedom?

We know that if we give Satan a hand, he’ll take you right back into captivity. Just because we have been freed does not mean we cannot be taken captive again. That does happen! We snap out of it and we repent, we have that opportunity and we come back closer to God again.

Satan doesn’t want us to exercise that freedom that produces unity, the oneness that represents the Father and the Christ.

God’s great work is to fulfill His Plan of Salvation. Our work is to represent Christ and the Father now as His Plan is being developed. *And it is a work!*

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.**”

I will leave this question for you to answer:

- Is the Church there at this point?
- or**
- Is there still work to be done to get there?
 - Are we there?
 - Are you there?
 - Does your life reflect that?
 - it is a goal
 - it is where we are headed
 - it is where we want to be
 - it is what we want to achieve

That’s the work that God wants us to do!

It is a work in progress that He might fulfill all things! To become more like God!

The importance of the individual calling becomes so much clearer to us.

Ephesians 2:20: “You are being built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being *the* chief Cornerstone in Whom all the building, being conjointly fitted together is increasing into a Holy temple in *the* Lord; in Whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in *the* Spirit” (vs 20-22).

That is a work in progress! A building is built and it’s a very significant building because it involves Jesus Christ at His return. This is for the Household of God. I don’t believe that we, at this time, can say that building has been completed. We’re all fitted together, we have that unity, we are being worked on so that we will fit together with the unified spirit.

For reference, you can read Haggai about the building of God’s Temple. A group of people had been sent to rebuild the Temple. Of course, they got distracted. This is a complete other Bible study that you can possibly do some other time.

They got distracted from the job that was at hand. There were enemies that wanted to stop them from completing the task. But they let down and for 16 years the work languished, it wasn’t being done. So, God sent Haggai to them to give them a good ‘boot in the rear end’ to tell them to get on with the job that they had been given. You can read this in Hag. 1:3-4.

We must have self-determination! With today's society so centered around self and wanting to feel good and put emphasis on ourselves, it becomes very evident that it takes courage to accept the work that is laid at our feet.

It is hard work! And the temptations are there constantly, causing us to find a way around the difficulty of doing that work. We tend to find justification in what we do and it greatly causes deceit many times.

This is what we must fight constantly, each one of us! We should not be sidestepping that building program and start expecting and demanding things from the Church, and 'If I don't get what I believe I should, I'll go elsewhere.' That's what we have to ask ourselves: Why are we here and not there?

Is God's works being accomplished more powerfully in you? *We must accept that challenge! It's time to consider our ways!*

Lamentations 3:40: "**Let us test and examine our ways, and return again to the LORD.**"

We must search out and examine our ways, and we must return to the LORD. That's what *consider* really means. Consider your ways means to search out! Examine our ways and take it to heart.

As we come to the days of Unleavened Bread this is so emphasized. We cannot slough off, we cannot let that happen to us. We've come this far, so we must stay strong and take the challenge! Take it to the heart!

Sometimes it might hurt; sometimes we have to look at ourselves in the mirror and admit that what we're looking at is not that pleasant. But God sees it anyway. Accept that challenge to change that!

Verse 6: "He has made me live in dark places, like those who have long been dead. He has set a fence around me so that I cannot go out; He has made my chain heavy" (vs 6-7).

The building is not being built, so I would like it to be built. What is our personal part in that? Think about that! Actually think about that.

If you had the mind to look for it, to seek it and to hear it, that Spirit that we have will stir up that desire within us all to get on with the building program and not to be building paneled houses:

- the things that are important to us
- the things that make life easier for us

The work that God has given us is a difficult work! It's a hard work! There's nothing harder than

changing what we are! We can acknowledge that at baptism.

Some of you may think what I'm saying today is very negative. But rather consider it as very positive. God is building a building and we have been given the opportunity to be part of it.

- Do we really understand that and appreciate that fact?
- Is God doing a work? *Absolutely, He is!*

There are different aspects of the work, but the work is

- the work of change
- the work of unity
- the work of the Body of Christ becoming one, reflective of the nature of the 'Elohim Family'

This is very important to God, the building of His Temple. We have been called to do a work, and that work is the work of change, unity and of the Body of Christ becoming one, the reflective nature of the 'Elohim Family.'

1-Corinthians 3:8: "Now, he who plants and he who waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward **according to his own labor**"—*not somebody else's!*

There is no responsibility that lies elsewhere, outside of each one of us to which we can appeal. The responsibility is personal, and we must personally accept that responsibility. Do we actually grasp that? *We are responsible!*

Verse 9: "For we are God's fellow workers; and you are God's husbandry, *even* God's building. 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**" (vs 9-10).

- Are we careful?
- Are we taking heed?

or

- Are we looking for compromises?
- Are we looking for the easier way to get around difficulties that are in front of us in this building program, this journey that we are on?

Verse 11: "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble" (vs 11-12).

We know that there's going to be a very trying time. The journey that we're on is not a cakewalk. There's going to be testing to see what

work we have actually done. What work have we personally done?

This is the time to do it, when we have the opportunity. We don't have anybody breathing down our necks threatening persecutions and drawing us off to be thrown to the lions and tigers.

We still have the freedom to do this work, but because we have that freedom and the quietness we sometimes seem to get too comfortable and slack off and have the tendencies to not do it.

Verse 16: "Don't you understand that you are God's Temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the Temple of God, God shall destroy him because the **Temple of God is Holy, which Temple you are**" (vs 16-17).

As we approach another spring Holy Day season, the Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread, let us seriously think about these things. We need to grasp the fulfilling that Christ is doing currently. That He is fulfilling within us, the individuals who are part of the Body of Christ the fullness of the Godhead, bringing us into a relationship with Him.

Unity from a Godly perspective is not just a nice idea. It's not just a nebulous ideal. It is absolutely essential as God creates His eternal Family. The unity of the Father and the Son must be replicated in those whom the Father has called. It is the basis of any Gospel witness that God will take to the world.

Take a look at the Church today. What is the condition of the Church today? *It is in the condition that it is because of the individual components of the Church.* Simple, isn't it? But do we actually grasp that? The individual components—those who comprise the Church—have got to accept and take the responsibility for that.

Just as now I am encouraging us to accept the responsibility to fix it, and if there are flaws to get things back in order where they should be.

John 17:9: "I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and I have been glorified in them" (vs 9-10).

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."

Do we grasp that? *That the world may believe!* That oneness; that unity of the Body of Jesus Christ representing the Father and the Son to

this world! The world as we know it needs to know the Father!

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).

- Do we love God and His benevolent plan for mankind enough to give our lives to Him?
- Rom. 12 talks about becoming a living sacrifice.*
- Do we love God?
 - Do we love the calling that we have received?
 - Do we love the baptism?
 - Do we love the reconciliation enough that we will give ourselves into the hand of God to allow Him to do what He wants done?
 - To present our lives as a living sacrifice so that the world may see the unity of the 'Elohim Family'?

What a glorious time it's going to be when the world finally sees that happen! But remember, the Church has a particularly important part to play.

Psalm 133:1: "**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!**"

- How many times have we heard that in our past experience?
- Do we truly understand it?

The word *unity* comes from the root word *to become one!* A group of people assembled to become one unit! God's 'ekklesia' the Body of Christ, a spiritual organism. The Body of Christ is to be at-one with the Father.

How good and pleasant is that unity? *That is why you and I are here!* That is what we, as individual members of God's Church, are trying to achieve. It is only one part; it's not the whole part, but almost a very critical part indeed! It is the crux originating from the initial calling we received from God the Father the Most High!

Let us take these words and apply them to ourselves before Passover, and let us dwell on the message and remember our goal: we are here for the unity of the Spirit, a unified Body that Christ and God the Father can use for the future. Let us really take this to heart; let us be spiritually unified. It's a must if we are to succeed. Without unity, true Godly love cannot exist. That is what a glorious unified Body is all about. The love of God expressed

through the words of God through us under Christ,
the spiritual unity created within the Body.

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 6:44
- 2) Colossians 1:13, 18
- 3) John 6:44-48, 62-64
- 4) Romans 8:8-11
- 5) Romans 6:4
- 6) 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, 12
- 7) Ephesians 4:16
- 8) 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, 15
- 9) 2 Corinthians 2:14
- 10) Ephesians 4:1-6
- 11) Ephesians 5:32
- 12) Ephesians 3:14-21
- 13) John 10:30
- 14) John 5:17
- 15) John 4:23-24
- 16) John 6:63
- 17) Ephesians 4:7-10
- 18) Psalm 68:19-20
- 19) Ephesians 4:13
- 20) Ephesians 2:20-22
- 21) Lamentations 3:40, 6-7
- 22) 1 Corinthians 3:8-12, 16-17
- 23) John 17:9-10, 21-23
- 24) Psalm 133:1

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Ephesians 5:22-31
- Haggai 1:3-4
- Romans 12

NB:bo
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