

Standing Strong in Faith

(Sermon Notes)

By Warren Zehrung 11/28/2015

I have recently become aware of three faithful men, bold in the faith, rich in service to God's people, faithful to the word of God, and regular speakers at Sabbath services, who have had the wrath of the organization's ministry come down on them, and remove them from the speaking schedule.

When the Worldwide Church of God turned to apostasy after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong, there were many, many brethren who were displaced from one another. We were once held together by a common faith in which most of the ministry supported the mission to teach God's truth and preach the Gospel, at least with lip service. But when heresy swept through the congregations, their true colors came out.

Zechariah 13:7 ...The Lord of hosts saith: **smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:** and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

While God says woe to the shepherds **who do the scattering** of His flock, we can be sure that He is well aware of each and every one of us.

John 6:39 This is the Father's will which has sent me, that of all which He hath given me **I should lose nothing**, but should raise it up again at the last day.

That is very encouraging. The fact that many abused, mistreated and displaced brethren have been scattered does not mean that God has forgotten about a single one of His people. As a general rule, the larger corporate church organizations have somehow convinced themselves that **unless** each member belongs to their group, God has no interest in them. That is not true at all.

In fact, God is allowing these **tests** to come upon His people in order to find out just who **stands strong in the faith**. The purpose of today's sermon is to examine the Scriptures with regard to those who have been **separated** from the bulk of the brethren through no fault of their own. Many have been singled out and divided from their brethren by the power brokers within the larger corporate groups who follow a specific agenda.

I would like to expose some of those improper attitudes. The purpose of this sermon is not to in any way denigrate the larger corporate church organizations, because there are **many faithful** brethren that continue to attend both their services and functions.

However it is necessary to point out that there has become a prevailing belief among many of the leaders of the corporate church organizations that they **alone** are God's representative government on earth. They teach that it is incumbent on each individual to search out which of the many corporate church organizations represents God's **sole** government on earth today, and then be loyal solely to that form of government. This process of elimination in itself brings about a division among the brethren.

Some members stay with a pastor whom they **trust**; some attend with the largest group that is **nearby**, and yet, others seek **doctrinal** truth and practice of the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Division in the body of Christ has been an historical dilemma:

1Corinthians 11:18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be **divisions** among you; and in a sense I believe that.

1Corinthians 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they who are accounted as acceptable [before God] may be made evident among you.

In other words, there is a **sorting out** going on in God's Church so that it will be abundantly clear in the end who stood for God's truth, and who it was that practiced their own form of pretend Christianity for expediency. Paul was addressing the converted brethren among whom there **must not** be division. And yet it existed in that congregation. So that is what Paul was intimating when he said he understood that there was division there.

He was saying that there were those who were attending, but they were not with the program. That is what we are experiencing today. There are those in attendance, members and ministers alike, who are not following the true tenants of the Christianity taught by Jesus Christ.

2Timothy 2:19 ...The Lord knows them that are His.

The reason that I have chosen to speak on this topic today is because the division within God's Church is still being **foisted** on the brethren. Too many brethren assume that the minister and the organization are always in the right. Those who have studied out III John are aware that God shows us that is simply not the case. Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence among the brethren, but he was an ungodly man.

In the same way, in today's congregations there are ministers who act in ungodly ways, purposely **singling** out brethren who are not a part of the 'in crowd' as Diotrephes did. Again, God is allowing this travesty to occur so that those who are **strong in the faith** will be made manifest (1Corinthians 11:19).

It is important that those who are not practicing their faith correctly be shown their error. Jesus Christ is not going to allow this life to pass in ignorance.

Daniel 12:7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to **scatter the power of the holy people**, all these things shall be finished.

Brethren, this is also clearly an end-time proposition: The way ahead of us is difficult. The Beast power and False Prophet:

Daniel 8:24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and **shall destroy the mighty and the holy people**.

What is the Church? When we say 'Church' what do we mean? I received a few responses to today's Countdown to the Return of Jesus Christ – and I wanted to share a few words with you:

This person wrote, "I found a congregation [close enough] to fellowship with. They seemed warm and loving until one day they had secret meetings and split up. I received a call from an elder asking if I would like to go with **their side** and I said that they should have followed the procedure in Matthew 18 and told the matter to the **entire** church so that we could all judge and make a decision as to who was right or wrong. The elder did not agree with this, and to this day I do not know what caused them to split up."

Brethren, in today's sermon we will be looking at Jesus Christ's instructions to us. We will consider how a Christian in these last days – must be "**Standing Strong in Faith**."

Almost all the larger Church groups would concede that the "**Church**" Jesus established at Pentecost is a **spiritual** entity composed of believers who are being led by God's Spirit. The Church is not a humanly devised organization or structure but the **people** with whom God is working.

Please key in on this one single point. The Church is not in Pasadena, Charlotte, Texas, or Milford, Ohio. In today's sermon, whenever I mention "larger church organizations," I will be speaking of church organizations like the Worldwide Church of God, Global, United, COGWA or Living. People have become used to speaking of these corporate organizations as "The Church."

They say things like, “I’ll check with the church.” Or, “The church says...”

Or, “The church is the authority in this matter...” How many times did we hear, “I’ll check with the Pasadena” – or some other headquarters location?

What is the Church? The Biblical definition is that the ‘Church’ is you – **the brethren**. God’s Church is **non-denominational**. We’ve always defined ourselves **correctly** in that way. That means that we recognize that Jesus Christ is the **head** and authority over the Church brethren.

Ephesians 5:23 ... Christ is the head of the Church:

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the Church.

Jesus has only **one** Church. Brethren, how deeply do you believe that Jesus has only **one** Church?

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is **one** Body, and **one** Spirit, even as ye are called in **one** hope of your calling; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is above all, And through all, and in you all.

Let me ask you a question that you need to ponder? Where is the foundation for **so many** competing corporate church groups? Especially when Jesus prayed so many times, “Father, that they may be **one!**”

And how do so many of the corporate church groups come to the conclusion that they are God’s **only** representative on earth? We do not have a human vicar or pope who exercises authority over us. Most religious denominations are set up with an authority that rules over all the local church congregations. The Catholics, Baptists, Anglicans, Evangelicals, Church of England, Church of Christ, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc...

An organization that exercises authority over local church congregations is referred to as a **denomination**. We have always understood that Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18 ...*I will build my Church.*

The word ‘church’ is a translation of the Greek word *Ekklesia*, meaning “a calling out.” *Ekklesia* **never** refers to a building or corporate organization, but always to the chosen **people** called out of the world by God into His assembly—the Church of God. It is very important to understand that when the Bible uses the term ‘church’ it is **never** referring to the headquarters **leadership** of some corporate organization. This fact must be stated clearly because too many ministers continue to call a head office control center “the Church.” It is not!

Recently, there have been a number of situations in the larger church groups where members in good standing have had punitive measures exacted against them. Why are they being punished?

In a moment I will be telling about some **faithful men** in good standing who have been punished and stripped of speaking assignments because of internal conflicts. In today’s sermon I want to give courage and encouragement to those who are being individually singled out by a **heavy handed** ministry whether they are in Living, COGWA or United.

Offences like these should not be taking place among God’s people, but when they do, what is the solution? The question arises as to how offences like these can be rectified. Let’s begin here in the Book of Matthew where Jesus Christ is speaking of the utmost importance of not offending anyone.

Matthew 18:7 *Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but **woe to that man** by whom the offence comes!*

Jesus says, “Do not be the one who causes an offence.” He acknowledges that there will be offences because the world is at odds against the things of God. Jesus, Himself, was continuously persecuted because He stood for God the Father’s Truth. Brethren, it is the same for us today – we will be persecuted for “Standing strong in the Faith.” Do not fear it. Do not shy away from it. Embrace it. It is a Christian’s lot in life. Jesus goes on to explain what great lengths God the Father goes to in order to maintain a reconciled state.

Matthew 18:11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

Matthew 18:12 *How think ye? If a man has an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray?*

Matthew 18:14 *Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

Ministers must be extremely careful not to offend the brethren because God does not wink at that situation. (Acts 17:30-31) We are being judged in righteousness by Jesus Christ right now.

The sad thing is that when ministers castigate, punish or hound faithful men out of the local fellowship, they think that they have won a victory by maintaining the integrity of their corporate organization’s policies. There is a strange and complicated dichotomy in their thinking. It is a non sequitur. They come to a conclusion that does not logically follow from the Scriptures. Those ministers believe that they have to support their headquarters and other ministers – right or wrong – or somehow they will be losing control.

It is a lack of Faith, that God’s way works, and it always works. Paul spelled it out so that no minister could make the mistake of presuming to take **dominion** over the brethren’s faith – for by faith ye stand (2Corinthians 1:24).

A minister is responsible to God for teaching correctly. Brethren, the ministry is not supreme in authority **over** our faith. The ministry does not have control over our faith. Some ministers believe that they do have dominion over the brethren’s faith. They take Hebrews 13 to give them *carte blanche* authority over the members. That is not what Hebrews 13 is saying: Paul is not giving the ministry free reign with the members’ lives when he says:

Hebrews 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account,

A cursory reading seems to imply that Christians must submit unquestioningly or blindly to the minister. But this verse is saying that we brethren should allow ourselves to be taught by Godly men who are actually living up to Jesus Christ’s teachings. Paul is speaking of good responsible ministers. A better translation would be:

Hebrews 13:17 Allow yourselves to be persuaded by your leaders who correctly guide you; they vigilantly care for your souls as men who must fulfill their responsibility [to God]...

The ministry does not have complete freedom to act as they wish because everything they say and do must also be in total accordance with God’s law.

Why are some ministers so dead set against the brethren being true to the leadership of God’s Holy Spirit in their lives? Why won’t they allow members to be true to their own consciences – **led by God’s Holy Spirit**?

Romans 8:14 For as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, they are the sons of God.

Should the minister do all your thinking for you? No! Is a church member to surrender his capacity to discern and judge matters, to the wiles of the ministry? Jesus tells the offended men that they are to go to the offending minister to gain him back as a brother. (Ministers are brethren also – and subject to the teachings of Jesus Christ.)

Matthew 18:15 *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

'go and tell him his fault' - After much prayer and fasting...

If we are not successful in our first heartfelt approach to gain our brother, we are to persevere with one or two more brethren who truly desire reconciliation.

Matthew 18:16 *But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

Brethren, it goes without saying that the *two or three witnesses* be impartial and of impeccable character – because sure as the sun sets in the West – the offended brethren will be accused of stacking the deck by bringing someone who he knows will side with him. If that second attempt at reconciliation fails, the matter must come before the **entire congregation**.

Notice where Jesus says: "Tell it unto the **Church** [Ekklesia]." He does not say, "Tell it to the ministry."

When I was in Global, I brought up this matter at a ministerial conference. I said to the entire ministry – including the top leaders – that the Scripture clearly says "Tell it unto the **Church** [Ekklesia]."

The answer that I received the top leaders was "We've always had the problem brought to us to decide the matter." One minister replied, "It would be too cumbersome and messy to bring the situation before all the people." That corporate church organization was **comfortable** with the status quo. They were uncomfortable doing what Jesus Christ said to do!

The brethren of the congregation are, according to the Scriptures, to possess ownership of the process. How will the congregation ever learn judgment, discernment, and the application of God's law if they are entirely left out of the process and kept in the dark?

The Scripture does **not** read as in James 5:14, "call for the **elders** of the church." But, to tell it unto the **Church** [Ekklesia]." Why? Because the entire congregation is in this endeavor together, and must learn from it.

Matthew 18:17 *And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it** unto the **church**[Ekklesia]: but if he neglect to hear **the church** [Ekklesia], let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

I recently heard a minister from one of the larger church organizations read this Scripture where it says "**tell it** unto the **church**." That minister read this verse as, "**tell it** unto the **church authority**." That is not what the Scripture says – it says to **tell it** unto the **church** – who are the brethren in the congregation.

The third step in the reconciliation process that Jesus gives us is **not** to be adjudicated solely by the ministry at some distant headquarters – but brought before the **entire congregation**.

In 1Corinthians 5, the Bible gives us a perfect example of the entire congregation making the determination in the matter of the man who was sinning with his father's wife. That longtime minister erroneously paraphrased the Scriptures to the brethren that **it was Paul** who delivered that man to Satan...

At Corinth, the congregation was the **offended** party. The congregation was the **witnesses** to the offence. The congregation was being **harm**ed by that man's sin.

Today, the larger church organizations teach that the **ministry** is the final authority in such matters. That is not in accordance with Scripture. And, unfortunately, the brethren lose faith in the process – because it seems that in 9 out of 10 cases when the matter involves a **minister** and one of the brethren, the headquarters ministry will totally **exonerate** their fellow minister to the chagrin of the offended party. That is not the Biblical example.

When ministers attempt to deal with the matter privately, it violates Christ's instruction to tell it to the *Ekklesia* – the called out ones. The brethren will never learn to "heal the breach," when they are left entirely **out** of the process. Paul did **not** make the final determination in the case of the offending sinner at Corinth. Paul taught that the body of believers, the *Ekklesia*, **not** the ministry, was to judge such matters. Paul asked, Do **you** not judge them that are within the Church? (1Corinthians 5:12)

Paul **did not** take the unilateral action upon himself of putting the man out of the congregation. That was not Paul's place to do. Paul deferred to the brethren who were the offended party – right there on the spot. Paul told them that he agreed with them. He told the brethren that they were acting according to the authority Jesus Christ exacted over them. Paul had told the congregation:

1Corinthians 5:4-5 "when **you** are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan...

These heavy handed ministers today have traversed through two, three or four organizations since they first heard the Truth preached and published. Does God follow them around wherever they hang their hat and receive a paycheck?

Again, I have recently become aware of **three** faithful men, bold in the faith, rich in service to God's people, faithful to the word of God, and regular speakers at Sabbath services, who have had the wrath of the organization's ministry come down on them, and remove them from the speaking schedule for not giving homage to the organization's headquarters, or toeing the corporate line close enough to suit the pastor. These are hard working, decent men, converted and faithful men that are being singled out and persecuted.

And unfortunately, there are few who come to their defense – out of fear, intimidation – and in some cases a misunderstanding that the heavy handed ministers have the right and authority to act in a coercive, abusive and brutish manner – if they choose.

In the true sense of the word, these three faithful men are being persecuted and having their good name maligned in their respective congregations. And, brethren, you are familiar with the names of the corporate organization's ministers who are persecuting these faithful men.

Let me share with you, brethren, some of the exchange that has been going on between the ministry and these faithful men. You will see that there are quite a few **logic** and **reasoning** errors, as well as **incorrect** spiritual principles that can be addressed.

When a member goes looking for nutritious food and the shepherd scolds him rather than feeds him, there are questions that need to be asked in regards to the shepherding.

Sermon Comment: Is a member supposed to be reprimanded by the ministry for fellowshiping with other Church of God brethren who attend elsewhere?

One man confided to his local minister that he was continuing to fellowship with other Church of God brethren on the Sabbath once or twice a month as he had been for the last couple years or so.

Sermon Comment: I know this man as one who serves, shares, cares and is open and considerate of brethren – scattered brethren – friends from the past – also. This man had even asked his minister to facilitate some events where the scattered brethren could fellowship together. The longtime minister replied that because he had been missing so many services - he needed an explanation before he could put him back on the speaking schedule. This man had prayed and asked God to guide his response to be honest and respectful to the minister.

Sermon Comment: Brethren, the way that the minister mischaracterized this man seems unconscionable to me.

Some remarks from the heavy handed minster:

The minister responded that he really had no idea that the member was **attending** with other Church of God brethren.

He said that he presumed the other brethren would not attend elsewhere – like it was some unheard of thing.

He said, If I had known you were doing so, you would not have been speaking here.

The minister said that he personally could not understand how the speaker was able to accept the responsibility of speaking before members who come every week to services while allowing himself to attend elsewhere.

Sermon Comment: The minister implies that this is wrong and against God's will to fellowship with other Church of God brethren.

He said, If everyone did what you have been doing, you would end up speaking to only 20 members.

Sermon Comment: Then the minster asked something really out of place:

What minister are you choosing to take **commands** from (2 Thess.)?

Sermon Comment: That minister sees his job description as that of "**commanding**" the brethren!

Then the accusations began:

The minister demanded: Hopefully you will repent of your selfishness, deceitfulness and hypocrisy, asking God to show you your independent and disrespectful spirit.

Sermon Comment: Independent spirit? Independent of whom or what – where does a member's loyalty lie?

Sermon Comment: Disrespectful spirit? Disrespectful of whom?

I'm very disappointed with you. Ask God to show you your spiritual weaknesses.

The offended man: Being appalled, offended and deeply hurt replied to the minister:

The offended man: You have caused me a great offense!

I found your tone to be very abusive, condescending and very disrespectful!

The offended man: You have grossly and unfairly mischaracterized me and you have made false assumptions and conclusions.

The offended man: You have charged me with being: · selfish · deceitful · a hypocrite · In need of repentance for an Independent and disrespectful spirit · and having spiritual weaknesses. And for what??? Because I mention that on occasion I fellowship with other Church of God brethren that don't attend with you? Your whole premise seems to stem from your belief that (your corporation) is the one and only true church of God and that my assembling with anyone else on the Sabbath is tantamount to treason or some form of spiritual adultery. Your own **Corporate Constitution** supports what I am doing:

Your **Corporate Constitution** states under the heading "The Church of God:"

"The Church of God is a spiritual body composed of believers who have and are being led by the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a denomination, a human organization or a building but the people God is working with in any age. The biblical name of the church is the "Church of God." Its mission is to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations and to make disciples of all who respond to God's calling, assisting them in their spiritual development and reconciliation to God.

The offended man: The definition above clearly does not suggest that God is working **with only one group** or human organizations of men. So I ask you again, how is my fellowshiping with God's people that are not a part of (your group) but who do acknowledge people in that group to be brothers and sisters in Christ such a horrible sin to you??? Why do react with so much fear, jealousy, contempt and malice towards God's people?

Since the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God, I have never believed in limiting my fellowship to any one particular group.

Sermon comment: If it was right to fellowship with all the brethren everywhere around the world in the days of the Worldwide Church of God, why is it considered **disloyal** to fellow with the same brethren today?

The offended man: I have maintained close friendships with many people who have continued in the faith yet attend with other groups. I strive to do everything I can to fulfill Christ's fervent desire that His church be united as one body throughout the ages. Five times in the 17th chapter of the book of John Jesus expressed how passionate he was about that.

John 17:20-21 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.

The offended man: I also strive to fulfill these verses:

Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The offended man: I have put my own interests aside to serve the scattered brethren who were looking for ways to continue to fellowship with other church of God brethren despite being separated and scattered by the ministry. I have given countless hours of my time promoting peace and unity. Are these efforts I have made what you consider as me being selfish???

The offended man: Why are you so concerned about numbers???? Is that what is most important to God? If every church of God minister followed the above scriptures and made it a priority to keep the church of God **united** as **one** and esteemed each other better than themselves, then we probably wouldn't be having this conversation.

The offended man: You have charged me with being deceitful. Exactly how do you think I am being deceitful? Have I violated some unspoken commandment that you have that requires me to limit my fellowship with only people who attend your group? I don't recall having to sign any loyalty statement that swears allegiance to your group. Signing any such loyalty statement would be a form of **idolatry**!

The offended man: I have kept the Feast with other Church of God groups and **you are also aware** of that.

The offended man: None of this has been kept a secret from you. I even **invited** you to join in as part of the speakers at one event but you refused. You told me that the speaker, whom you knew would do fine job.

The offended man: So I don't know where this charge of being deceitful comes from. How then am I a hypocrite as you have also charged me?

The offended man: What exactly is this "Independent and disrespectful spirit" that you think I have? Is it because I desire unity and peace and fellowship with **ALL** of God's people and not just with those in your group?

The offended man: Please tell me how I have shown ‘spiritual weakness.’ The bible warns us about how we should not put a limit on those we love:

Matthew 5:46-48 If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

The offended man: Why have you chosen to attack me and level several completely unfounded and outrageous charges against me?

The offended man: Sir, you have given me no choice but to vigorously defend myself. I have done nothing wrong in this regard, and all your accusations have absolutely no merit. There is nothing I need to repent of in this situation and I feel you owe me a sincere **apology**.

The offended man: I come to you in the spirit of Matthew 18 in the hope that this can be resolved quickly and peacefully between the two of us and not have to go beyond that.

I am not perfect but I know I don’t deserve this kind of abuse. I will pray that your conversation will reflect more of the qualities of a true humble, godly servant and the fruits of God’s spirit and godly mercy.

Sermon Comment: Brethren, that was certainly a **heartfelt** and emotional response – straight from the heart.

But here is what the longtime minister had to say in response:

Longtime Minister: I’m even more concerned about your spiritual state than before. You may not realize it, but your answer only confirms what I stated initially. Why does one despise the **correction** that comes **from God**? Why does one bite the hand that feeds them? Because in their mind, they believe they have done nothing wrong or no one has the right to correct them.

Longtime Minister: Is it not a problem that you are functioning spiritually as independent from every group, as you clearly admitted?

Sermon Comment: Let me interject here that the longtime minister is blind to God’s truth. The abused man seeks **unity with all** – not the independence that this minister sees.

Longtime Minister: Is it not a problem that you’ve given no commitment to any church?

Sermon Comment: That is a wrong use of, and definition of ‘**church**’ by the longtime minister. Again, Jesus Christ has only **one** church of which all who are led by God’s Spirit are a part.

Longtime Minister: I know you are fully committed to your own spiritual purposes.

Sermon Comment: This is a jab at the offended and abused man, insinuating selfishness or rebellion.

Longtime Minister: Is it not a problem that you have chosen to answer to no one other than yourself? Do you not realize that Matthew 18 **does not apply** to those who are independent from any group since the final outcome (as you stated “going beyond that”) of Matthew 18 is taking the matter to the church?

Sermon Comment: The longtime minister is very confused here. He has confused himself by substituting “church authorities” in place of the Scriptural, *Ekklesia*, meaning the congregation. Secondly, the offended and abused man is not “independent from any group” as he considers himself to be a member of God’s Church. Thirdly, the longtime minister totally missed the point of the phrase “not have to go beyond that” meaning to bring the matter before the entire congregation. If the longtime minister understood the meaning of Matthew 18:17 he would have understood Jesus’ intent for the sake of reconciliation.

Longtime Minister: **What church** have you chosen to make the final judgment?

Sermon Comment: This minister seems to reject the truth that Jesus has only one church.

Longtime Minister: And don’t you realize that the sin being written about in Matthew 18 is one that, if not repented of, places a person out of the church? In your mind, what one church has the authority to place one out of the body of Christ?

Longtime Minister: Do you not see the selfishness of what you have done over the past few years considering the fact that you now have admitted that since the breakup of WCG you have, in so many words, become independent from every group?

Sermon Comment: There is an accusation of misuse of funds here that is **mean spirited** and therefore left out of this dialog.

Longtime Minister: By your actions, you deceived me! For most of all the years I’ve known you, you have kept the Passover with only one church and attended only one church. That in itself is meaningful. I had no idea that you have attended other Feast sites with other church of God groups.

Sermon Comment: Not true – perhaps he has forgotten past conversations.

Longtime Minister: You have written, “I strive to do everything I can to fulfill Christ’s fervent desire that **His church be united as one body** throughout the ages.”

Sermon Comment: Exactly right!

Longtime Minister: Considering the fact that you don’t believe there is one body that God is dealing with, are you not being hypocritical?

Sermon Comment: The longtime minister obviously does not understand that Christ’s Body is **ONE**, and he thinks that the word ‘church’ means a specific physical corporate organization. The longtime minister, contrary to his corporate constitution, believes that God is dealing **ONLY** with his physical corporate organization. What else could he possibly mean with a statement like this?

Longtime Minister: If the church was to be united throughout all the ages, you’re saying there should only be one church group in every age. Then why are you not promoting one group and why have you taken the stance to be independent from all groups? Shouldn’t unity of one body begin with those who are striving to fulfill Christ’s fervent desire? In other words, should not promoting unity in one body begin with you? If there is not one group, one spirit, one gospel, what are you talking about when you speak of unification?

Sermon Comment: This minister seems to believe that Jesus spoke only of a physical corporate church – and not a spiritual entity. His words are difficult to comment on because of his complete misunderstanding and terrible confusion... There is too much to be able to comment further.

Longtime Minister: In reality, are you not just promoting yourself? You wrote that the church of God has been “scattered by the ministry.” Blaming all ministers. Are you God’s replacement for the ministry? Is God now using you to take up the slack, heal the breach between those—who have different doctrinal beliefs, different spirits, etc.—into the one church, united as one body, that you are praying for?

Longtime Minister: Since you say the ministry is responsible for scattering the singles, you are God's chosen one to unite them? Is that not high-minded? Either you don't know why there has been a scattering or you don't adhere to doctrinal integrity and ministerial morality.

Longtime Minister: Why did you leave WCG? Why did the ministers of (another corporation) allow immorality at the highest levels?

Longtime Minister: Don't you realize that you are guilty of overlooking sin for the sake of your definition of unity?

Does every minister esteem those who are practicing sin as better than themselves?

Longtime Minister: So...God should have esteemed Lucifer-become-adversary as better than Himself and give Lucifer His position for the sake of unity? Are you not mistaken in applying "esteeming...better" in such a fallacious manner?

Longtime Minister: Don't place the entire ministry into one group. You were sitting in the audience when a leader of one group told other ministers to leave if they "don't like it."

Longtime Minister: You want one body—as you should. Simply don't follow the group that caused the problem as they would not be of the right spirit. But commit to the body that isn't scattering the entire membership.

Longtime Minister: Do you **not** realize that **not** attending church, in the context of Hebrews, leads to the unpardonable sin?

Longtime Minister: Based on what you have stated, you are simply promoting "unity with diversity" (basically the paradigm under which WCG was working in 1994). Certainly not unity into one body.

Longtime Minister: Did you know that when you place yourself under the hands of the ministry you recognizing that God has used another who actually has authority over you and cares about your spiritual state of mind?

Longtime Minister: When one is blind they cannot see. I pray you will allow God to open your mind so that you will see and obey. Please humble yourself through prayer and fasting.

Sermon Comment: That is an on-going conversation which has not reached its conclusion...

Brethren, we must have the spiritual discernment to perceive between false and true ministers of Jesus Christ.

In Peter's words, this is what the counterfeit preachers are doing:

2 Peter 2:18-19 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

What does God require of us when, those ministers we look to, have gone astray?

The answer is that we must **stand strong in the faith**.

End: Standing Strong in the Faith