

Sermon Notes

(A basic transcription with modifications for style and clarity)

REVIEW, REFRESH, REAFFIRM

Brian Orchard, December 12, 2015

As you know we had a conference last weekend and today I would like to spend a little time with that. But I'm going to take the opportunity to review and refresh and reaffirm who we are as the Church of God, The Father's Call. So there will be some review today and some refreshing of some of the things we considered at the beginning and a little direction as to where we go forward from here.

Our Father is pleased when His children dwell together in unity and harmony. Psalm 133, you might just glance at that. In verse 1 it tells us:

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

The word "brethren" can be also translated brothers. It's the same word that's used in Genesis 13 referring to Abraham and Lot – members of one family. So it is good when members of one family dwell together in unity.

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments.

Which is a reference to the holy anointing oil used to consecrate holy objects in the temple worship – including Aaron and his sons. One interesting little comment here from the *Commentary on the Old Testament* in this regard is that the temple and priesthood represent "that Israel far and near, is pervaded by one spirit and bound together in unity of spirit." Which is why David uses this particular example in this Psalm. Then it completes the thought:

3 It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing — life forevermore.

This unity of spirit cannot be imposed; it cannot be forced. It must be the product of the working of God's Spirit within each of one us, which leaves us with a very strong sense of personal responsibility when it comes to the unity of the Spirit. That is a responsibility we recognize and that we make a priority.

The reality is that we live our daily lives in an environment that is clearly designed by the god of this world to bring division and disharmony at any attempt of family. And that can be regarded in the social area in general. It can also be referred to in the Church specifically. Satan does not want brethren to dwell together in unity. And we unfortunately today see in the world around us that disintegration of family and the result that comes from that; the disharmony, the disunity that we experience in our world around us.

We cannot ignore the environment in which we live. It does, unfortunately, have an impact. We try to resist it as best we can, but it does have an impact. And so, from time to time, we need to pause and we need to check our orientation; check what is going on inside our minds.

So last weekend we spent time checking the orientation of the form of governance that God has led us to focus on – a governance that is to produce a group of “brothers” (brethren if you will) that are members of one family, “bound together in a unity of spirit”. That was our goal and our purpose.

As you know, we have taken things slowly, maybe to the point of some frustration. But we have taken things slowly, allowing the Living Head of the Church to lead us in understanding how God’s government should work in the Church.

The basic foundation upon which we stand is family-style governance; in particular, the God-family style of governance -- a family that operates according to the will of our Father. I would be the first to admit that it is a work in progress because, as we move forward, what we are considering is a major paradigm shift. And it takes a while for us to get our minds oriented to that paradigm shift.

I would just agree with you all from a personal point of view, it’s not an easy shift to make. Having been in the ministry forty-three years now and being under one particular paradigm for a long period of time, to make this shift sounds easy. To say family-style governance sounds easy. It’s not that easy to actually put into practice; so it takes some work and effort.

I will talk about the incorporation and what it means for us, but first of all I want to review. I want to take a little time to review this very important aspect of governance. And, it was impressed upon me again this week just how important it is that we understand this and embrace it as a personal responsibility.

I was searching for something and I was going back through some old notes. I’m probably the only person here who does a search that doesn’t involve the computer. I came across some old notes from a conference that was given some years ago, a ministerial conference. I found in my notes a lecture that was given on why governance within the Church is not based on the family relationship. Now, I was astounded to go through my notes and read some of the things that I had written down, looking back at it

now from this point in time – why the family has no basis for governance within the Church.

It was stated in this lecture (whether it was stated or I got it from it, it was in my notes) that we are not equal and must fit into an authority structure where one is over the other. So it is important that we address this and we grasp it if we are to have unity of Spirit because governance in the Church is the extension of government in the divine realm into the human realm. And in this Christ is paramount.

If you come to Colossians 1 and in verse 12, breaking into a thought here of Paul, but a very powerful thought when it's broken down into individual components and thought about:

Colossians 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

That in itself is just an incredible statement for us as human beings to embrace and to take on board as to where we stand, why we stand where we are. And it's been given to us by the Father, giving thanks to the Father for the particular situation we're in.

13 He has delivered us (or drawn us out) from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

What an incredible thing for a human being to be able to experience. The world is in darkness. And the world operates by darkness. And God has given us (not because we have anything to offer Him or we are anything in particular) the opportunity to come out of that darkness and to be transferred into a relationship with Him, referred to as the "Kingdom of the Son". Into a relationship:

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

And each statement is a powerful statement that is deeply impressive as to who we are.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Referring, of course, to Jesus Christ here.)

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

This is a description of how a human being comes into a relationship with the Father, brought into a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the body, the Church. And in all things He is to have the preeminence.

Whatever form of governance is in the Church it must result in “that He will have the preeminence”; that Christ will have the preeminence. So the focus on governance as it works in the Church, as we are brought into this relationship giving thanks to the Father for it, brings us with this particular direction and focus towards Jesus Christ.

I’m going to stay with Colossians, but I want to insert Daniel 7 verse 27 just for emphasis. We’ve read here about being conveyed into the Kingdom of His Son and here we see the fullness of it.

Daniel 7:27 Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

The ultimate “conveyance” is into the God-family Kingdom. God is a family – and the Father’s purpose is to add sons to His eternal Spirit family. And the Church serves a role in that purpose.

We are drawn from the darkness of this godless world and transferred into the Kingdom of the Son – who is the Head of the Church. The Church is not the Kingdom, but it is the vehicle through which the fullness of the Father is expressed in reconciling humans to Himself. Note that comment, “the vehicle through which the fullness of the Father is expressed.” You start to understand and appreciate the importance of the Church with some of these scriptures.

Let’s go back to Colossians and continue from where we were. Colossians 1, picking it up in verse 19.

Colossians 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

The point has just been made that Christ is the Head of the body, the Church. Now we’re being told that in Him, in Christ, the fullness should dwell. We know from chapter 2 verse 9 that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is fullness in a relationship through Christ with the Father. And that fullness leads to the family of God, the Kingdom.

20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him (by Christ), whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

And this is a very important aspect of this relationship and it has to be a very important aspect of governance within the Church, within the body of Christ, to help accomplish this.

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight —

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...

If the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, then it must be imperative that each member of the body have full access to Christ. A very, very important relationship. This is where the family nature of governance comes in to play, in assisting the development of each member of the body having full access to Christ.

1 Corinthians 11 verse 1 and (as I said), this is a review process where the apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

That in itself is an interesting comment as to what Paul saw his role being within the Church and towards the Church.

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Which is part of the reason for “imitate me” as he is taking the teachings and the understanding given him through Jesus Christ to the Church.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

This is an important statement because clearly, the marriage relationship connects the heavenly realm to the human realm if Christ is the Head of the man who is the head of the woman. We’re talking here of a marriage relationship and we’re talking about the position of that relationship relative to Christ and to the Father. This is a very important relationship to understand.

Can the marriage relationship be a model for governance in the Church? It’s interesting, and you’ve heard this many times since you’ve attended marriage ceremonies within the Church, that within the Church’s marriage ceremony we have this statement: *“Marriage is a natural union (referring to the physical fact of a man and a woman coming together); it’s a natural union but also a divine institution, ordained by God.”*

Marriage is a divine institution. So when someone who has been *“delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the Son”*, when that person enters into a marriage, they are making a covenant with God. The marriage is an important vehicle for a reconciled relationship with the Father through Christ.

Now, it doesn't take away the individual responsibility, but this is a model. We're looking at a model that God created from the beginning that would assist man to come into a relationship with Him. So marriage is an important vehicle. There is a spiritual element to marriage. It's a divine institution, created by God. It's not just something physical, a natural union that's apart from the divine purpose that God is working out here on earth.

It is a vehicle that allows us to connect from our human level to the divine level, the family of God. And it makes absolute sense that the family of God would be expressed in the human realm in a family way; there is an absolute connection there.

If you read on through the rest of those verses it is about authority, the authority within the relationship of a man and a woman. And it's already set the process here by stating that "the head of every man is Christ." So Christ is not out of the picture here, but there is authority. There is structure here. And it's all designed to lead somebody into a reconciled relationship as we've read about in Colossians.

Now each individual has their own responsibility in their relationship with God. We don't take away from that. It's not like you can't be in a reconciled relationship if you're not married. That's not the point. We're just looking at the pattern that God has set. Has the pattern been messed up? Yes, big time, big time! Because Satan hates the pattern. And Satan does not want human beings to be able to relate to the spiritual realm. And so, speaking from Satan's point of view: marriage has got to be separated from that and then marriage has to be broken down.

Let's go to Ephesians chapter 5, and at this point what I want to do is to add something. And I do this because of the push back that there has been against any concept of the marriage relationship being important, the family relationship being important, in governance in the Church. There are some verses I want to draw your attention to but I'm going to read (and I understand reading can be a little laborious), because I want you to hear this from the source and not from me.

I'm going to be using *A Commentary on Ephesians Based on the Greek New Testament*. Let me assure you when it comes to Greek you need to hear it from somebody else other than me. I want you to hear what the Greek implies. The value I have found in these commentaries is that it takes the Greek and gives substance and meaning to something in a way that I could not do of myself. So in Ephesians 5 verse 1 we read:

***Ephesians 5:1* Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. (Or 'as beloved children' is also a correct translation.)**

Comment: "Having declared that we are to be imitators of God, Paul adds the phrase 'as beloved children'. He is apparently looking at God as the Father and believers as the children in the family of God". (The concept right there is family.) "The

Greek word translated ‘beloved’ refers to those who are the recipients of God’s love.” (Again, that touches on where we began with Colossians.) “It is a title given, not on the basis of what one is but on the basis of who one is.”

So, this a very important concept; “being imitators of God” leads you directly into the family-type of structure.

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

“In this verse the main point is that believers are to continually ‘walk in love’ and he uses Christ’s example to stimulate believers to do so. The Greek word translated ‘walk’ comes from the preposition and the verb and literally means to walk around, walk about, hence, it refers to the way believers live and conduct their lifestyle.”

So ‘walk in love’ is a lifestyle, a way of walking and it spins off from the family of God from verse 1.

Another comment: “Since Christ’s love towards us is used in example of how we are to walk in love, let us examine the manner in which He loved us. Paul says, He gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God unto an odor of a sweet smell. The phrase translated ‘He gave Himself up’ is in the aorist tense and means that at a given point in history He gave Himself over and delivered Himself up to death on the cross. The active voice indicates that He Himself both made and carried out the decision to die on behalf of sinners.” (He made the decision to carry out, of course, the will of the Father.)

But this becomes important when we consider some of the aspects of Paul’s writings here because Christ submitted Himself to the will of the Father. And He submitted Himself to death on behalf of the Church. We’ll read that a little later here in this particular chapter. So that concept of Christ submitting Himself is very, very important. Drop down to verse 15.

15 See then that you walk (and it’s the same walk we saw in verse 2, walk in love) circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

Our lifestyle, which we referenced up here in the walk of love, is to reflect the will of God. Dropping down to verse 20.

20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

This is where it starts to get a little problematic for some. Let me just read again from this commentary:

“The Greek word translated ‘being subordinate’ is derived from the preposition and the verb that means they are to arrange themselves under, to put themselves in an inferior role and be submissive to one another. (We’re talking about governance within the Church and we’re putting our finger here on something that is of vital importance.) The fact that this is a participle means that they are to be subordinate ones, the use of the middle voice indicates that they themselves are to assume this secondary role, and the present tense implies they are to continually live in this manner. Even as this word is used to describe the subordinate relation of the Church to Christ, likewise, the members of the Church are to be subordinate to ‘one another’, each one is to take the initiative in assuming an inferior rank.”

That is an absolute key to governance within the Church. You can force an inferior role. Is that going to produce the spiritual qualities that God is looking for? Or is there going to be greater growth and development if the individual in their converted state (and it comes back to conversion) assumes, takes it as a personal responsibility to assume that inferior role? And if we are truly converted when we’re baptized we are assuming an inferior role. You submit your will, you submit your life in total, to God at baptism. That’s a way, then, to view life.

And so, when we talk about a personal responsibility it can’t be any other way. You can *force* people into an inferior position, but is that going to enforce growth and development and Christ-likeness? We have recent history to be able to say no, not necessarily. We’ve got to do it from within, as was brought out in the sermonette.

If this is going to work, if this is going to go forward, then we have to do this from within each one of us. And we all have a responsibility in this. The attitude is key to governance in the Church.

Now, as we prepared the update that went out to you yesterday, there was some hesitation to use the word “hierarchical” in the update – not because we don’t believe in it as a biblical model, but because it carries baggage. It is a word that has become associated with authoritarianism. And it is the baggage that is the problem, not the word. So we don’t have any hesitation, I don’t have any hesitation to use the word hierarchy. It is the God family; it’s great, it’s of God. But I do understand that it carries baggage and can mean different things to different people.

In Israel the hierarchy that God established set the high priest in a particular function over the people. It is through the high priest that the people were directed to God. He had a very important function. It was a little later that the people said, “We want a king. We don’t like that form of hierarchy. We want a king like the other nations around us.”

They inserted a level in-between the people and the high priest. And you know the story. You read the story of the kings of Israel and Judah and the way things went were relative to how the king went. God did not want them to have a king, He wanted the

focus to be on the high priest, whose job was to direct the people to God. Then, as God wanted something directed back to the people, He conveyed it back to the people through the high priest.

So hierarchy, in itself, is not wrong; but it can be misused and abused. If there is nothing wrong with the principle, then we have got to get rid of the baggage and our practice of family-style government will go a long way toward doing that. We've got to put this into practice to get rid of some of the baggage. The paradigm shift – we've all been through the setting of the paradigm and we've got to get rid of that. It takes time, it takes effort. It doesn't happen overnight.

So, we've used the term hierarchical in the update. We're not going to continue to use it over and over and over. It's implied, it's understood in a family-style of governance. Verse 22 then goes on to say:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

And what is interesting here is one of the reasons I want to read this from the Greek, what is implied by the Greek.

“Note that we have placed the participle being subordinate in parenthesis because it is not repeated but implied in this verse. This is logical when we recognize that verse 21 flowed into verse 22; there was no break between them in the original manuscript, (And so the concept of submitting one to another in the fear of God flows into the structure that we've already seen from 1 Corinthians 11 verse 3; into the marriage relationship) the same verbal adjective expressing what both believers and wives are to do. Even as believers are to subordinate themselves to one another likewise wives are to subordinate themselves to their husbands.”

Dropping down a little:

“Even as all believers are to arrange themselves under the Lord to assume a subservient relation to Him and to occupy a subordinate position in His body; likewise, wives are to voluntarily arrange themselves under their husbands. Subordination to the Headship of Christ is according to absolute Truth – He must be obeyed. Subordination to husbands must align with subordination to Christ.

And we're talking about the model. We're talking about the way God would want it to be. I mentioned hierarchy; what does that mean to different people? It carries baggage. Well, let's be honest. The term family carries baggage. The term father carries baggage. I have had enough discussions over the years with people to know and to appreciate that when we talk about God the Father and we try to portray that in the very loving role that He occupies (a loving, kind and a merciful God, merciful Father), some people have difficulty with that because the term to them carries baggage because of what they have been through with their physical fathers – been through or

not been through. And when we talk about family-style of governance and you might have come from a family that was very distorted, dysfunctional; that concept may not be wholesome to you.

So, we're using terminology where we've got to look to how God intended it to be, not what we've experienced around us. And that takes effort, too, to leave some of those things behind us. But *it is the attitude* that is the predominant thing here. Submitting one to another is not a structure of governance. It is the attitude with which we govern and are governed.

Each one is to take the initiative in assuming an inferior rank. This is spiritual. This flows from baptism, real repentance and conversion. It's something that's not natural to the human mind. And I would say that what we're talking about here, as far as the wives and the husbands are concerned, doesn't come naturally either. The god of this world, with his attitude that he's pumping into the world, doesn't make it natural or easy to do. A wife has to work at that. But even more so, the husband has got to work at his role to allow the wife to assume her role. So there's responsibility up and down the line here. But let's understand: it is attitude.

Now, our discussions this past weekend heavily involved these areas because, let's be frank about it, it really doesn't matter much what the structure of governance is. It's the attitude that is all important. You can make pretty much (I was going to say any structure, maybe I shouldn't be that generous) work, if you've got a group of people who are voluntarily submitting themselves to the Head, Jesus Christ and will work under His guidance and direction. But, we see clearly from scripture that the family-style is a godly form of governance.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

And so, if you look at the role of the husband and you see that he is submissive to Jesus Christ and through Christ to the Father, it's absolutely imperative that the husband not put in the way blockages for his wife's view of Christ and through Christ to the Father. We're talking about the model. We're talking about the way it should be.

I don't suppose any of us as husbands operate that way, but it doesn't take away from the model. We operate according to the way we were raised. Our parents operated according to the way they were raised and so on and so forth. The model is good. And this is where the personal responsibility keeps flowing; that we have got to step up into these roles that are not natural to us, that require conversion and require the Spirit of God for them to function and to function well.

And that conversion is an ongoing relationship between ourselves and Christ. We started it at baptism, but it had better be going on today as well as it has been for

however long you've been baptized. It's an ongoing thing as long as we are human beings.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Christ submitted Himself to death on behalf of the Church. Husbands, what are we prepared to submit ourselves to on behalf of our wife and our family? These things flow on down. I'm drawing your attention to this and saying Christ submitted Himself because "submitting one to another in the fear of God" does not destroy structure. It does not destroy authority. Rather, it enhances it. And of course, that's one of the criticisms. "How can I be boss and in charge if I have to submit to somebody that's under me?" It's an attitude.

And the husband submits to the wife from the point of view of lifting her up in a relationship with Christ; guiding her, directing her, setting the example, making it a positive environment for the wife and the children to develop that relationship. That is submitting one to another. It doesn't do away with the headship of the husband, as we've already read.

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

That's what we want in our family relationships. It's what we want for governance in the Church. We want people to be connected more deeply, spiritually with Jesus Christ.

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. (These two things are so intertwined. And it's a beautiful, beautiful role model.)

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (And this is where it becomes spiritual.)

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Christ and the Church and the way things are to function within this particular body and keeping in mind what we've already read about in Colossians as a lead-in to this. The result of governance in the Church must be Colossians 2 and verse 19.

Colossians 2:19 ...holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Governance within the Church is to promote growth, development of a reconciled, restored relationship of an individual with Christ and through Christ to the Father. That's what it is in the Church for and that's what it is to do; help people grow and develop and strengthen their relationship with the Father.

So let's go back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians and see what led up to this. I could have arranged this perhaps a little differently, but I chose to do it this way. In looking at this again, we are rehearsing something we've already gone over. But, the more I do this the more excited I get about the concepts that are in here, not less excited; I don't get bored with this. And I was inspired to think we probably need to go through Ephesians verse by verse. Because the end result of the book of Ephesians is the Church; the strengthening of the structure, the operation of the Church. Now you see this at the end of chapter 1.

Ephesians 1:22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And it's through the Church, it is through the body that the fullness of the Father is expressed. The connection is to the Father. Then further in chapter 2 we come on down to the household of God. The last four verses there in chapter 2 are specifically addressing the Church and the temple and the spiritual relationship. I want to come down into chapter 3 and begin in verse 8, because that sets the theme. Paul hasn't gone off in a tangent. He's still addressing the Church. And here in verse 8 he says:

Ephesians 3: 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints,

Does Paul have an attitude of submitting himself one to another in the fear of God? It certainly would appear so, but does that take away Paul's authority? Because in other places Paul says, "I am an apostle of Jesus Christ" because he had to assert that to a Church that was having problems and difficulties to get across the teaching and the emphasis that he needed. Here he says:

...whom am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, (and so it's bringing the Gentiles into the context of the Church)

9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Now this fellowship of the mystery, the word is up in verse 2. It's called dispensation. It's the same word. It can be called stewardship of the mystery

...which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

So something is here. He's talking about the Church, that's the context. He's developing something here of understanding of the importance of the Church. And he says, and this is an incredible statement in verse 10:

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

It says, quite directly that principalities and powers in the heavenly places are learning something about God's plan and purpose through observing what God is revealing to the Church. Again let me return to this commentary for verses 8 and 9.

"Even though we quite thoroughly discussed the meaning of the Greek word translated "dispensation" in verse two, where it was associated with the grace of God, it is still important that we deal with it here in conjunction with the word mystery. This word does not have inherent in it the concept of time, but its meaning is enacted in time. It basically means a house-law, hence, the management, administration, arrangement, and economy of a house. In actual usage the idea of house has tended to drop off in favor of the meaning administration, dispensation, arrangement, and economy.

The Truth which God has given for this present Church age is the mystery. This Truth covers the span of time from the beginning to the closing of the Church age. It determines how God manages, administers, and governs the affairs of His Church. The Truth of the mystery, which is the Truth for the Church, controls the present Church economy and gives a pattern for operation."

I thought that was powerful. It gives a pattern for operation and through the operation of the Church! Principalities and powers in heavenly places are gaining a greater understanding of God's purpose and God's plan. That is incredible! That God is revealing to His Church a pattern that the heavenly bodies, the beings, are watching God reveal and work with His Church. They're learning more and more about what God's plan is through the Church, through the functioning of the Church

11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

And His eternal purpose is to create a family! His eternal purpose is to have sons in His eternal spirit family.

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

There's just the simple flow of logic here in terms of family from the divine God family, the Father and the Son family, into the human realm. So when it comes to governance in the body of Christ why would we draw a line and separate governance in the heavenly realm with governance in the, well, let's say the spiritual human realm, the Church? It's just logical that it flows on. The whole family in heaven and in earth is named.

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

Building in each individual that's a part of the body, a son. A son that He can change into spirit at the return of Jesus Christ.

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height —

And as you comprehend that, principalities and powers in heavenly places are learning. And no doubt, as they see that, you've got twenty-four elders whose job is to surround the throne of God and sing praises to God. And as they're watching the development of God's plan and purpose through His Church. No doubt there would be a great deal of singing of praise and rejoicing to God.

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

That is what we want to strive to achieve, the fullness of the Father within the Church and within our relationships.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

There's a very important purpose for the existence of the Church. The Church is a spiritual organism and if we allow worldly elements of governance to come into the Church, the power of the spiritual will be diminished. If we take worldly concepts of leadership and bring them into the Church, if we take worldly concepts of family and bring them into the Church something will be lacking. The spiritual will be diminished.

What we strive for (and this is a huge goal) is that the spiritual raising and lifting of all of God's people onto a higher spiritual level of a relationship with the Father. That's our goal, that's our purpose, that's what we strive for. And of course, in that it has to come from the Spirit of God but it's got to come from the Spirit in the inner man of each person. We've got to grasp that. Like I say, it's a huge paradigm shift.

And, I will speak personally having been through all these various things over the years, the authoritarian form of government is the easiest. Having somebody tell you what to do and you saying, "Yes sir" is the easiest form of governance. This is difficult because it puts the responsibility back on each individual member of the body. You must carry it as must anybody else who has responsibilities within the body. You must carry that responsibility.

During the course of this past year we have changed our legal structure from an association to an incorporated entity. The association was set up and registered by Steve Andrews and his work and efforts to get us up and running during that very difficult period of time have been appreciated. However, after seeking guidance and counsel over an extended period of time, it was decided that the Church would be best served if we officially incorporated. The corporation is recognized as a Church, organized exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 501c3, which you can check online anytime you wish.

We know that some have concerns in regard to incorporation. And you know that we had concerns because we said so. We were very concerned as to whether incorporation would lead into the model that we had seen that we wanted to get away from. And so we have been very cautious in allowing God to lead us, Christ to show us what He wanted within His Church.

We finally arrived at a point where we could see how we could make the family governance within the Church work under an incorporated entity. Because some of the advice that we received was very, very strong in the direction that we needed more liability protection than what an association could provide. Which may not mean much to you but if you were on the Board of Directors it means a lot. We need liability protection. And it does provide greater levels of protection for us.

Steve Andrews is currently focused on other things and is not a part of our ongoing administration.

Now, what I want to direct your attention to and rehearse just some of this are the Bylaws that we have incorporated because our meeting last weekend was, in part, to take the Bylaws that already been accepted and already been incorporated and see how we're going to make that work.

Now, if you want to read the Bylaws they have been posted on the website. You go to the 'Welcome' tab and under the 'Welcome' tab you will find the Bylaws. If you have

trouble sleeping look up the Bylaws, read them. It's a legal document but it does reveal what we feel is the direction.

Now, there is a Preamble to the Bylaws which is an excellent summary. I won't read the entirety of that. I just want to bring your attention to some of this and you can check it yourselves later. So, in the section under Preamble to the Bylaws:

"The head of the Church is Jesus Christ. No human being(s) can or should seek to place themselves in that position or attempt to insert themselves between the Church and Jesus Christ in any attempt to block or hinder that spiritual authority and governance structure set up by God the Father." (I think that's pretty clear.) Any governing body ordained and created on the earth to make decisions, set and alter Church doctrine, carry on administrative responsibilities, or perform any other physical duties on behalf of the Church, is subordinate to Jesus Christ. (Period) The governing body of the Church is directly responsible to the spiritual head of the Church in all things and must yield to the spiritual direction of Jesus Christ."

And what we have, as you saw in the update, we have two bodies working together. As soon as I say two you can assume that could become problematic. This is not doctrine. I'm just going to say Satan loves the number two. He hates the number one.

So, we've got two bodies here. We have a governing body which is the Council of Elders. And we have a body that is called the Business Management Team that conducts the day to day physical work of the Church. But since we've got two entities we've got the potential for problem. This is where the things that I've already talked about come into play – "submitting one to another in the fear of God." It's how these two work together that is going to be paramount. Back to the Preamble:

"The governing body of the Church must function above and independent of any administrative positions designated by corporate legal form and put in place to comply with California law. (So we give a nod in the direction of the incorporation as far as the legal entity is concerned. But we see a higher level. That is the spiritual level.) The required administrative positions are in place solely to conduct the duties set forth in the Bylaws and carry out the physical administrative duties on behalf of the Church. The scriptural instructions contained in God's Word supersede any and all Bylaws established for the form, duties, and responsibilities of any physical corporate entity." (And these Bylaws can be changed if, through experience, we see, you read what we've written there in the Bylaws, if we see anything needs to be changed we can and we will change it. Back to the Preamble)

"Decisions made by the governing body will be unanimous. This model of spiritual consensus is in accordance with the spiritual nature of the Church and is supported by scripture, specifically Acts 15. Matters coming before the governing body must be agreed upon by all members or the matter must be tabled until differences are resolved

or it becomes apparent that matter coming before the governing body is ill-advised, untimely, or not suitable for further consideration, at that time...Voting by members of the governing body is not considered appropriate and will not be included as part of the spiritual consensus process.

I want to put your fears to rest here. We do not vote! There will be no voting. Let me give you an example. This past Monday after the conference of the weekend, the Board of Directors, the Council of Elders (That term is synonymous to please the state of California. We don't think of ourselves as a Board of Directors. We think of ourselves as a Council of Elders.) The four that were on that Council were together physically in one place, in my home. We had a matter that needed some direction, a spiritual matter brought to us by a member of the Church. We sat down, the four of us, and we knew in advance it was coming so we had time to say study the scriptures on this and read this and be prepared so we all came together and we examined the scriptures and we talked about it and we all drew in what might be particular issues or problems. We thought about this, we thought about that. We discussed it.

And in the end I simply looked around at each one and I said, we said what the answer should be. Are we all in agreement? One, two, three. We didn't vote. Yes, we were all in agreement. That's the way it will work. It won't be a two-thirds/one-third majority. It's always difficult with four people to get a two-thirds/one-third. But that's the way it went in the past. It went from a spiritual consensus, which I had no problems with at that time, very quickly to a political consensus.

There will be no voting. There will not be any political consensus. It will be a spiritual consensus led by Jesus Christ.

In Acts 6 verses 1 through 5 we see a pattern. I said we've got two groups.

Acts 6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

So there we see two groups, one with the spiritual responsibilities and one with the physical responsibilities at their direction. Now there is a linkage between these two groups so they don't operate completely independent of each other. The senior pastor who is on the Council of Elders will also be on the Business Management Committee

providing a linkage between the two groups so that they're not totally separate from each other, provide a channel of communication backwards and forwards between the two groups.

Now, brethren, we are moving in a new direction and the possibilities are challenging and exciting. This get together last weekend was directed toward the implementation of the principles contained in our bylaws. We had agreed on the approach when the bylaws were adopted now we have to work to implement. In doing so we desire to raise our approach and operation onto a higher level. If I may remind you of the sermon last week by Mr. Veal; "A More Excellent Way." That's our goal, that's what we will strive to do.

Now last weekend we discussed two main areas. Obviously from what I've said that is one of the main areas. But the other area is simply what I will call the website development. Our main tool for doing any work is the internet. That's just the way it is today and that is where we are. That's a tool that has been given to us. With the limitations we have as a group there's somethings we just cannot do and to be honest, don't really feel we should do at this particular time. We're going to focus on the internet.

Two years ago we committed ourselves to feeding the flock. Given where we were and what was going on we committed ourselves to feeding the flock. That remains an important focus. It remains an important focus because we see the example of the apostle Paul of preaching the gospel to the Church. You might want to look at Philippians 2 verse 19. This is interesting, at least I found it interesting where Paul is writing to the Church in Philippi and he's writing about Timothy. It's an interesting relationship between these two.

***Philippians 2:19* But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.**

20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. (So, he's talking very specifically about the care of the Church.)

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. (So some of the issues we face in the Church are not new. The apostle Paul faced them, obviously.)

22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

It's just interesting terminology given what we're talking about here, "as a son with his father." They worked together as a father and son. It acknowledged Paul's authority, which he had. And I'm sure Timothy had no problem acknowledging his

authority. But they worked together to preach the gospel to the Church. They were obviously in need of it because “all were seeking their own.”

And given the condition of the Church today, preaching the gospel to the Church is an optimum. It's important! It must not be underrated. I'm not saying and I haven't said we won't preach the gospel any other way. It's got to start somewhere and the flock need to be fed. And we have committed ourselves to that.

We are looking to upgrade how we do that using the internet. We are looking to build a platform to improve the streaming of services so that what we produce from the streaming of services will be upgraded into the website. This platform will also be used to develop a superior service (allow me to put it that way) in other places as well.

We have struggled and you know we have struggled. We've gone to certain places where our services have failed because of the internet connection. The Wi-Fi has let us down. Pentecost last year was an example of that. It was all set up, it was tested. It was ready to go. We were using the hotel Wi-Fi. Services started and suddenly maybe somebody, dozen other people in the hotel decided to get onto Wi-Fi and it crashed our band width and we were unable to get the video uploaded. So we've had those problems. So we want a platform that is going to be built that will allow us to improve that, to improve our internet. There are certain goals we've listed that we needed and internet connection is one of them.

Last weekend we took the opportunity to have Ulysses Ronquillo and John Prohs come and address us and to give us ideas and thoughts of how we can do that. Excellent, excellent presentation. I didn't understand a word Ulysses said but it was an excellent presentation. It was technical. He's a technical person and he's talking about very technical things. I was just impressed even if I didn't understand. The two of them together work together extremely well and we're going to look at how we can develop this.

Now, we've been very tentative in these areas. To be honest, we've been tentative for good reasons. Firstly as we started it was called zooming, remember? We didn't know what we were doing. I'm sort of speaking generally on behalf of a lot of other people here but it was general acknowledged. We had to learn something that was brand new. We're trying to be fiscally responsible. As we began we didn't know what we had to work with. We were trying to be responsible and we were trying to learn. We now feel that we're at a place where a more professional approach can be and should be developed.

I said we had challenges, right? New direction, great possibilities and they're also challenges. Here's an example of it. This has been submitted by one of the members of the Business Management Team.

In 1900 the average life expectancy was 48 years. Today it is 78 years. In the past there were only three generations in the Church. The oldest generation made the decisions and the younger adults raised the children until they grew into the older generation's place. Change was slow and organic with very little disruption.

Today we have five generations in the Church. Now at the Feast we have a family photograph of four generations. If we're going to make five my mother-in-law is going to have to stay alive and my grandkids are going to have to get on the ball rather quickly. There are four generations of our family in the Church. *Today we have five generations: The Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, the Millennials and the Centennials. That just about covers everybody in this room one way or another. Each generation has their own approach and we can no longer address the concerns of just one group. It's not that the younger generations don't care about the Truth, it is that they approach it differently and their communication patterns are different.*

The fact is that we respond to the Truth and to the world around us based on the ideas of our own generation. Consequently we miss opportunities to connect with others because we tend to approach people from our point of view exclusively. Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 9 that we can't do that. And you might want to read that. Paul said, "I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some." And we want to look at that and see how we can broaden our communication.

Our web site is the primary method we have to communicate to the world at large. And that is in our sites. We understand the need to preach to the Church. It starts there but as we go on now we're going to develop a more professional approach and begin to separate some of these items that will be more Church oriented from some that are more generally oriented. And develop as we go forward and have Christ show us how He wants the gospel preached to the world at large.

We accept that responsibility. We just don't know exactly how to do it at this point in time. But there's a large enough responsibility to preach the gospel to the Church and learn in the process how to present a more professional item for both cases. We have to learn to create an educational experience there that appeals to all five generations. Right now we predominantly communicate with our Sabbath messages.

Over the next year we need to learn to break those apart and leverage them to engage a wider variety of peoples. In some cases we will need to re-record them and present them in segments. And some of our original sermons of two years ago would do well to be redone, reworked and repeated with some of this focus in mind. And some of the sermons can be broken down in segments in various ways to do this

While long and comprehensive articles may appeal to some, the vast majority of people today want smaller and easily digestible ideas to think about. Those need to be created. Over the next year we would like to create landing pages to specific topics that

have quick overviews of the ideas presented there along with short videos or podcasts. There will be of course links to longer and more detailed articles and messages to those interested in digging deeper.

I would just like to add my own personal comment to that. Whilst I agree with all of that I would also like to remind ourselves that no person can come to Christ except the Father draw him. Yes, we need to be wise, we need to be smart in how we craft our message. But we are not looking to go and get people to come and join us. We're looking to effectively preach the gospel. And unless the Father draws somebody there's nothing we can do. But we shouldn't sit back and do nothing and say it's all the Father's responsibility. Paul didn't do that. And we're not going to do that.

So, our focus last weekend was very heavily on roles. What are our roles? Now, we have within the Business Management Team, we have a president, we have a secretary and we have a treasurer which sounds all very official except they don't mean what the state of California thinks they mean. We have placated the state by having those titles. We were required to have them.

But it's the role, what is the role of a president that is important? Keeping in mind where we've already been, submitting one to another in the fear of God we have a Council of Elders. And we have a support function like we read there in the book of Acts. And this will work if we will have the attitude that we've read about out of the book of Ephesians today. If we don't it won't work. If we start to want position, start to put one over another, start to want to have our – whatever stated role – acknowledged as supreme over another it won't work.

It will work if we submit one to another in the fear of God. And it will work if you will take on the personal responsibility of submitting one to another. Because this group has the opportunity to represent unity of spirit. We're not looking everywhere else (and I know there's some misunderstandings) let me assure you, we're not looking to go out and get other organizations and push them together or draw them to us. We're not looking to do that. We can't do that. And I don't think that's the role God has given us.

We provide a fold that the Shepherd can bring His sheep to if He wants. The members are scattered and there are members that have been hurting and if we can provide good food, clean water (Ezekiel chapter 34) that's our role. And if God wants to bring people, fine. We're not looking to merge with anybody else. We're not looking to bring other organizations into us. But we are wanting to lower the boundaries and the barriers between the various peoples and be friendly and to express the Spirit of God – kindness and meekness, easily entreated – all those qualities of God's Holy Spirit. So we will be friendly.

Last night my family and I had the opportunity to have dinner with the head of one of these groups and his son. Very pleasant, very pleasant. Did we talk about merging

together, that we want them to come to us or he wanted us to go to them? No we did not. We want a cordial relationship.

I have told you before COGWA has been asking for me to go back again to Dallas, to their headquarters. I will do that. Not to join, not to merge, not to do anything other than be godly brothers and just show a willingness to be open towards our brothers. So please understand, we have a responsibility, that we have strong responsibility here. We must never allow a layer of human organization get in between the Living Head of the Church, Jesus Christ and the body, which the Father has drawn to Him. We must not allow that to happen. Government in God's Church exists to facilitate the reconciliation and restoration of relationships with Christ and the Father. That is our focus.

So, what I have addressed here today in some detail and weekly update helps in that area of governance. I'd like to conclude with Philippians 2 verses 1 through 5 because Paul is appealing to the Church in Philippi for unity and he gives a particular model for that unity.

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, (if there is any encouragement it can also be translated in Christ) if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Psalms 133, brothers dwelling together in unity. That's a responsibility we all have within the body of Christ.

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind (There it is again.) in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Can we do that between ourselves? Can we focus on that and regard each other in that manner?

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (and finally)

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

It's a challenge. It's a huge challenge to make this work. And again, terminology – family governance, it sounds good. And when you get down to the nitty gritty of making this work, within the two governing bodies that I've referred to today, you've pretty much got those five layers of generations. So communication between us is critical. It's an important, very important factor and it's not that easy to communicate effectively. It's very easy to communicate misunderstandings.

So this is going to be very difficult work. We need your prayers. We need your support and we need your encouragement for this very difficult road that we've set ourselves to follow. But with Jesus Christ as the Living Head of this Church and the power of the Holy Spirit flowing we can accomplish brethren who dwell together in unity.