

That They May Be One

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 6/29/2019

I gave this same sermon on March 8, 2003 in San Antonio, Texas at a small ministerial conference. It was broadcast live on the internet, and especially to Chile and Peru in South America. Unfortunately, it was not recorded. It is time to give it again. King David spoke on the subject of God's people dwelling together in unity.

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

The night before Jesus died, He focused on His desire that God's people dwelling together in unity. But, a terrible thing is going on in the Church of God. We are no longer able to dwell together in unity. We are no longer able to go to the Feast with all of our friends and brethren. Families and friendships have been broken up. It is deplorable, the way friends and brethren have gone in opposite directions.

How many "friendships" in the Church were like the **morning dew** – which vanishes with the first hint of summer heat? Our Christian love for one another should have withstood any storm if our **hearts had truly been woven together.**

Colossians 2:2 That their **hearts** might be comforted, being **knit together** in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.

Where is the evidence of that kind of Godly love? Large numbers of God's people have **little** or nothing to do with God's people in other groups. Too many of our brothers and sisters have given up any hope of a far-reaching fellowship. Daniel said that the power of the holy people will be shattered and scattered at the very end time. What has happened to the Church of God? God is not pleased. Let's go back to that fateful night 2,000 years ago when Jesus had less than 24 hours to live.

The apostle John recorded a portion of Jesus' formal prayer to His Father. Jesus must have shared these intimate moments with His Father – with John after His resurrection – in the forty days before His ascension into heaven: We are told in Acts 1:3 that Jesus shewed Himself alive to the apostles (among others) after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them **forty days**, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God: Jesus shared His personal conversation/prayer with His Father – with John who wrote it down – word for word – so that it might be shared with us. It is as though we are able to listen in:

John 17:1 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Jesus glorified his Father by bestowing honor, praise, and worship upon His Father – and by His life's works. We are privileged to witness the reciprocal relationship that Jesus enjoyed with His Father. They enjoy a perfect give-and-take exchange between them. Jesus glorified His Father by His perfect life and sacrifice... And the Father glorified His Son by raising Him from the dead and restoring Him to Godly Glory – and by highly exalting Him (Philippians 2:7-9)

John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gave me to do.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, **you glorify me** with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

The Father elevated Jesus back to heavenly glory. Remember, that Jesus had set aside His heavenly glory to become a man (Philippians 2:7-9). Brethren, I want you to take notice of how very much you and I, and all our Church brethren were **on Christ's mind** that night.

Jesus was not moaning and groaning about the terrible horrors He was about to suffer. No. Jesus was worried about us.

John 17:9 **I pray for them:** I pray not for the world, but for **them** which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

Jesus knew that the True Brethren – would also **bring glory** to Him.

John 17:10 And all mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am **glorified in them**.

There is an interesting point here that I want to bring out: Jesus is revealing that in the same way He is in this give-and-take reciprocal arrangement with His Father – The Church brethren are also in this reciprocal arrangement of bringing glory and receiving glory.

John 17:10 ... I am **glorified in them** – The Church brethren **bring me glory**.

Brethren, I hope you understand the perfect **unity** that exists between Jesus and His Father. There is never any disagreement or conflict between them. They love one another perfectly. They always work together in perfect harmony and agreement with each other.

John 10:30 I and my Father **are one**.

Jesus reveals the Father – that we might know Him. The Father raised Jesus from the dead – that we might live. Jesus stressed the **oneness** and **unity** that exists between Him and His Father. They serve one another... They help one another...

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom you have given me, **that they may be one**, as we are *one*. [#1]

There is the first time we see the **title** of the sermon. Jesus says that there is perfect unity between Him and His Father. He also says that He desires this same **perfect unity** between the Church brethren. So, the question becomes: is there reciprocal love - a perfect give-and-take interchange between Church brethren? Who is my brother? **ALL** who are led by the Spirit of God are our brethren – wherever they are right now.

Corporate organizations **cannot** negate a responsibility God has given us. There is **no Scripture** that allows for organizations to divide and go their separate ways. Unity is required, and unity comes only when we have a right relationship with God and man. Most of the brethren would openly admit that, "There are Spirit led Christians in **all** the groups." What then, prevents our "fellowship of the Spirit" with likeminded brethren?

There is to be a **oneness** among all of God's people. I serve you – you serve me. I help you into the Kingdom of God – you help me into the Kingdom of God. We will see that the basis of **unity and oneness** is a genuine care and deep concern for the complete well-being of **all** the brethren. Unity requires nothing less than putting our very lives on the line for the sake of each other. Oneness demands a Christian love for our neighbor. Sadly, as a church, we have missed the mark.

There is to be a **oneness** among all of God's people. I encourage you – you encourage me. God's way is not a one sided relationship where one person does all the **giving and serving** and the other does all the **receiving**. God desires a two-way love and brotherhood between the brethren. Do we love and serve others – even when we don't feel like it?

We are in training for the Millennial service with Jesus Christ. We are in training to be shepherds and teachers.

Isaiah 30:20-21 ... thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, **This is the way, walk ye in it**, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

If we have not learned to love and serve others now – we **will not qualify** to show others the way in the Millennium! The Church of God is the training ground for the World Tomorrow. Jesus tells His Father that He is praying that **we make the cut!**

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for **them also** [that's us] which shall believe on me through their word;

John 17:21 That **they all may be one** [#2]; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that **they also may be one** [#3] in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:22 And the **glory** which you gave me I have given them; **that they may be one**, even as **we are one**: [4th time]

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that **they may be made** perfect in **one** [#5]; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world.

John 17:25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

John 17:26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

On the night before He died, Jesus Christ prayed to the Father for the **unity** of the brethren. We've always had a saying in the Church of God that when something is mentioned **three times** in the Bible – it was for **emphasis** – and... When God says something **three times** in no uncertain terms it carries great weight. Let me ask you the question, brethren:

When we hear Jesus beseech His Father **five times**, that His fervent desire is **That the Church Brethren be One in Unity** – How much should we take it to heart. Five times, in His intense prayer, He expressed His petition for our unity – not only a unity of the Apostles – but also of our unity – those who would follow. A "death-bed" request is of the utmost importance and significance.

Why did Jesus desire that true Christians be unified? Please notice the significant repetition of the phrase, "that they may be one" in Jesus' prayer. But what do we find today? Pick any large city... We find three or four groups who for decades **refuse** to meet together **in unity** for Sabbath services...

And each of those groups have an **unwritten list** of Church brethren who are not welcome to attend – under any circumstance. So, **though** they hear Jesus Christ’s words, “**That They May Be One,**” they apply it very selectively – in fact discriminating against – and ruling out **many** who are led by God’s Holy Spirit.

How can they possibly **justify** that behavior in light of God’s word? When they stand before Jesus to give an answer for themselves, how will they explain themselves?

Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:12 So then **every one of us** shall give account of himself to God.

As individual members of the Body of Christ, how can we avoid the condemnation that will come upon those who seek to have a following after themselves – as Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence among them – did?

Are we blind to the fact that what is prominently going on in the Churches of God today is the **sin of Diotrephes**?

That would make a good second title to today’s sermon – the “**sin of Diotrephes**”

Why do you think God included this episode in the Bible? These are some of the last words the apostle John wrote?

3John 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence among them, receives us not.

An apostle of Jesus Christ was not welcomed at church services!

3John 1:10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and **forbids** them that would, and **casts** them out of the church.

Brethren, how is that any different from what we find widely in God’s Church today? As individual members of God’s Church, what are we to do **that their sin** is not on our head?

3John 1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Cross the lines! Reach out. Show Jesus that you do desire... **That They May Be One!** Don’t wait for their funeral – that’s too late to make amends. Brethren should share a unity with one another, and help each other into the Kingdom of God. Somehow, even in our scattered condition, true Christians must be on the same page, **spiritually** speaking. We must be of a mind wherein we recognize **one another** as brethren – without **reserve**. When Jesus looks down from His throne in heaven, He sees only **one Body** of believers who share a **unity of the Spirit**. We must understand that the Church of God is not a physical entity – but a spiritual entity.

The “Church of God” is the Body of true believers that God the Father has called to be the **unified** Body of Christ.

1Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.

Paul writes from God's point of view, but the question is this... Is **unity of the Spirit** also our point of view as to how we should be behaving? Let’s look at it in God’s word:

Ephesians 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Forbearing one another in love - That means patiently putting up with each other.

Ephesians 4:3 Endeavoring to keep the **unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:4 There is **One Body**, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Ephesians 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

1Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be **no divisions** among you; but that ye be **perfectly joined** together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Let's look at the attitude we must have towards those brethren in other groups:

Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Paul repeats what we saw in Ephesians a moment ago. We must be patiently putting up with each other – or it will not work.

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, you do the same and forgive.

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on Godly love, which is the bond of perfection.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God **rule in your hearts**, to the which also ye are called in one Body; and be ye thankful.

That is what is **absent** in God's churches today - the peace of God... And it is not **ruling in our hearts**... And that's a shame – because for that reason we were called in one Body – the Body of Christ. But, what do we find?

We are **scattered** all over the place—and it is not right! Jesus is the head of His body - His Church – and converted Christians are individual parts of His Body, the one Church of God (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus Christ has only one Body – thus, He has only one Church. We see this again and again in the Scriptures—the "Body of Christ" is the **one** Church of God (Colossians 1:24). The Body of Christ is the **one** Church of God.

We have been given the inestimable blessing of being a part of God's true Church. The Scriptures are clear – Christ's Body [the brethren] must relate to one another **in unity** as an integral whole.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function:

God is saying that you were called into His Church to provide what others **lack**. You have something that they need – and it is a sin not to be there for them. We will see this exact **responsibility of ours** again in just a moment in 1Corinthians...

And they have what you desperately need – and how will you receive it – if you remain scattered?

Romans 12:5 So we, being many, are **one** Body in Christ, and every one members of one another.

Each member of the Body of Christ has a responsibility to live according to the rules of the Kingdom of God – now – at this time. We are to put into practice the way of life that Jesus taught and lived Himself. As individual members of His Body, we are to live as He lived.

1Corinthians 12:25 That there should be no schism [there should be no **division**] in the Body; but that the members should have the **same care one for another**.

It is interesting to think about how the individual members of the Body of Christ depend spiritually on each other. We will see that **everyone is needed and necessary** – there are no spare parts in God's Church. When anyone is missing – the Body of Christ is left in a crippled state. **Everyone is needed** because of the personal **spiritual gifts** which fulfill different functions of the Body. One of the main lessons of Christianity is this:

As members of the Body of Christ, **we all need each other**, just as our physical bodies need all its parts to work in unison properly. You cannot walk if a **foot** is missing. Why do we understand that so well – and not its **spiritual** counterpart?

1Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit **withal**.

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone **for the profit of all the brethren**. Instead of a **foot**, Paul begins to give some **spiritual** examples of parts of the Body...

1Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of **wisdom**; to another the word of **knowledge** by the same Spirit; ...**Faith, discernment, languages**, etc.

1Corinthians 12:12-13 For as the Body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one Body, being many, are one Body: so also is Christ. By one Spirit are we all baptized into **one Body**.

Brethren, time to act is running out! That's a warning to us! God is **sorting out** those who will be faithful to Him. It is sad that too many of the brethren are **fearful** that if they sympathize with brethren from other Church of God congregations, they will be chastised for it. They have been deceived into following a **spirit of division**, instead of what is written in God's word.

You might say, "Well, **it's just not my thing** to reach out to the brethren in those other churches – though we used to keep Passover together and wash one another's feet."

That is the spirit of fear.

God cannot use the **fearful** in the Millennium to teach others. God has His list of those who will not make it into His Kingdom in Revelation 21:8. Notice who is listed **first** on the **'useless'** list.

Revelation 21:8 But the **fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Make it a point to fellowship with those brethren **who are not fearful**. I know that some are **too far gone** and have set themselves in stone. We are told to make a distinction. If they are a part of the Church of God – there are **some** there who are still of the Body of Christ.

Twenty years ago I had a lot of hope that **church leaders** would bury the hatchet – settle their differences, and make peace – and come back together. But, it hasn't happened – and a few **leading men** gone to their graves already. They are going to have egg on their face when they stand before Christ. Is this concept of **That they May Be One** that difficult to grasp? In Jude 19, Jude starts off by recognizing that some are **too far gone**.

Jude 1:19 These be they who **separate themselves**, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Jude 1:20 **But you, beloved**, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the [*agape*] **love of God**, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

I'm glad that it is translated correctly there, **love of God**, and not *charity*. This is a salvational matter – Note!

Jude 1:21 **Keep yourselves** in the **love of God**, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ **unto eternal life**.

Jude 1:22 And of some have compassion, **making a difference**, making a **distinction**: Don't set out trying to save everyone – that's too ambitious...

James 5:20 Let him know, that he which turns around [a single] sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Jude 1:23 And others save with fear, **pulling them out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Pulling them out of the fire shows that they too are in imminent danger if they are not willing to **accept others** – just like we are in danger if we do not act. Ask God to give you the courage to send a **card** or an **email, phone** them up – make it easy for them to overcome their fear. Continue to reach out to those brethren who worship God in sincerity and truth – wherever you find them – because that is where God is. Continue to open your heart and home to them while ignoring the artificial boundaries of the political corporate groups.

When Jesus Christ returns, it will be those who are striving for the **unity of the Spirit** who will be His resurrected Saints. Unless we, the Church of God, pull together in unity – we have failed in the commission God has given us. God intends for the **unity and oneness** of His Church to be an example to the world!

Not only are we to be **One** with God – but we are to be **one** with each other. Imagine if we could bring about a unification in attitude, direction and fellowship of the brethren, especially as we find ourselves separated by the imaginary walls of worldly administrations.

Yes, from our perspective it seems improbable that God's people will come together in one specific fellowship – and yet it is imperative that the saints of God achieve a unity and oneness that transcends organizational lines.

God's Church is not a **place** to look for – it is a **people** who **exhibit unity and love** for all. God commands all the brethren to be "one" with all who are called of God at this time and led of the same Spirit. We are certainly not living up to this clear instruction.

Scripture unequivocally states that within God's Church we must exist in unity and oneness.

The widespread scattering that exists today is not in furtherance of the Gospel. The division we are experiencing is destructive to the Body of Christ.

We have come to a time when we **claim** "fellowship of the Spirit" while justifying our separation from other Christians. Organization is necessary – it is not wrong in and of itself. Somebody has to put the Feast together, provide halls Sabbath services, publish the Truth, help to administer third tithe, etc. It is when "organization" begins to supplant the honor, obedience, veneration and reverence **due only to God** that it becomes inappropriate.

The **purpose** of unity and oneness in the Church of God, according to Jesus, is to send a **message** to the world. What is that message? Jesus says that the reason the Church of God must maintain and exhibit **unity and oneness** is so that **the world may believe!**"

Let's go back and look at that Scripture again and see what our **responsibility** is:

John 17:21 That **they all may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that **they also may be one** in us: that **the world may believe** that thou hast sent me.

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that **they may be made** perfect in **one**; and that **the world may know** that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John 13:35 Jesus said, By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye **have love one to another**.

"Oneness" is obviously intended by Jesus Christ to apply here and now – how else could it be an example to this present evil world. We are missing out two ways – the world is not noticing our unity – and we are not doing what God expects of us.

We have our work cut out for us.

End: **That They May Be One**