

Maturing Spiritually

(Transcript)

By Warren Zehrung – 5/24/2014

Why do the larger political groups ridicule those who are holding on to the truth once delivered to the saints? The Apostle Paul sometimes had to defend his apostleship against false apostles, deceitful workers. There were those who denied that he was truly an apostle.

2 Corinthians 11:

5 For I suppose I was not one whit behind the very chief apostles.

6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me... [especially these who are]

13 For such are false apostles and deceitful workers.

Today, we also find it appropriate to defend the fact that we are a part of God's True Church. We were attacked for not going along with the **excesses of the bigger churches** about four years ago and now the attacks are being **renewed**.

They are claiming that the small scattered brethren who meet for Sabbath services in private homes are **not a part** of God's Church.

We will look into the Word of God and follow the examples we find there.

The first big attack that I'm aware of came out in the form of an article on the Sabbath titled, "Should I Attend the **Living Room Church of God?**" It was intended to be a derogatory comment and the article starts off sarcastically:

"Tired of wasting time driving to church? Or talking to people who really aren't any better than you are? Shouldn't you be relaxing on the Sabbath like God says?

That kind of language is close to blasphemy—by twisting God's truth

"Welcome to the LR-COG (Living Room Church of God), where all you need is a **laptop**, a talking **head**, four walls, and a **bag of chips**."

In other words, those who aren't attending with the bigger groups are flippant, casual and disrespectful to God's Sabbath. Then the author characterizes us as **not really wanting** to keep the Sabbath.

"Oh, I don't really feel like going to that today. I think I'll just stay home."

Notice brethren, the **accusatory** nature of this attack on us:

"There have always been people who **try to wrangle** their way out of assembling every Sabbath, like God commands—it's nothing new. When there are people—then, there are excuses."

Notice brethren that those who ridicule us like this — claim that we are not a part of God's Church:

"But what about those people who willingly choose to go it alone? Can they really isolate themselves **from the church** and survive?"

Their **premise** is that they are the church—and we are not.

This next quote from the article that puts-down the Church-in-home brethren is **true**:

"God built His church (His spiritual family) for a reason: to build each other up, and ultimately get everyone into His kingdom."

The implication of the article however, is that the big corporate church organizations are edifying the brethren—while the Church-in-home brethren are keeping people out of God's Kingdom. ...Also **true** in this article is this statement:

"Why does God even want us to assemble in the first place? One of the main reasons is to "build each other up". Being with our spiritual family stirs up good works and helps us grow spiritually (Hebrews 10:24-25)."

However, I would like to ask the question again—I've asked it before:

When was the last time you encountered the members of the big organizations assembling together **for the very purpose** of exhorting one another, and provoking one another unto love and to good works?

I submit to you that that is **not** how the Sabbath is primarily kept by the bigger groups.

In fact—more and more of the true brethren are awakening to the fact that there is a **distinct lack of Godly love** exhibited at those Sabbath meetings:

Here is another excerpt from the article ridiculing the Church-in-home brethren.

I want you to notice, Brethren, how easily this article allows the big corporate organizations the liberty of having a "**few things wrong**."

"Jesus attended church despite corruption. You think your church has **a few things wrong** with it? Things were ridiculously corrupted in Christ's time—doctrines, practices, religious leaders, everything. The whole synagogue was run by hypocrites! But He still went to the place of public worship."

Now they are impugning Jesus for going along with the corruption –and saying nothing. They are accusing Jesus Christ of going along with the sins of the Pharisees –and doing nothing about it.

That is not the case!

What is left out of this diatribe against the Church-in-home brethren — is Jesus' response to the "**Few things wrong**." (Like they should be overlooked and just go with the flow.)

No, Jesus' life's work was to point out what was wrong with that Pharisaical political religious movement - and supply God's **righteous way of life** - Christianity - an entirely opposite approach from the religiosity of His day and ours.

Brethren you cannot knowingly go along with something wrong with impunity.

Leviticus 5:

1 And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.

Today, I'd like to answer the question: "Is it **safer** to attend with the **big political church groups** – or not?" Is it wrong to meet **with** Church-in-home brethren?

Acts 5:

42 Daily in the temple, and **in every house**, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Romans 16:

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus...

5 Likewise greet the **Church that is in their house**.

Philemon 1

2 To our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the **Church in thy house**:

Acts 20:

20 I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from **house to house**.

Acts 16:

13 On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a **riverside**, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted there.

After the baptism and conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch—he did not return to a large congregation in Ethiopia—because there were none.

We have brethren in the Church today who were called by God before there was a single congregation in their entire state—and yet they were a part of God's true Church. True Church people came from everywhere to attend the Feast in those early days of the Radio Church of God— and they did not have congregations back in their areas to return to—and yet—they too were true Church of God brethren.

The point of that article is: If you have gone to a big church and sang a few songs – been preached to, and visited your friends – you have properly kept the Sabbath Holy...

And if you did what the Church in home groups are doing – it is not pleasing to God!

We are counting up to Pentecost.

We have always recognized the New Testament Pentecost as the birthday of the Church of God—the beginning of the newly called out ones.

Title: **Maturing Spiritually**

Pentecost also portrays the spiritual maturation process that the brethren experience as they go on to perfection — **let us press on to spiritual maturity** (Hebrews 6:1).

Counting up to Pentecost is an indication that we are to go on to perfection.

The counting of seven weeks of days up to Pentecost is analogous to the called out one's—the *ekklesia's*—Christian maturation process in preparation for the resurrection. 7X7 = perfection.

God's purpose in the calling of saints into His Church is that they grow up and succeed spiritually where ancient Israel failed before.

The New Testament Church of God came into being on the day of Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some first century brethren were called by the Father and became Children of God on that very day. We would say that they became, "Church members."

God's Spirit was poured out on them for a very special purpose—that purpose was the establishment of the Church of God.

There were **no** buildings, and **no** organizations, only **people** who had received the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Today, the bigger church organizations declare that the smaller church-at-home groups are **not** really Churches of God at all.

That is because one of the things they learned in WCG was that on Sabbath you went to a “real church hall” that had 600 – 800 chairs set up where a preacher would tell you all you needed to know.

Unfortunately, that is what some people are still looking for.

I want you to turn to a scripture in the New Testament that shows that weekly Sabbath services consist of large congregations in every town with a pulpit at the front and a headquarters dictating what is to be played in all the congregations so that some particular leader or leaders are held in the lime-light.

There are not any Scriptures like that!

And yet – that is exactly what so many people are still looking for nearly 30 years since HWA died.

The clear biblical example is that individual congregations were taught to be **spiritually dependent** from any remote leadership's headquarters. They were taught to take the responsibility in hand — in their local congregations — and to work at **independently** administering God's perfect way — autonomously in their local congregations.

Consider the example of Paul in instructing the local congregation at Corinth to put sin out of their midst — in order to keep the congregation Holy unto the Lord.

Paul desired to see the congregation become **spiritually mature** enough to handle their own affairs in a biblical way.

That kind of **spiritual maturity** is considered **rebellious** by today's corporate organizations.

There is a third world leadership mentality that insists on keeping people subservient, dependent and reliant on its heavy-handed rule of law.

It is not a Godly concept to never take the gumption to deal with a local problem according to God's biblical examples.

One of the great failings of the Worldwide Church of God is that the brethren in the many, many congregations were not adequately trained and instructed in how to love one another according to biblical principles.

Godly love does not just come to pass out of the blue! Godly love is spiritual and eternal – it originates with God. It is God who first makes it possible for us to love Him. John points this out for the Church, and he is quick to add that in the process of coming to love God – brotherly love cannot be omitted.

1 John 4:

19 We love [God], because He first loved us.

20 If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

The Love of God must mature — it must grow to Perfection.

To find the Church that Jesus Christ built, do not look for a group with great numbers. Jesus said,

Luke 12:

32 Fear not, **little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Why aren't our brethren being taught the biblical laws with regard to:

Genetic Foods: We are set for **manmade** disaster.

Abortion: It is murder — plain and simple — an abomination in God's sight.

Lesbianism: Why so much suicide and emotional anguish?

Why aren't the big political groups "Crying aloud with their **resources** — and not sparing — not reservedly holding back — as they are doing? Why aren't they using their **resources** and big voices?

Muslims: Name Muhammad plan of extinction—"Push at North." This political correctness of denying their nationalistic aggressiveness is soon to end in pervasive bloodshed.

Daniel 11:

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

Education: It is going down the tubes.

Blatant Homosexuality: Why so much deadly disease and lack of a stable life.

Bisexual: The acceptance of every conceivable act of Animalistic behavior and bestiality.

Where are the voices telling God's people that **tattooing** their bodies — so that they look like a Persian rug — is something that God does not permit.

Transgender: Perverted transvestites — ruining their brains and searing their consciences so that they will never be usable to society.

Gangs: LA, Chicago, Detroit, NY

Global Warming: It is the removal of God's hedge of protection—and outpouring of His blessings of which we have become accustomed.

Climate Change: It is about the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 — the blessings are being removed because of our overt rejection of God.

Amos 4:

7 Also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

Marriage: The sanctity of Godly marriages and the family: The basis of a nation's foundation.

God's financial laws: When will the bubble pop? When that last puff goes into an overinflated balloon.

DNA Manipulation: We are on the verge of unleashing uncontrollable deadly viruses.

We are now in the Laodicean era—the last era of the Church— where a number of the larger political corporate organizations are focusing their efforts on growing their association numbers.

In their effort to — not rock the boat — to be politically correct — the big political church organizations are propagating and disseminating a false Gospel that is designed to appeal to the masses. Be like the Protestants and get the **numbers** up — that is the only thing that is important to them.

...Not Godly justice, mercy, faithfulness, equity, Godly love and forgiveness... — those are not considered in the administration of their severe controlling rule.

Godliness in those political church organizations is **set aside** for expediency. It is no different in the large political church organizations than in the pagan jungle world of, “Might makes right.”

1 John 4:

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.

And there are **new** Hapless and helpless **young** ministers who are caught up in that quagmire of perversity and do not know how to escape. Hapless—because they are **miserably** caught up in something bigger than themselves—they are unfortunately unable to handle the **circumstance** in which **they find** themselves.

Too often they become little Napoleons who think that because of WHO they are working for—they are empowered to run rough-shod over the brethren.

They do not know the admonition of Galatians 6:1—to consider himself, lest he also be tempted – and carried away with their dissimulation by willingly **perverting** the facts (Galatians 2:13).

These **young** ministers cannot escape because they have been taught since their conception in the church to defer to the headquarters leadership’s tactics — rather than to look to the God of the bible and His perfect way and law.

These young newly ordained ministers cannot see how they are being manipulated and misused.

Matthew 10:

28 And **fear not** them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear [God] which is able to destroy both soul and body in the grave.

Their leaders — whom they have been taught to trust implicitly — have created an unbiblical church environment with arbitrary rules in order to justify and conceal their own abuse of power.

And so they are in a “catch-22” — a dilemma or difficult circumstance from which there is no escape because of mutually conflicting or dependent conditions — a paradoxical situation from which an individual cannot escape because of contradictory rules.

These young ministers want to do what headquarters—and they want to do what God says—but **they are two different things!**

It is job, security, headquarters says, defer to headquarters — and they are never able to step out in Faith and do what God says.

That is why Jesus said Godly **Faith** on earth was disappearing day by day - and what little **faith** there is on earth will be sequestered off to the Place of Safety just before Christ returns - leaving a **Faithless** earth.

We should **not** expect to find abundant faith just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, **nor** should we anticipate finding **faith** among many of God's people caught up within the same dilemma in which the young ministers have been shanghaied through.

Over the last decade we have seen a terrible erosion of faith. It seems clear from the following Scripture that there will be a scarcity of faith - even among the Brethren.

Luke 18:

8 Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

One of the brethren responded to this week's Countdown to the Return of Jesus Christ.

"I can only hope and pray that others hear the message and wake up before it is too late. I fear that God's people as a group have let down and are trusting the men in charge to make their decisions for them. They may think they have it made by just showing up each week to see their friends in the church hall. Those people have come to believe that meeting and assembling in a church hall is the absolute only way to keep the Sabbath correctly. But again the question they should be asking themselves is: Why am I here and what should I be doing?

I received another response from an elder in God's Church to this week's Countdown to the Return of Jesus Christ.

"Thanks for this message. We have known for many years that the New Testament example was **house-churches**, not controlling corporations with class systems.

"We have also felt that since the downfall of WCG, God has been calling brethren out of the **corporate control mentality** back into smaller groups or house churches.

"We are praying that many more brethren — who are currently attending corporate groups will wake up and come to know that the **WCG model** simply does not work."

Another elder in God's Church responded:

"Warren, Once again you have hit the nail squarely on the head! Too bad there are **so many** who do not understand that simple message. Thanks for all your work and inspiration, Your Brother in Christ..."

Here is the dilemma we face, brethren:

Those are our brothers and sisters in Christ that have been caught up in that **tsunami** of **deception** and Godless control.

Our brethren in those big "safe" corporations can no longer see the Truth of God—because of all the distractions.

Brethren, let me be perfectly clear: There is **no** safety found by sitting in a big congregation.

Their leading ministers are trying to **defend the indefensible** proposition — that those in power have the rule.

In fact, we must be doubly cautious when sitting in a **big congregation** not to enable those who are asleep there...

We certainly do not wish to give the appearance of **promoting**, endorsing, or supporting the political leadership that has lost its way.

If it looks like we are joyfully going along with all the programs of the **political** church authorities—we encourage the **weak** brethren to accept their destructive agenda.

Susie Q would be saying I'm still in the big church because I'm watching Buddy, and Buddy could say the same thing... and a whole bunch are staying because "everyone can't be wrong."

It would be like resisting getting into one of Titanic's life boats as the ship sank because you didn't want to bring bad publicity to the Cunard Line shipping company.

We are responsible to give a right example to others.

God warns us not to **offend the weak** brethren.

We cannot sit idly by while our brethren are swept away to their destruction.

End: Maturing Spiritually