

# Kiss The Calf

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 3/22/2014

Brethren, we are in Laodicean times when the greater part of the Church has let down... Jesus is outside knocking... We should all want to scream, "Wake up and smell the roses!" What is it about us Laodiceans that is so displeasing to God?

Our forefathers had a lot of trouble with idolatry. In the Old Testament, idolatry was a constant problem. Is idolatry a big problem in God's church today?

The ancient nation of Israel lost their home in the promised land and were carried away into captivity because of their **idolatry** and Sabbath breaking. Idolatry is the worship and devotion of idols, images, or anything in place of God. It is the worship of false gods. It is the wrong prioritization, excessive attachment or veneration of anything. Idolatry robs God of His preeminence.

Is there any chance that we usurp God's name and authority, and claim to be His agents when, in reality, we are actually furthering our own agendas – and if fact **kiss the calf**? The truth is, idolatry is just as much alive and active today as it has ever been. Here's the problem; for God's Church, led by His Spirit - idolatry is fatal.

Some corporate church organizations have fallen back into the same idolatrous trap of putting loyalty to men and organizations ahead of loyalty to God. We need to recognize that there is a great deal of idolatry within the greater churches of God. Every time that we do not put God first in what we are doing – anytime that we are not looking directly to God – we are guilty of idolatry.

Our brethren in the big political corporate organizations think that everything is peachy keen. Oh they realize that things aren't what they once were – but after all they say – there is nowhere else to go??? They have not learned Christianity – but they have learned that you are supposed to attend with a large group. The Scriptures say nothing about having to belong to a large group.

And, they are satisfied to draw a line in the sand (which has come to mean nothing these days.) Trinity... Sunday Worship... Pork chops... No Ten Commandments... That is not going to happen this time.

From time to time I try to point out where all this is headed. When I run across a blatant example of a problem that clearly demonstrates the mindset of those men who are leading God's people astray – I try to elucidate that evidence. I wish to illuminate the trend that is destroying the Truth – if only the brethren have the **eyes to see**. The brethren in this last church era cannot see how far off they have drifted – because of their **blindness**.

**Revelation 3:**

**17** You do not know how blind you are...

**18** ... **anoint thine eyes** with eye salve, that thou may see.

Somewhere in the course of things obedience to God has gotten lost.

...being true to the Bible – has become passé.

...Loyalty to God has been forgotten.

...taking a stand for what is right – is no longer important.

**Matthew 24:**

**12** Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold.

...Reverence for Godly things has become old-fashioned.

...laying down our lives for another – has been forgotten.

Christianity today is measured by loyalty to one's organization. Faithfulness is determined by allegiance to those in charge. It would almost be comical if it were not for the fact that it is so tragic...

Ministers hop from one organization to another with their faithful groupies following them wherever they go. Groupies are people who regularly follow around a pop music group or other celebrity. We are to be more than groupies – we are the Children of God.

People follow a favorite minister – rather than reverence what God's Word says. When ministers leave one group for another group – they expect their loyal groupies to go with them – wherever they go.

It's true! When what was the largest break-away group to leave Worldwide formed in 1995 – they fully expected their people to follow them – hat in hand – without any explanation as to what their new doctrinal beliefs would be. And the people followed them... even though most of their ministers had never raised a single objection to the Tkachs' heresies.

I believe that everyone within earshot of my voice knows that things will not go well for those brethren with a Laodicean attitude. It should go without saying that in these Laodicean times we would want to do everything possible not to have a Laodicean attitude.

I understand that most of the people in the different church organizations refer to themselves and Philadelphians – because – that is what they want to be. But wishing to be Philadelphians, and actually being Philadelphians are two different things.

Philadelphians possess brotherly love – and none of the large groups who claim to be Philadelphians actually reach out in brotherly love and acceptance to the other church organizations and brethren. It is all talk – trite expressions. It is all platitudes and sentiments – without any substance.

One of the best ways to get kicked out of most of the bigger organizations is to let it be known that you are openly fellowshipping with members from another church group.

When we stand before Jesus Christ and give account of ourselves, He is going to ask us for hard evidence of our brotherly love. Saying, "I have love in my heart for all men," like the Protestants do – is not going to cut it!

### **Romans 14:**

**10** But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought 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.

Let's set the stage for where I'm going today. You all know the story. Aaron would explain to Moses - I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf. The bull was worshiped in ancient Egypt.

### **Exodus 32:**

**1** And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.

### **Exodus 32:**

**4** And [Aaron] received [the gold] at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a **molten calf**: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

### **Exodus 32:**

**6** And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to **play**.

This "play" in verse :6 was an immoral religious orgy – before the calf - like the Egyptians engaged in.

Why did the Israelites worship a calf-idol? It seems preposterous to us – doesn't it? In Egypt the Israelites had been exposed to pagan gods. Without God in the picture the Israelites often reverted back to the base things of the world. They would **kiss the calf** – a barefaced act of **idolatry**.

They revered the idol instead of the true God. God intends that we come to understand His supreme sovereignty.

Let's jump ahead almost 500 years later! We will see that this **calf worship** was endemic in the Israelitish mindset.

**1 Kings 12:**

**28** Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two **calves of gold**, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

God continually saved Israel – only to see them fall back into idolatry. If we had been there, we would have done the exact same thing. Throughout the period of the Kings in Israel's history bull – calf - steer worship was prevalent. They worshipped the calf – they doted over it – they **Kissed the calf**.

You are all aware that the Roman Catholic Church is a main bastion of paganism today. When I was a young Catholic at Maryhill Seminary -- I was taught to **kiss the feet** on a crucifix and relics, etc... medals and scapulars. There is a large bronze stature of Simon Magus at St. Peter's in Rome. Catholics kiss the foot of the supposed St. Peter. Over the centuries they have kissed half the foot away!

I kissed Bishop Charles P. Greco's ring – meaning that I was loyal and subservient to him and would do his bidding. That is a vow I had to renounce before being baptized in God's Church.

The Catholic priests bows and kisses the altar at mass. It is a Pagan practice, kissing the hand or the thumb. A kiss is given as a sign of submission and homage. In western culture we don't do this this kind kissing very much.

President Obama bows to Saudi Arabia's king, to China's president, and to Japan's emperor as a sign of recognition, submission and homage. Picture a man bowing down to the golden calf that Aaron made in the wilderness.

The calf represented strength, power, muscle, virility and fertility - and a host of forceful attributes. The gentiles live by an ungodly philosophy might makes right – or survival of the fittest – it is the opposite of the way of God. Who looks out for the weak and the fatherless?

**Zechariah 4:**

**6** ... Not by **might**, nor by **power**, but by my [Holy] Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

We are to worship God only in Spirit and truth. Without God in the picture the Israelites often reverted back to the base things of the world. They would **kiss the calf** – and adopt the ways of this evil world. They gave homage to their pagan idols by bowing and kissing the calves.

**Hosea 13:**

**1** When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in **Baal**, he died.

The **title** of the sermon is from Hosea 13:2

**Hosea 13:**

**2** And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice **kiss the calves**.

**Kiss the calves** meant to give obeisance, deferential respect, worship, adoration, veneration, honor, homage, reverence, deference, and submission to an idol. Baal is represented as a bull or calf in the Old Testament. Remember how God told Elijah that there were 7000 who had not **kissed** Baal?

**1 Kings 19:**

**18** Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto **Baal**, and every mouth which hath not **kissed** him.

We hardly ever hear of idolatry being mentioned in the Church of God today. Some think that all the idolatry today is in the Catholic Church with all their statues. Could it be that the sin of idolatry, which was so pervasive in the Old Testament, doesn't apply so much to the True Church of God at this time?

Or, brethren, could it be that we are looking in all the wrong places? Could we be fooled into thinking that we are putting God first, when in reality, we are telling Him to take a back seat to our other pursuits? That is putting God in second place.

There was an **incident** that has been playing out over the last few weeks – that should demonstrate to us how Idolatry manifests itself in the Church of God today. It is taking place in the new corporate organization that formed as a result of political infighting that split the largest group out there into two factions.

All of the big political church corporate organizations are having serious problems because their governmental structures were set up in the wrong way to begin with.

The **incident** began when a one of the men in the congregation gave a sermon on "**Brotherly Love**."

**Brotherly Love** – that is a good thing! – because that's what is missing in the Laodicean brethren. We need to hear about brotherly love.

**Luke 10:**

**25** ...Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

**26** He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

**27** And he answering said, Thou shalt **love** the **Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and **thy neighbor as thyself**.

**Mark 12:**

**31** And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. **There is none other commandment greater than these.**

So we see it was a good thing that brethren in the latest big corporate organization to form heard a sermon on brotherly love.

But what was not emphasized enough was the aspects of **who** and **where** the ones to be loved – are.

It was not clear in the sermon that this “Love” should be bestowed on those in the **other** church groups.

The Pastor there gives lip service to other groups – but he seems to want everyone to believe that his group is the **only true church** and there is no excuse for not attending with them... exclusively.

The True Church of God is **not** any political corporate organization of men that call themselves the “Church of God.” But, the big groups teach their members to be exclusivists. They all teach a form of: “Our group is the preferred church organization.” Brethren, that’s wrong – but it is a fact. All the big groups want to be # 1.

Brethren, the True Church of God is **one Body** regardless of whether its members are part of a political corporate organization or not. The True Church of God is a **spiritual entity** – it has no address.

And so the question came up: **Is it enough** to love only those in your church group – where it is safe to enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie? The Bible teaches that we cannot be restrictive with regard to those for whom we show love.

**Luke 6:**

**32** For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

**33** And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

And so, one of the men in that newly formed group thought it wise and good to say – **who** a Christian should love and **where** those people were.

In other words – is it sufficient to love only those in your group (As could easily be surmised by those who had heard the sermon on “Brotherly Love.”) or must Christians love all the brethren who are led by God’s Holy Spirit?

**1 John 3:**

**14** We know that we have passed from **death** unto **life**, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother **abides** in death.

Brethren this is a matter of salvation – it is that serious. God says Life or Death! It could not be clearer!

There cannot be **barriers of separation** by corporate organizations that separate the love of the brethren from one another. To do so means death!

And so, this brave man set out to give his sermonette on "Esteeming Our Brother Better than Ourselves for the sake of Unity."

He began by referring to the previous week's sermon on brotherly love,.. saying that his sermonette was a good follow up to the sermon we had last Sabbath.

He stated, "I want to look at the perspective of how we look at other church of God members who **are outside of our own particular organization**."

"Do we sincerely believe that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ? He turned to:

### **Philippians 2:**

- 2** fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
- 3** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
- 4** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

"So we see here an attitude of a humble mindset and a desire that the apostle Paul had for the **church to have unity**."

The sermonette man spoke from his heart... He said:

"This is one thing that I have had to examine myself about when it comes to how I **look at others** in the body of Christ.

"What I have found is that I needed to **change my views** or opinions on certain things and change my mind set.

"Also in examining myself on this I have found that I needed **to repent** of some of my attitudes - if I wanted to have the **mind and attitude of Jesus Christ** be in me.

"Today there are literally hundreds of different groups out there.

"Who is my brother?" that I'm supposed to be esteeming better than ourselves for the sake of unity?

"Do we have the same concern and brotherly love for those **in other organizations**; that natural affection, as we do towards someone that is in our particular group or organization?

"How do we look at our brothers in these other so called "Independent Church of God groups?

"Do we see them as legitimate brothers and sisters in Christ?

"Do we allow for the possibility that some are actually Christians like ourselves?"

"Do we feel, like we are better Christians because we belong to a bigger group? Is Bigger is better?"

"So in examining myself I found that I was a little uncomfortable at first but I got through it."

"I found that I had to **change** my **opinion** of them and realize they are still part of the **Body of Christ** and doing the best they could with what they had."

"I thought, he said: "What about people who chose to stop attending with our big group due to the fact that they were being **mistreated** by other members or the ministry?"

"Do we condemn them?"

"Do we look down on them as inferior Christians because they are not sitting with us every week?"

"In some cases [our] ministers have actually forbidden them to listen to other ministers online that are with other organizations and told them that their **salvation** is at stake if they didn't come back to the particular congregation they used to attend."

The sermonette man read:

#### **Ephesians 4:**

**3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.

**4** There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called in **one** hope of your calling;

**5 one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism;

Then, paraphrasing John 17 he said:

"Jesus was very concerned about unity and **oneness** of the **brethren** and prayed 1, 2, 3, - 5 times that His church would be united and **one** then, and in **our time today!**"

"So if we can all apply the words of Philippians 2:1-4 about **having the same love**, being of one accord, and of **one** mind to our lives and have an attitude of humility and esteem others better than ourselves, I think it would be a **great start** to achieving unity and **true brotherly love** with **all** of God's people."

I thought it was a **great** sermonette – he called for obedience to God's law and His Word in loving all our brothers and sisters in Christ – wherever they are.

God desires – **love** among the brethren – He hates **division** among the brethren.



It seems that we have gotten so used to the **separation** of the **brethren** in these 20 years of apostasy that we have forgotten what the **will of God** is.

The sermonette man spoke the truth – those led by God’s Holy Spirit are God’s people.

### **Romans 8:**

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

Then the Pastor stood up to speak:

He said that he wanted to bring **some balance** to what the sermonette man said.

By the way, this Pastor is the same man – who in the days of Worldwide’s apostasy was the Regional Pastor who came to my home to censure me for teaching that “God the Father, in great power, raised Jesus from the dead” – while the Tkachs were teaching “Jesus raised Himself.”

### **Ephesians 1:**

**17** That the **God** of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father** of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

### **Ephesians 1:**

**19** And what is the exceeding **greatness of His power** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

**20** Which he wrought in Christ, when He **raised [Jesus] from the dead**, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

That Pastor and his wife sat right there – on that blue couch and asked us, “**Can’t you just go along with it.**”

And while the Pastor and his wife were sitting there I received a call from Pasadena Headquarters. The call was the man who now heads up the political corporate organization that this Pastor recently broke away from. I was fired, and my wife and I were disfellowshipped for teaching:

### **Hebrews 4:**

**9** There remains therefore a keeping of a **Sabbath Rest** for the people of God.

So this Pastor began by saying that he was going to bring some “Balance” to the sermonette.

But what this Pastor did was to warn the brethren of the perils of leaving his political corporate organization to follow some of the most **radical** church leaders out there!

Brethren, the sermonette was about fellowshiping with scattered **brethren** who are led by God's Holy Spirit.

The sermonette was **not** about following **false ministers** who have sought a following after themselves.

Those are two entirely different subjects.

We all are aware that there are false ministers out there – but the question the sermonette answered was: “What about our **brethren** – led by God's Holy Spirit – from whom we have become separated?”

The pastor pulled a classic **bait and switch** maneuver. He tried to undo all **the good** the sermonette man was trying to accomplish. The sermonette man was saying to, “Reach out to your brothers and sisters in Christ – wherever they are scattered.”

The Pastor parried with this countermand, “You brethren just stay put – if you know what is good for you.” He is using a fear tactic. He is still at it – he is doubling down today. The pastor could not even make eye contact with the sermonette man during his correction of the sermonette.

The **Pastor** should have been the one who was pointing the people **to God** and His Word, but he was not doing that – he was focusing the entire congregation's attention back on his organization's corporate authority!

He **kissed the calf** - in other words he paid homage, obedience, respect, loyalty... (not to God, but) to his political corporate organization rather than to the Word of God.

That is a huge mistake: The church corporate organization is never to come between the believer and God because corporate organizations do not represent the “duly constituted authority” from God.

These political pastors **covet** the members. The Scriptures point out that, **covetousness is idolatry!**

### **Colossians 3:**

**5** ... and covetousness, which is idolatry:

### **That is kissing the calf!**

That is giving **his** loyalty, and demanding **your** loyalty, to a man made organization.

If you are not with them – they figure, you are against them. It is as if they were saying about those who are not with them, “Let them sink – who cares about them?”

I was reminded this morning by one of the readers of the Countdown to the Return of Jesus Christ: I quote:

“I look forward to hearing this message.

Reading through the Old Testament about how God continually saved Israel and then saw them go back into idolatry is enlightening.

I tell myself that I sure wouldn't have done that after seeing the miracles God performed..... Really? Am I better than the Israelites?

In all of the years I belonged to the COG I've wondered what profit there was to reading all of the old time stuff in the Old Testament.

And then a light went off. I now see the lessons recorded for us.

Suddenly all of those things are relative to me and my situation.

To God, a thousand years is as a day so the Old Testament and even the Crucifixion are not old news.

It's as though it happened in the last week! It's fresh in His memory.

I'm trying to think in those terms.

I never grasped the idea that the Church of God organization and leaders could be idols.

Many in the past almost worshiped HWA as though he was more than a man.

A recent JOURNAL article mentioned that no man or organization has Spiritual authority over us.

I would argue that in the sixties and seventies the "church" encouraged the view that if a person left the congregation he was Toast spiritually.

Many still believe that whether they admit it or not.

Thank you for speaking on this subject and I do look forward to hearing the message."

Brethren, I'm afraid that some of these Pastors rely on this "fear" aspect to keep their members in line.

### **Jeremiah 1:**

**16** And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to **other gods** and **worshiped** the **works** of **their own hands**.

They worship their own political corporate organized institutions.

That is giving your loyalty, and demanding loyalty, to a **man made** organization. They should be looking to God's Word – and pointing the members to God.

A minister's job is to inspire the brethren to look to God and develop deep personal relationships with Jesus Christ – the only Head of the Body.

Brethren, that **demanding of loyalty** to their organization by them – is superseding the authority of the Bible. It is wrong!

What that Pastor did was "**Kiss the calf.**"

They not only want to "grow the church" they want as many members as possible to come to their organization. These political corporate Pastors want God's people – to be **their** people! ...The pastor's people! Brethren – They belong to God.

That pastor has changed groups a number of times. What does he think? Does he have god in his pocket – like the Israelites had little golden images of gods – so that he can continue to demand loyalty wherever he goes?

He rebuked those men who demanded loyalty of him at the big organization that he left. "I got fired he said – because I wouldn't sign a loyalty oath in the other big organization – that I left."

Does he think that God is following him from organization to organization? And the brethren have to be on the same page he is on when he moves – at the exact same time. They can't think for themselves.

He hasn't learned yet! He is paying his dues to the association of which he is a part by reprimanding the sermonette man.

Brethren – pray that his blindness be removed and that God will grant him repentance, (Not just him – but all the ministers who are doing the same thing.)

This is the same regional pastor who sat on that blue couch right here with his wife and said, "**Can't you just go along with the Tkach's?**"

He was kissing the calf **then** and he is still **kissing the calf** today.

It was a blatant act of idolatry.

People say, Warren you go too far – that is way too strong!

Not so.

**Idolatry** is putting anything before God!

Love God and love the Body of Christ.

End: Kiss the Calf