

## 950322 Importance of Unity HLH No2 H TX PM

Good afternoon to all of you. Some few may have been here in the morning. I will not be giving the same topic, which is appropriate, so the those who do speak here might like to pick up on some thought, make it their own, and this makes your being here this afternoon equally worthwhile. I am pleased to know some of you for a long time, and one particular family for a very long time, the racelers, I happen to spot you. I knew grandmother, going back to 1948 in Belknap Springs in Oregon. It's a long, long time ago. An unforgettable woman. Someday we'll meet some unforgettable people who long since been forgotten, individuals whom we have never heard of over time, and sometimes we may be surprised that some whom you know won't be there in that first resurrection. We make those decisions. Our responsibility today, which I would like to address, is based on a number of scriptures that would let us understand how we should conduct ourselves and how we should look at the biblical record in terms of what the Church is saying today and in terms of what the New Testament apostles explained, what Jesus himself explained, and what the prophets foretold. This is no time to set aside scriptures. This is the time to look at all that will be the basis for judging us. I was asked to come here on this occasion by Mr. Joseph de Caas, Jr., in Church Administration, so that we understand from a perspective that I give it what it means to function as one body, one Church, irrespective of how God chooses to first make himself known to others. This Church is unique in the sense that there is a message that we do have to give to the world that no other group as governed by those Church bodies understands equally as we do. There may be people in them, as also God has called people directly or indirectly out of Reformed Hinduism or Islam, Judaism, to come to understand what we do. Some people understand certain things, some understand much more. There are people whom you may have heard of and remembered. I would like to explain a few cases so we understand. There was a lady in our Fresno congregation in the 1950s and 1960s who made possible the opportunity of students to reside in student residence in the year 1950 and thereafter. In the building we came to call Mayfair because it was patterned, of course, after the British architecture.

I think that was the name in fact given to it. Mrs. Herbert Anderson was baptized in the early 1920s in the Baptist Church. They came from Georgia and I was always impressed what happened to accent over there. She was one of those delightful women who knew that Mrs. headquarters was in Pasadena. I will say this a little humorously because I talked to her about it and I mentioned one time that I was going back to Pasadena and she says no, no, it's pronounced Pasadena. You see, she knew I was mispronouncing it because it wasn't spelled that way but she always pronounced it the other way and didn't know it. Some 20 years she grew and understood having repented and been baptized, believed as she read and studied the Bible and finally heard the World Tomorrow program when we were still called the Radio Church of God at the corporate title. She was never rebaptized because she gave every evidence that her baptism we would call valid and her repentance and she could not nor could we explain what God had done in her apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. There wasn't a thing that the church came to say that she didn't grasp clearly without the here's the way I look at it arguments that so many give. So we have had as a record not some new idea that we may have had as a record individuals and those of us who were in the church in the late 1940s and 50s will remember how many as also I have met some who were baptized in the Church of God Seventh Day with headquarters in a Sanbury, Missouri who had been in our fellowship. One woman who is now in her 80s was baptized in 1928.

Mr. Harold Jackson, you know, the minister who died comparatively recently was baptized a member of the Church of God Seventh Day in the late 1930s long before I was. And so we have recognized I think what has happened is that there are people who didn't know that we recognize their Christians elsewhere whose minds are such that they begin to see what it is that God wants of them simply by reading the Bible and listening and paying attention to whatever is said from the pulpit or other literature and they come in those days after many years to have fellowship with us but not everybody makes it at the same pace to the same speed. And so indeed we do recognize that God chooses to call whom he may, where he may. On the other hand, God's government does work through God's people and there never was a collection of so many converted minds as we have in the history of the people called the Church of God in the last 130-plus years.

With that in mind, I should like to ask ourselves how we ought to behave and understand whenever there are new issues being addressed. Because how we approach a problem is often more important than the problem itself. Because maybe the problem is something which one can debate. Maybe it involves intellectual discussion, not to mention spiritual, but it is simply a matter of discussion.

For example, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, that is, no one throughout the Protestant Catholic Orthodox world, no one in Hinduism, no one in Islam, no one in Judaism, which is rejected by Buddhism, by the way, in case you didn't know.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is an intellectual doctrine, that is, one can discuss it, but it does not necessarily alter what we do from day to day. Then there are doctrines which we discuss that would alter what we do every day because they alter what we are, not merely what we intellectually think. When it comes to intellectual doctrines, let me illustrate a point. There are people who can agree with us. The Seventh-day Adventists would not dispute our traditional view regarding the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, nor do our Buddhist friends disagree.

Our Muslim friends or Jewish friends might well disagree, but to agree with us does not make one converted on such a point.

To disagree may or may not indicate that you are unconverted because maybe you still don't understand the issue.

So let's take note of the possibility that some intellectual topics that don't affect us can be held by people whose attitude can be very self-centered or very generous in terms of other people. But when it comes to things that we do, we also need to be careful that if we understand certain things clearly, there may be others who don't and have a different practice.

In general, I would say smoking is one of the decisions the Church has made that has not been a major issue, but we know that there are members who do smoke.

They're rare, but that's one delightful woman illustrated when Mr. Tkach and I came to her home to pray for a physical condition she had. She let us in and we sat down where she had forgotten to take the ashtray away. Then she smiled. This was one of her habits she was wrestling with.

Now, we never knew that because she always had some mint that hid the fact.

Did her smoking contrary to the ruling of the Church rule her out in terms of the pursuit of the kingdom of God? And the answer is no.

But it did clearly indicate that she had a problem to wrestle with.

But it would have been much easier for her to let us smell her breath and help her earlier than to have covered it up. So let us understand that we can have people who have habits that we would not want to have. I can speak of smoking perhaps more freely than some.

Some of you wouldn't want to remember the problems you had wrestling with such a difficulty.

I know a man not in the church. Talk to him from time to time who can take or leave alcohol as he wants to. But he can't do the same with tobacco. There are people who are the other way around.

Even though the Church has a basic policy that we have enunciated, we do have to learn to work together with one another despite those differences in things with which we wrestle. And it is more important to understand how we come to grips with these matters and work with one another than whether or not we have a specific habit because, after all, the habit is physical and the problem is not simply luck. It may, for many, have involved luck. It may, for others, have involved something quite different.

A physical encouragement to do something that was disliked, but once you got started, it became an addiction so that you have a bodily lust for a physical drug that your mind wishes it could be free of but cannot be free of without some significant counseling and or medical help.

So we must distinguish between certain things we do and certain problems that we wrestle with and cannot overcome unlike the things that we can overcome.

Smoking, for me, was never a problem. The reason is my father didn't smoke.

The reason he didn't is his father did.

And his father, as a German mathematics teacher at a university in Kaiserslautern, followed the custom that his son should light the pipe when he, when father returned home.

So my father was a little boy under six years of age at the time and he lit the pipe for grandfather.

And it tasted awful. My father could never understand why anybody would smoke.

And so my father never had a problem with smoking because he simply couldn't stand it.

And the story was enough for me not to want to. It just never occurred to me.

Then I had the wonderful experience in those days before the Golden Gate Bridge was built across the San Francisco exit at San Francisco because the bay would flow into the Pacific.

And we would have to take a boat to go to Oakland or San Francisco.

And you'd put the car on the ferry boat on the lower deck and you'd walk onto the upper deck in the open air. And time and time again I sat and somebody two, three, four rows in front of me was smoking and the smoke would come right like this. And you know what old smoke is like.

So I could never understand why someone did that.

And therefore it never was the problem.

Now I illustrate this today because for some of us there are people that we find weak that don't do what we can do. But we all have weaknesses in different areas and strengths in different areas. And we should learn how to work with one another.

God has called a body of people, some with bad habits, some with better habits, called us to understand some fundamental truths regarding the purpose of life and the nature of eternal life and how to receive it.

In so doing we discover some very interesting verses that I would like to introduce you to.

Let's turn for the moment to Ephesians 4 and see what indeed a new covenant church, one in which Christ offered his life to us that we may be forgiven sins and receive the possibility and the ultimate eternal life. In Ephesians chapter 4, I will start with verse 1.

Paul speaks of himself as a prisoner because that's what he was from time to time. And as a prisoner he could have said he was a prisoner of the Romans, but in fact he was a prisoner of the Lord in this sense that God could use him as a prisoner and in fact without being in prison he couldn't have been used to do what he did. For being a prisoner, having appealed to Caesar, he was in fact under Caesar's custody and had a chance to address Caesar's court.

A person who was not in this position could not have asked for an audience with Caesar's court to present the message that Paul did. He says, I beseech that I'm reading a little modernization from time to time of the authorized version. I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, that is there is a responsibility that we have, a vocation or a specific calling, not a hobby. Christianity is not a hobby. Christianity for some is a hobby, it is simply arguments. For us it is not a hobby, it is a job to be done, a responsibility, and not now a singular or lone responsibility as some of the prophets of old had to function.

With respect to walking worthy of our responsibility, Paul says, to do so with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering for bearing one another in love.

Now I'm starting with something that probably isn't new to you. You've heard this before.

Having heard it before, how do you practice it when you discover study papers you may or may not agree with and ministers with whom you may or may not agree or who may not wholly agree with one another in terms of their perspective? That is, do you forget what you learned here in advance, or do you still remember it? With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering for bearing one another, that's an authorized version. Now lowliness is the opposite of haughtiness.

Meekness is not weakness, but a recognition of what you really are and an ability to recognize what you can contribute to others and to recognize what others can contribute to you.

Long suffering is one of those old long suffering words in the English language that we endure reading in the King James Version. It really has the sense, in more modern terms, of the willingness to endure and be patient. That is, we should not act superior. We should not act brassy, brashly, putting others in their place, and we should learn to be patient for bearing one another in love. We have to learn to be forgiving and to be helpful and to work with one another in the spirit of love, whether or not we wholly agree.

In marriage, we learn to work with one another in harmony when you discover that all the things you did together and agreed to do before your marriage don't seem to be the same afterwards when you find all the things that are different. Now hopefully that doesn't explain you, although I suppose we could say, the closer you are to one another, the longer you are, the more you do notice the differences and the more you should grow to be like one another in some kind of happy medium. I picture a marriage the same as we should picture the church. We'll leave it with two in marriage and not the hundreds in a congregation, but it's like two circles.

When two people touch each other, the circles of interest, touch each other at the border, you know, you can draw two circles that just have a tangential relationship, you really find that some people have the sense enough either to bring those circles closer to one another or simply to become acquainted with other people where your circle overlaps more.

Some people want to marry instantly as soon as this circle touches and then discover they share nothing except just a little border.

But the more you learn to live and love with someone, to live with and love someone, the more those circles should overlap. And essentially what we mean by unity both in marriage and in the church is that point in time when there is complete focus, that is a complete overlapping so that essentially we all agree on all things.

But that is something in principle we come to over time.

It is not something we come to immediately. And so Paul addresses how we approach the problem.

Some are called being Jews, some are called being Greeks, some are called today with different states of mind from a libertine background to a restrictive background to a happy medium, if there be such. And we approach it in the fashion in addition, what is said here in verse 3.

In addition to being meek and patient, we endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the spirit is an important thought that the spirit of God manifests itself in Christians, in us, and in others whom you may meet who have yet to come to the same understanding on some points that you do. But there is a unity of spirit that I want to address that is different from a unity of doctrine, because I can agree with someone else in doctrine, but there will not be the unity of spirit. There is not the same unity of spirit between a Buddhist and myself with respect to the unity of the spirit, even if there is an agreement on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. There may be people who leave our fellowship to decide to be a part of another one that they think will make them more comfortable, where they think they will find a unity of doctrine, and they discover that sooner or later they have a certain spirit, and we discover that even if we may agree with some of them on certain points, we no longer have the unity of the spirit with them because there is another spirit motivating what they are, what they think, and what they do.

And it perhaps best to summarize with a spirit of competition, that the spirit that changes the character of those whom we once knew as sharing in the spirit, the unity of the spirit of God, but when we make a break and assume there is some other more comfortable setting, that changes.

People become different, assertive, whatever it may be, and you soon discover, as some have, that the bonds of understanding they had with those who were broken with our fellowship are no longer the same. We are to keep a unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

That's a relationship that is manifested by the word peace. Some nations can live at peace with one another. I do not mean to present a problem to any one of you because I know one or more can belong to these ethnic groups. You're not always like a group and we're all supposed to be a converted mind, or becoming that depending on our age, but anyone who knows that we now have a Czech Republic and Slovakia knows that you have two nations that once were one and there was no civil war.

There is something in the psychological, emotional makeup of the Slovaks and the Czechs that prevented war. There is something different in the makeup of the Serbo-Croatian population where we had a civil war and the tragedy that is besetting Bosnia, where people simply do not understand

how to handle peace. There may be many among them who wish it, but their national leaders do not know how to resolve it, and they all become one way or another victims or participants in this terrible tragedy, not to mention the folly of other places in Asia, Africa, or parts of the New World. It is important then to understand that you work at peace, the bond of peace, what holds people together is an ability to learn to be peaceable toward one another, to keep that unity of the spirit so that you recognize that even if someone disagrees with you, you share the same spirit. Now, when we don't share that same spirit, there is the beginning of some very serious problems in terms of relationships.

Husbands and wives may differ on many points, but if they share the bond of peace and the sense of unity of marriage, there will be nothing that cannot be overcome within the unit.

The Church functions however apart we may be as congregations or as individuals as one body and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling, Paul says, and in this sense, wherever Christians are, we are united through the spirit of God, and have one ultimate hope. I won't go through the next verses because they're not the point at issue here, but I will move down into the chapter.

We read in verse 21, you have not learned Christ in terms of misbehavior, as you find in 17, 18, and 19, all the sins of the Greek, the Hellenistic society, the Roman society, or for that matter, what the Jewish society allowed itself to do privately. We don't find that Christ lived that kind of life, if so be that you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Him.

We should therefore behave in the following manner. In following Christ, we put off concerning the former conduct, the word conversation is in the authorized version, but put off concerning the former conduct, the old man or woman, the old way of living and thinking corrupt, according to deceitful lust. That is, what is natural is to seek fulfillment of physical things.

We should be renewed in the spirit of our minds. That's where the decisions are made.

We should become a new person, a new man or woman. We are in verse 25 to put away lying, speaking every man instead truth with his neighbors, because we are members ultimately of one congregation or church, a great congregation of many local ones. So we're told to put off something and put on something else. Whether some like it or not, this is the message of the days of Unleavened Bread. To confuse the Passover with the days of Unleavened Bread is to make a mistake, as some do, and I'll speak plainly on that. Christ died for your sin. The days of Unleavened Bread do not picture the death of Christ. They picture the fact that you not only need someone who paid the penalty of sin in your stead, but you need to recognize what is here, your responsibility to put away lying, not merely to be forgiven lying, not merely to be forgiven all the other problems that are defined here. We are to put away lying, to put away stealing.

That means we wrestle with our bad habit. We don't just sit back and make Christ the minister of sin while we do nothing in fulfilling the meaning of repentance. Repentance means you take a look at yourself and now you ask what it is that you ought to be like and ought to set aside.

And you discover strengths and weaknesses and you make decisions in your mind what you want to do.

You make it not on the basis of your natural conscience, you make it on the basis of divine revelation. Your conscience, meanwhile, would excuse or accuse. If Christ died and you believe anything that would accuse you in your conscience, you can be free of, because you're not asked to be perfect at

once. You're asked to have that as your goal and your conscience can be free of all the flaws that you have yet to wrestle with.

But you will never wrestle and bring yourself in subjection as Paul speaks of it without, of course, the power of the Holy Spirit of God, which simply transforms your weaponry, makes it possible to gain victory. We're not to be angry. We're not to steal. We're not to lie.

Verse 26, and if we are angry about something, we must curb our anger so we do not sin.

That's a simple way of rendering it. Don't let the sun go down on your lap. Don't dwell on problems.

Be forgiving because anger that you let stay in your system is like giving place to the devil.

Let him who stole steal no more. Let him rather labor working with his hands and let no corrupt communication. Verse 29, proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that is, which builds up someone else as well as transforms your own thinking.

This takes effort on your part as well as the power of God. Now, when you choose not to exercise effort, when you choose not to overcome yourself, you grieve the Spirit of God.

I'm turning verse 30 around in the St. Structure. It says, don't grieve the Spirit of God.

But when you don't do these things, you do grieve the Spirit of God because God's power is granted you. And if you don't use that power and aren't willing to change just as the children of Israel removed leaven from their homes, we have to come to grips with our own nature.

And we must distinguish what our nature is from guilt. Christ paid the penalty of sin or guilt. Christ gives us the power to rule over our nature.

Cain had the power to rule over his nature if he had sought to do God's will.

He could have received the Spirit and become like his brother Abel.

We must put away bitterness and wrath. That's really getting angry, striking out at others, and anger and clamor and evil speaking.

All this put away from you with all malice so that you be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

Now, what is significant here? It's very, very important. Paul is addressing attitude, mood.

Paul is not addressing doctrine, but we can let doctrine be the catalyst or the match that ignites all sorts of moods. And this is what I want to address this afternoon, it's distinct from what I did this morning.

If there's something you don't understand, or if there's something you think you do and somebody else doesn't understand, or if you surmise that someone else has ulterior motives, or if you imagined, and even if the other person did, I think you should follow advice I have been giving for some 20 years.

Don't make somebody else's problem yours.

Don't make somebody else's problem your own. I think most all of you have enough just with your own, don't you? Why become angry? Why become impatient? Why become frustrated with somebody else? Be patient with them. Let your example influence them and make them think.

We have people who have come and gone out of this work because they made the mistake of becoming bitter toward someone else, someone else whom they thought was imperfect, someone else whom they thought shouldn't have a responsibility. You can name one after another reason. It doesn't have to affect the church. This could be business. This can be politics.

It could be any field of human endeavour.

So here we have a remarkable series, a remarkable series of statements as to what we need to be working on that leavens human nature. Lying, stealing, anger, wrath, bitterness, clamour, impetuosity, evil speaking, and of course we could give different translations to these words to enhance. We need to work on these problems, many of which you may think you don't have because stealing would hardly be the factor that we're dealing with here unless it is, let's say, the doctrine of tithing. But many of these others we can have and begin to misunderstand how we should behave toward one another.

So Paul is telling us it's very important in maintaining the bond of peace and the unity of the spirit that we all should be sharing in to do the positive things of being, meek, long-suffering, patient, and to avoid the other things of anger and frustration that leads to striking out against others and perhaps their responsibility.

The book of Colossians, written also by Paul, has a very interesting perspective on the same thing in chapter 3. Seek those things which are above, beginning verse 1. Set your affections on things above, verse 2. Don't set your affections on things on the earth.

Now we have died to the past.

Our life that we now live is made possible through Christ in us, that in terms of biology, we are still living and breathing. In terms of what we were in our conscience, in our mind, we are dead to the past, someone having paid the penalty in our stead so that we can reckon our life that was of sin has essentially died. Doesn't mean we don't have to still wrestle with it, but it is no longer dominant, and we come up out of the water of baptism with a new kind of life ahead of us, and we have the spirit of God to enable us now to the laying on of hands to live that new kind of life that is Christ lives in us.

When Christ who is our life shall appear, and we shall appear with him in glory, that's Paul's brief summary. Now if this is the case, he's saying, since we have died to sins, having asked Christ to pay for it in our stead and having reckoned our self buried in baptism which shows you that sprinkling is not the proper form, we now must put to practice some very important things beginning with verse five.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. Now here our members of our bodies and minds are defined in terms of what the body and mind does.

One, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil contumescence, covetousness, which is idolatry. There can be many other translations used, whichever one you have, that's not a major area of concern. There are all sorts of sexual promiscuity described here as well as covetousness. That's in verse five. We're told to do something about it to mortify.

In Ephesians Paul speaks about putting these things away, like you put away leavens, for those for which things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience.

This was the kind of society, and especially in that day, the society in which men lived.

I grew up in a home in which my father never used the kind of words that many of you men have heard in the business or workplace. He would allow himself the word D-A-R-N.

That was simply something that my mother explained to me that I shouldn't use, so that's never been a part of my vocabulary in that sense.

But I grew up in a home where the kind of general conversation never included the kind of communication that men used to allow themselves, and I now even hear women use on talk shows, which once in a while you hear when you flip the dial tune in. This is the way the world is. So what we are learning here is the most important thing we do is to govern ourselves. Now one of the areas in which we must govern ourselves most has to do with anger and wrath. I think this is very important.

We can become frustrated and angry over things with which we may disagree.

We're told to put off the old man, put on the new. This is a comparison with garments.

We're told to lie not to one another. Now one of the common places in which lies occur is in gossip.

Gossip does not have to be a lie. It can be true, but the intent is not right. It's malicious.

So here we have a description that Paul is addressing, and I think it important to recognize to what extent these areas, apart from the question of sexual immorality and improper words that we use, but the other areas pertaining to attitude and motive can easily get out of hand when we find disagreement over issues of governance and doctrine.

My purpose here is to address this afternoon, but I didn't directly address this morning.

This morning I addressed the question of our interrelationship and functioning as a unit.

Here I would like to cite for this afternoon, in the same theme, the verses that Paul is emphasizing. He's not pointing up how important it is to agree at every point of doctrine.

He tells you not to be carried about by every wind of doctrine that comes alone.

There are some people who change their minds over every new thing that can occur. We need to be sure why we did what we did, examine why, and when there is a flaw, we consider and change.

When there is no flaw that comes to us, we do not change, and when there is, we must not fail to change.

Abraham Lincoln quoted many a time in the church that I will believe something that is called new truth when it is proved to be true. That's our job.

What I may consider proof, and what you may be considering as proof, may not be the same thing.

You may need more proof than I do, or I may need more proof on something that you do.

But I should not be angry at you if I find that you don't understand something, because what would convince you, you haven't found, and I haven't found, for you.

Don't assume, I hope you all understand this, don't assume that what convinces me of something would convince you, or that what has convinced you would convince me.

A chemist may need far more proof than I would, not being a professional chemist, on something that somebody writes on the subject.

Being more knowledgeable with mathematics, I might demand more proof than you would.

You would take somebody's explanation as adequate, and I would not.

Knowing more on the subject of history in general, I might demand far more proof than you would if you didn't know.

I don't think we have always understood that.

We think that if we have explained it to ourselves, you should understand it, and when you don't, there's something wrong with you. That is, never the case.

So it is important that we learn how to conduct ourselves in accordance with the intent that God has given us to pursue eternal life, and that means that we should govern our mind, govern our thoughts, and be able patiently to work with one another.

Now, we have many places in scripture that give us an understanding of how to analyze revealed truth. Let me turn to Luke 11, 42, if I might.

The Gospel of Luke 11, 42.

World unto you Pharisees, Jesus says. Jesus was a messenger of the new covenant.

He was explaining how people should understand what had been written in the Bible.

He said, you tithe, mint, and rue in all manner of herbs, you know, these tiny seeds and the little dried leaves, and you pass over judgment and the love of God.

This is not an argument over the subject of tithing. I want to address it all at this moment, but I think it is very important. This is Jesus' teaching of how you look at things, how they should have looked at it if they wanted to have life, even when the covenant made it Sinai was still enforced, and how we should look at it now that a new covenant relationship is enforced. For it was possible to gain the spirit of God as a gift. Gain may not be the word I really wanted to say, to gain life through the spirit of God, even during Old Testament or Old Covenant times, that is, when the covenant made it Sinai was enforced. Not for the nation as a whole, but for someone who looked into the scripture and saw its intent and purpose.

Long before the prophets were written, David understood. Long before Jesus was born and the apostles lived, David could read the Old Testament and have the spirit of God and still know that he wasn't saved by the works of the law.

And he could know what it was that he ought to be doing spiritually.

Jesus defined it here as having judgment.

That means the ability to make decisions.

There are people who have poor judgment, people who have good judgment.

By nature, we differ in the ability to make judgments, but we must not pass over this.

And we must distinguish, because somebody surely will misunderstand, to judge one another is quite a different thing, but to have good judgment and to know how to help someone else, how to come to a conclusion, how to remove the log, as Jesus said in your eye, that you may remove the splinter in the other person.

Most of us, of course, have it the other way around.

The other person's problem is the log. In yours is only a splinter, but Jesus worded it differently and intentionally.

And the love of God. You want to know what it is that pleases God, not like the Jews who tried to find a way around the law or who tried to make themselves super righteous. And the Jews did both things. There are some people who think the Pharisees only bound burdens when, in fact, in some cases they released people from responsibility that they should have exercised. The binding of excessive burdens as in connection with the Sabbath and healing is obvious. The releasing of people from responsibility that they should not have released them from is obvious when you remember that strange word from the Hebrew generally not translated in English, where Jesus said that a gift that properly should take care of parents and widows and orphans. If you present that as a gift to God called Corbin, then the Jews who were the religious teachers say, well, if you do that, you gave it to God.

That's enough. You don't have to be concerned about other people. But the God who said love me with all your heart, soul, mind, and might also said to love your neighbor as yourself.

Therefore, they were without excuse in freeing people from responsibility.

For the real reason, of course, what they had in mind was if you make a donation, they got the money.

It was far more important to God that if you loved him, you also loved your neighbor, then that you made a gift with the things that should have been of help to your neighbor.

God doesn't need your money. He doesn't need your gifts.

He needs to know what it is, what is in your heart. The work of God may need gifts.

And other people may need it. But God wants to know that you're using good judgment in what you do.

So it is very important to recognize that as we look at scripture, we should look at it with judgment, not in haste, and we should look at it first and foremost as how the love of God should be expressed. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, said Paul, by means of the Holy Spirit, so that we may do the things that please God and help men. I will turn to another verse in Matthew 23-23 where Jesus addressed the same most fundamental question with different words in one place and the same in another. 23-23, the Jews were involved with details on some things that omitted weightier matters. Law, judgment, mercy, I don't mean law, it was matters of the law.

They overlooked judgment, mercy, and faith. Now let's look at these words.

Judgment is the same in both cases. The love of God doesn't appear here. In the other account, Jesus spoke of the love of God. Here Matthew focuses on mercy. Now the love of God most certainly would include mercy. So mercy now focuses on one aspect, that is, you are generous, concerned, and helpful in showing mercy to someone who is in need. You use good judgment.

You, in fact, have to make decisions when you read scripture.

And you should show mercy to others who may be weak and fall short in responsibility.

And there is also the importance of faith. Faith makes it possible to make decisions with confidence. To tell somebody you ought to be healed, you should not go to a doctor, you should have faith. Definitely answer the question of why the person may not have it.

It takes faith to know how to obey God in the way he asks us to live. But not everybody has that depth of faith. Long ago in the autobiography Herbert W. Armstrong mentioned the case of his older daughter, who was pregnant and also had a cyst. And she was not always in a perfect spiritual state of mind. And the doctor said that either there should be an operation or she would lose the fetus and possibly die herself. Certainly the fetus would not be born alive if she didn't have surgery. And Mr. Armstrong told her, unlike some in the ministry decades ago, that she either should know that God will answer or she should act before the time is up and rely on men to take care of it on the basis of their best skills and find the best man available. She prayed and fasted and knew that God would answer.

Now she had a record of knowing that and in this case she believed that under examination it was gone. The doctor examined her and it was gone. So no operation was necessary.

But if it had not gone, there was only one decision. And that was the sensible one.

If God has not answered and the time is up, don't put the doctor in such a difficult situation that he's doing something too late. So it's important to understand the role of faith and mercy and the love of God in looking at the scripture. And Jesus was speaking when no New Testament book was around. And he was saying when you look at the Bible, the first thing you must never forget in how you read and study is good judgment.

This I think the church has underestimated. We have focused our knowledge and wisdom and understanding, all of which bear on the topic. But it is interesting that at this point Jesus did not say wisdom and mercy and faith. He used another term because if we're to be judged by every word of God, if we're to be judged by every word of God because we're to live by every word of God, then we need to know how to examine every word of God. Some will not be critically important because there's simply personal names and some genealogy. It pays at least to know that the genealogy is there and possibly why. I cite something of that nature just so you know how to distinguish between that which is more important and that which is less.

An older person who has little time to read should choose to read the most important parts of the Bible that come to his attention or that someone can recommend. A person who is a professional teacher has a responsibility to learn much more of some other areas of the Bible to be sure you make them plain and clear if that is a part of your job. But in any case, as we look at Scripture, it is important for us to learn how to use good judgment.

Now when we do look at Scripture, we also need to learn that other people may look at it differently and it depends on our background.

There are different ways of looking at it.

That might seem strange, but it is not strange at all. If we all looked at it the same way, we wouldn't have all the denominations we do. The fact we have people who are sincere, who look at it differently should give us the evidence that we don't all look at things the same way.

And if we're sincere, then we're not dealing with the question of being dishonest.

There are some people who are knowingly dishonest. You can see it. I've heard the lecturer once of a what we call a fringe movement in the Christian world and that person quite clearly did not wish a

certain person in the audience after the lecture to think of any other possibilities and a certain possibility in order to get that person to be a member of a particular movement.

This was long ago in the late 1940s after the first year at Ambassador College and I attended that lecture. But most people are far more sincere. I have met men who were sincere and I have met men who were not. I have met men who were sincere with whom I would disagree and I have met men with whom I could agree who are not sincere. It just happened to be on that point we didn't have any difference. Human beings must recognize that we take different approaches.

We take certain premises for granted.

I take the view. You will not be judged by my view.

I take the view and you take whatever your view is but you will have to give an account as to whether that was the biblical way of doing it. Before the book of Acts was written, before any gospel account was written, before Paul was converted Jesus said how to look at what was then scripture.

And in chapter five of Matthew he makes very clear how we should look at the problem.

He who says it's enough that I do not kill my neighbor or murder him and yet hates his neighbor is a murderer at heart. That is if you were to look at the scripture, the law, the Ten Commandments, you would discover in there what David discovered, what the prophets discovered.

You would discover something more if you ask why is it given and how should I see its intent and purpose. If all you see in the law is the letter of the law you will be condemned and you will die because the law saves nobody.

The question arises, why can't we have grace without law? The answer to the question is it's the wrong question. Let me explain something because this is an age of confusion, confusion in the whole world and some confusion still in the church. Grace is grace and law is law.

You are saved by grace. Grace does not define right from wrong. If I want to know right from wrong I must go to the divine instruction. I do not go to my conscience unless my conscience is educated by divine instruction. I would need to make first of all some decisions. Is there evidence that God has spoken to us as humans and is that evidence clearly delineated so I know it is in the Bible. Actually my search was easier than somebody who lives in India or Saudi Arabia or the state of Israel who doesn't have access to either old or new testament or only the old testament and not the new. Having discovered that the word of God indeed is speaking to me it is possible then for me to look at it and to note that some things are stated thou shalt do no murder thou shalt not kill and I notice all the things that are not included in that especially when I come to you shall not commit adultery and I notice all the things not included in that for adultery is not homosexuality or bisexuality or bestiality or fornication or prostitution and to kill someone doesn't touch upon anger or hate and so Jesus says he who lives by the letter of the law dies because he can't fulfill even the letter and he overlooked all the intent and purpose and the details of the law given elsewhere if all he limits himself to are some broad principles we have grace without law when it comes to the mercy of God and forgiveness there is no other way but the mercy of God and the grace of God and the death of Messiah but when it comes to what we ought to do we need the divine instruction the divine instruction has often been summarized in law but it's much more than that because the old covenant was not more than some three chapters in a fraction and a repetition in a major part of one book Deuteronomy but the instruction of God begins with Genesis and ends in the Hebrew scriptures with second chronicles that Jesus had available and we are to look at that instruction and he did in the patriarchs and the prophet had that instruction either orally or partly written David didn't even have Isaiah or Jeremiah

or Ezekiel of the 12 or all the books of Psalms he didn't have first and second chronicles and first and second kings and yet he is going to be in the resurrection king over Israel because he found written to the spirit of God the intent and purpose it is therefore possible to be saved who face in the coming of the Savior and examining the instruction God has given us that determines right from wrong without any portion of the New Testament and most of the old but you can't use that as an excuse now because you have all the rest of the Old Testament and the New therefore you could even know more than David as David said he knew more than his ancestors did who didn't have all that God revealed to the children of Israel it became of record I do not find that we need to have the convulsions we do but somehow we have gotten into two ways of thinking one that somehow salvation is more than the gift of God the more perfect and the more you overcome the more you can be saved which is nonsense we had an article how much should you overcome or must you overcome to be saved this was in support material in the pastor general's report and appeared in the world wide news now there are people who worry and the article was addressing people who worry that they haven't overcome enough because they think the degree to which they have overcome is not enough but somehow the overcoming process is what in part saves you that's why saying I have a drunken father and a smoking mother tobacco smoking let's say and I have to learn to honor my father and mother and I struggle trying to honor my father and mother and I have problems with it because they haven't treated me right as a child they don't treat me right now they don't treat my wife right they don't treat the grandchildren right and yet I try to honor them am I making a picture here that's clear I hope none of you had the experience and so there's some people who think that if they could just perfectly honor their father and mother that somehow contributes to their being saved and if they fall short they feel guilty and then they feel condemned and then they think the solution is to get rid of the law honor your father and mother nonsense that's what the statement in the article is he has overcome the devil the world in broadness nature into subjection to the will of god and if christ lives in you you also are accredited as an overcomer because you are willing to have him live in you but that does not now give you the excuse that you don't have to face up the fact you must stay in a state of repentance to ask christ to live his life in you how much you try to honor your father and mother measured in some yardstick is not the issue you it is the attitude of being willing to honor your father and your mother the attitude that comes from the presence of the spirit of god and I learned the importance of honoring my father and mother as a result of the divine instruction I do not learn that from grace I learned that from instruction but the instruction is quite a different matter from grace the grace and the mercy of god is granted us so that we may if we are in a repentant overcoming state of mind willing to have christ live in us and his spirit in us and for some who have it easy to honor father and mother and for some who don't we live side by side and work with one another and we help one another that's what all this is about is about there is a great deal of difference between being an overcomer in attitude and thinking that overcoming is what saves one because you can never fully in this life overcome all parts of your human nature even with the spirit of god that's just the reality because you have enough of human nature and you have not the fullness of the will of god and enough of human self-will that there's always something more to overcome there's always something more so you don't have to have a sense of guilt because christ in a sense is in you and the potential power to overcome the devil at all times if you have in your mind the state of repentance the state of mind of being an overcomer and that comes from revealed knowledge so when i look at the scripture i find things in the new testament i find things in the Psalms i find remarkable things in the prophets you may have your approach some others that you may have your approach but you need to recognize whether that approach will stand in the judgment when i read in the new testament the importance of what christ did what christ now is and what he shall do i see there why we know that god as saviour came to dwell among men and that he is the captain of our salvation our lord and the king who is to come to establish the kingdom of god

on earth which many are forgetting and much of the world has forgotten at the same time however it is important to know that the righteousness of god that is enough that was led to you that righteousness that is apart from war because it is the righteousness of christ attested to by the law and the prophets that is now in us through the holy spirit if we are a state in a state of repentance and in a state of belief but at the same time that righteousness is not attained by doing the law with our own strength but that righteousness can be missing if you decide that you won't look in the scripture to see what it is that god defines as righteousness in christ for christ was the perfect man and he did not sin he was not in a state of opposition and if christ overcame the devil the world and anything in his nature he can do the same things in you and where you fall short the grace of god forgives and christ then becomes the standard that is in you and when you have that standard as your life through the spirit of god if christ lives in you and every time you discover that you fall short you ask god to forgive yourself sorry to forgive you as you forgive others then you stand in the judgment free and guiltless if you decide that it depends on what you do you will find it a broken read if you decide you don't need to see what it is you ought to do you will also find yourself a broken read that may seem a paradox but it is not i already told you what paul said in Ephesians 4 in chapter 3 of Colossians things that you must be willing to do but that you cannot do by yourself alone in your own strength and by the gift of the holy spirit you work on these things they don't make you immortal honoring your father and mother won't make you immortal you will die like we all do the gift of god through the holy spirit and christ living in us makes us ultimately at the resurrection immortal and that is something beyond any power that we can achieve without the gift of god so grace and mercy stand in a category absolutely different from anything else but at the same time god asks us to let christ live his life in us and not that we should continue in the way of sin so we must be willing to surrender our lives to christ to let his mind be in us so that when we read these scriptures all the new we discover in them every day some things that we can in fact discover in the life of christ the patriarch the prophet the judges and the apostle and put that to work in us which doesn't save us but it makes us the kind of being that we ought to be because it means our minds now are attuned to the mind of god if we say i love my neighbor as myself jesus loved his neighbor as himself then you are thinking the same thoughts and christ in you is living through the holy spirit and making it possible for you to think like jesus christ did but that has nothing to do with the problem the way you fall short and have sinned that there is forgiveness in some other way than simply the mercy of god so today i will conclude here at 501 as little fox says by encouraging all of you carefully to look at yourselves and to see how you behave toward yourself your family your neighbor in the church or out and within this fellowship that we can maintain a body of peace and unity and begin to think the thoughts that god revealed from genesis to revelation because that's the mind of god and the mind of god was in jesus christ and if christ is living in you paul said it this way with my mind i serve the spiritual law of god with my flesh if i let it rule the law of sin and death that is it does the things that are wrong but if i learn by the power of the spirit of god to rule over myself step by step which is what i ought to be doing anyway and resist the devil and his temptations that come into mind or from outside that affect the world it is not really i who is living says paul but christ was living in me because you let the spirit of god change and transform your mind and your attitudes whether if we do this we will not be concerned about many of the problems that have afflicted different areas of the church of god we must focus on the unity of the faith as reflected in the unity of the spirit of god in us and that is manifest by the love of god and the love of our neighbor as our self