

# God's Government in Your Life

Fred Coulter—October 23, 2010

Today I want to ask the questions:

- What is the government of God?
- What is the role of the Church as church leaders and brethren?
- How many have suffered through at least one church war?
- How many have suffered through two?
- How many through three?
- Why does it have to be that way?

Right now, there's another church war going on, and I'm concerned for the brethren, because I believe what we need to do is find the truth about the government of God in the Bible. And it's far different from what different church organizations say it is.

- Who is a true Christian?
- How does God define it?

Some churches say, 'If you're in this church—and we are the true Church of God—you'll receive salvation, and if you leave us, you leave God.'

- Is that true?
- What is a church in the world?
- *A church in the world first of all is a corporation!*

Now a corporation is for the purpose of doing business. The Catholics have it set up a little bit differently. They are a corporate sole, as close to a living organism as you can get. And with a corporate sole you can designate one heir to take over. Let's see, should they spell that *h-e-i-r* or *e-r-r-o-r*? Let's understand this: The corporate structure in the world has nothing to do with the Church. That is just to do business.

The Church, as we will see, is the *body of Christ*, which then is the gathering together of the *called-out ones*, because that's what church means. ***The ones who have been called out of the world, chosen or selected by God!*** And we know how God does this, through His Spirit:

- He leads and draws someone to repentance
- He leads them to the Truth and understanding
- He leads them to the point of baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit

That is the defining definition of what a true Christian is.

Romans 8 is very important because it shows that with God, He makes a spiritual dividing line, not based on a church corporate structure, but on

whether they have the Spirit of God on not. Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**" (vs 7-8). So God looks at it entirely differently. Have you ever been in a church meeting where it ends up being totally carnal? *Yes!* All right, that defines it.

Now here's what Paul says, v 9: "However, you are not in *the* flesh... [As God looks at you even though you are still a fleshly being, because with God's Spirit you are to be changed and converted.] ...you are not in the flesh, but in *the* Spirit, **IF**... [There's that two-letter word again. I still have all the IF statements in my Bible and I'm going to finish giving some more of those sermons, here's one of them.] ...**IF** the Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you.... [Or indeed could also be truly.] ...But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." That is the definition, right there.

Can there be people in the Church of God attending who don't have the Spirit of God? Even though they're attending, they're not part of the body, but they're attending a corporate meeting from a corporate organization? *Yes, indeed!* How does God take care of that problem? *By church upheavals!* He takes care of many problems that way. If you have the Spirit of God and you love God, you will always be faithful regardless of what takes place within any organization. And what happens when there are upheavals? *It's a testing and trying of your faith!* Do you believe God?

"...But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you, the body is indeed dead because of sin; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness" (vs 9-10).

Now, let's look at another aspect of the Spirit of God, because we find that there are two aspects of the Spirit of God. This is important for us to realize. "Now **IF** the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells within you (v 11).

Look at the two parts, v 9: "...**if** the Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you... So [It talks about the Spirit of God.] ...But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ..." The two parts are:

1. Spirit of Christ
2. begettal from the Father

Now let's see this from John 14, because this is how we define: Who and what is a true Christian? Then what we will realize is this, it is not depended upon a corporate organization. It's not wrong to have a corporation to do business in the world, but it's not correct to make that corporate structure as though it is the Church of God. And then the authority of the ministry taken to themselves to use that in a wrong way on the brethren of God.

We've gone here before, but let's really understand what it is here, John 14:15; here's the whole basis of our relationship: "If you love Me... [Jesus said. You have to have the Spirit of Christ—correct?] ...keep the commandments —namely, My commandments."

Do we have this verified in the book of Revelation? *Yes, we do!* Revelation 14:12: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are the ones who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." So faith and commandment keeping are defined in the end-times, because that's an end-time prophecy there—*by faith and commandment keeping.*

Now, let me just say this, the most important series that we have done recently is *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*—14 sermons. I'll tell you, brethren, when you go through that—when I was preparing these sermons and going through them, I learned in preparing them more about God's grace and commandment-keeping—what God has is a spiritual standard for everything that we do. And I start out by asking the question: Why did Jesus say if you lust, take out your eyes? That would mean every man would have to have gouged out eyes—correct? He said that to show that *carnally*, without the Spirit of God you cannot overcome lust.

But remember there the last verse in Matthew 5:48, He says: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect." So, He showed you can't do it with carnal force and oppression or discipline without the Spirit of God. And the goal is to become perfect like the Father. So that's a fantastic standard—isn't it?

John 14:16: "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age: Even the Spirit of the Truth..." (vs 16-17). What will God's Spirit always lead you to do?

- to *seek* the Truth
- to *verify* the Truth
- to *know* the Truth

And today we have that available for us with the Bible as never before.

I told Albert to meet me and he said, 'I have my computer with me.' So he had a 23-inch Apple computer that he just bought. And I looked at that and then he showed me a Bible program called *Accordance*. And you can do everything with it. Now Randy was talking about this earlier, so I've asked them to get together and go over it. But what Albert did, he took the *Faithful Version* and put it in there and it's got what, 10-12 versions? Connect it all up, you can get to the Hebrew, you can get to the Greek, you can put on the *Faithful Version* and you can put on the *King James* and it will immediately show you all the differences from Genesis to Revelation and how it was translated. I'm sitting there thinking, that's good as long as you have electricity. But a Bible like this [a book], you don't need any batteries. Fantastic, though; that can be a tremendous tool and there are things that have great potential with that.

Now let's understand that in the end-times, God is going to make it so there is *no* excuse to anyone concerning the Word of God, God's plan, God's intentions, the return of Christ. He said, 'This Gospel's going to be preached in all the world, then shall the end come.' And we're not close to the end by any means, especially if you look at where is the *king of north* and where is the *king of the south*. If you want to go online, download the one, *Fourteen Things to Happen in Prophecy Before the End Comes*. We're moving closer to fulfilling them, we're not there yet. I'll bring some sermons on that in the future.

But anyway, back to this. John 14:17: "...the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because **it dwells with you, and shall be within you.**" That is the key! The way that God draws you, He sends His Spirit to be with you, (see sermon series: *The Spirit of God, The Seven Spirits of God*, that tells you how God does it. God tells everyone, 'Seek and you shall find.' So if you're seeking, what happens? God's Spirit will come and be with you as long as you're seeking and want to keep the Truth, and you're going to follow it when you find it. God's Spirit then will lead you to repentance and you can be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit and have it dwelling in you. That's the key as to who a true Christian really is.

Now notice, Jesus didn't say, 'Now on Pentecost, I'm going to start My church and the first thing I want you to do, I want you to go to the high priest and I want you to take out corporate papers so that we can have a validated church.' Didn't work that way—did it?

Verse 13: "And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*" (vs 13-14). Many times we have

to be patient in prayer—correct? Because it not only *anything*, but it's modified by the will of God and it's modified by the fact that not every answer is yes.

Verse 21: “The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.... [And this became a mystery because:] ...Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’” (vs 21-22). How is Christ going to manifest Himself to each and everyone that really wants to understand and yet no one else in the world will know it when that begins to happen, but the person experiencing it? ***Through His Spirit!***

This is the key; this is the foundation of everything that is done, everything we are to do. Everything that God will do is all wrapped up here in v 23: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him... [I want you to really think about this and this verifies what we read in Rom.8, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Him Who is dwelling in Christ.] **...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We...** [We—not I, not Him—but We.] ...will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”

That means *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. That's why Paul later wrote, ‘What don't you know that your bodies are the temple of the living God?’ Think what a phenomenal thing that that is in our lives that we have the Spirit of the Father and Christ together, also called the Spirit of God, because it comes from both—*in us!* How many people are there in the world to have that? Well, we don't know, because God only knows.

Now for some minister to get up in the pulpit and say, ‘We're the only true Church of God on earth.’ Really? How do you know? Always remember what God told Elijah when he ran away and was afraid, hiding in the cave. After God did a special miracle and burned up the sacrifice and everything like that, Jezebel was after him, and he said, ‘Oh, I've got to get out of here, Jezebel's after me.’ So he ran down to Mount Horeb and finally God had mercy and spoke to him in a small still voice and He said, ‘Now, now, Elijah, you're not the only one. I have 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ And he didn't know them. So ***we don't know where all of God's people are in the world. We don't know who God is working with!***

My hope and prayer is that all the Churches of God would all get right with God, including whatever one of us needs to get right with God, too—right? So we can do what God wants us to do.

We're going to be held accountable for an awful lot. We've got the whole Bible, like we've seen here, all of the digital things that we have. Boy, after seeing what Albert showed me last night with all the versions of the Bible, you can check the Hebrew, you can check the Greek, you can look at this version, you can look at that version. You can look at it in English and French and German, Arabic. You can look it up in Russian. You can look it up in any language, it's all there. I couldn't help but think, Jesus said that the Gospel is also going to be *published* in all the world. I thought, man, that was really something! You go on, say, okay, let's compare the *Faithful Version*. He's already got it in there. Let's compare it with the *King James*. Let's compare it with the *New International Version*. Let's look at it in Arabic. Only thing I have against the Arabic version, it calls God *Allah*. I don't know how to solve that, because I'm not an Arab. But there it is. Look at that!

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.... [Now the Word is all of the message of Christ.] ...The one who does **not** love Me... [Again, notice the dividing line. There's no halfway in-between. Except someone who has had the Spirit and has become Laodicean or has become like a Sardisite or has become like a Thyatiran or has become like a Pergamon, who have incorporated too many of the things of men and the doctrines of this world into their teachings. Otherwise it's clear-cut.] ...The one who does not love Me does not keep My words...” (vs 23-24).

Very interesting play on words with the word, *word*. You have *Word*, which means the *entire message*. You have *words*, which means each and every single word. “...and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, Who sent Me” (v 24). Isn't that something? Let's take this a little bit further.

Let's talk about the individuals in the Church now. When we are here together, we are an assembly of believers. When we are not together in services on the Sabbath, we are all part of the body of Christ. Now let's see what Paul says in Colossians; we'll look at several places in Colossians, because then we will end up with: What is the government of God? You're going to be surprised. *The government of God is not the ministry!* Note that—***it is not the ministry!*** We'll talk about the ministers a little later.

(go to the next track)

Now Paul, in opening every one of his epistles, gives an opening very similar to what he gives right here. And what I want you to do, I want

you to think about the words as we read them. Then think about your current church experience and ask the question: Is this what I'm experiencing? And if I'm not, then why not? And if I'm not, then the question becomes—like we talked about with the book here and these things are here—*Lord, What Should I Do?*

Colossians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle by the will of God..." Now remember who Paul was before he became Paul? *He was Saul!* He was the same as Heinrich Himmler. **God can convert anyone!** And what did Paul finally say of himself in Eph. 3? How much did Paul exalt himself over the brethren? *He didn't!* He said that 'this knowledge of the mystery of God has been given to me and I am the least of all the saints.' Think of that! That was Paul's attitude.

"...by the will of God... [So can God convert a person? *Certainly!* Conversion is a process and it's not a Slam! Bang! once done, everything is finished.] ...by the will of God, and Timothy *our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ...* [What did we talk about? *The Spirit of Christ!* And also read more there in Rom. 8. But it's very important concerning the *government of God in your life personally* and then what is it collectively when we get together.] ...*who are* in Colosse: Grace and peace... [He wants you to understand the grace of God comes to you continually. And that's why this latest series, *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping.*] ...and peace..." (vs 1-2). Not fighting and warring. We don't need fighting and warring. We all have a lot to overcome; I have a lot to overcome. We all have a lot to learn; I have a lot to learn.

Listen, we're preparing for eternal life. And if you want to know, let's do this. We've done this before, but let's do it again. *The dot.* Remember the dot? Take your pen and make a dot a piece of paper. That's how big we all were when we were conceived. Look at us now. God had all that programmed in there and look where we are now. Look at that dot again and understand that with the begetting of God's Spirit in us—spiritually speaking, compared to what we will be at the resurrection—we're like this little dot. So why get all exalted? No use getting all exalted. That's why God wants us

- to *love* each other
- to *help* each other
- to *serve* each other

When we come together as brethren we have joy in the Lord, peace in the Lord. That doesn't mean we have to go around and hand-clapping, foot-stomping, rolling in the aisles.

"...Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.... [Remember '**WE** will make our abode with him,' dwelling in us.]

...We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **praying for you continually**" (vs 1-2).

Note that, that's one of the things every minister should be doing:

- praying for the brethren daily
- praying for those who are sick
- praying for those who need work
- praying for those who have difficulties and problems

—especially when there's turmoil in the Church:

- What happens? *Depression, questions!*
- What's happening?
- How come this is going on?

And you hear of the intrigue behind the scenes. Is that from God or is that from men? And maybe an additional source behind that as well. "...praying for you continually since hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love that *you have* toward all the saints" (vs 3-4).

Now the report that I got from the Feast down there in La Quinta was that it was a fantastic Feast and very, very loving because you all stayed in the same hotel, you had meals provided every night, Monday through Thursday, and they had lots of spirits, wine. And even the whole management and all of the ones working there at the motel got into the spirit of things and were happy to see us and we were loving each other, learning from each other, and it was just about the right size, and likewise in all the Feast sites, because we are doing like Paul. We are looking to God the Father and Jesus Christ; we're not exalting any man. God works through men, and God is working through all the brethren—correct?

This way you'll understand more of the real government of God when we get into it. "...love that *you have* toward all the saints; Because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, which you heard before in the word of the Truth of the Gospel; which has come to you, even as *it* also *has* in all the world... [This then, becomes a prophecy, as well as a statement, that Paul wrote at that time.] ...and is bringing forth fruit, just as *it is* among you, from the day that you heard and knew the grace of God in truth... [Now you can hear of the grace of God not in truth and that's mostly in the Protestant organizations.] ...even as you also learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you... [Notice the difference and the approach and the attitude of those who were helping Paul. Same attitude.] ...Who has also informed us of your love in *the Spirit*" (vs 4-8). The love of God is manifest through the Spirit of God.

Verse 9: "For this cause we also, from the day that we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled... [This is the whole purpose of what God is doing. Today we can have this fulfilled even more.] ...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will... [Isn't that the most important thing? Instead of 'Lord, what should I do?' 'Lord, what are You doing?' His answer is, *I've got it in the book.*] ...in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Not just the carnal understanding of intellect or power of thought of human beings. Because what happens? You read Rom. 1, 'Those who profess themselves to be wise, become foolish.' Why? *Because the first they do is reject God* and they end up saying, 'Oh, everything came from nothing. Started with a *big bang.*' You know what God's answer is? *Go get your own big bang!*

"That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work... [you must have works—what kind?] ...and growing in the knowledge of God... [This is why we have Sabbath services every week. God wants us to grow up into Christ. That's a tall order.] ...being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy" (vs 10-11). He shows there, there are going to be difficulties. There are going to be troubles. We can overcome them all. We don't have to worry. Trust in God.

You've heard it said how many times since you've been in church—prayer and study—correct? But what has been missing, the *prayer and study is for a relationship or fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ!* That is the primary important thing in our lives. What has happened too much in churches of God, as well as churches of the world, they have made getting together for church meetings as the primary thing. That is only fruitful when you've taken care of your relationship first. Notice, Paul said he prayed daily.

- Do we pray daily?
- Do we cry out to God daily?
- Are we yielding to God?

If we're doing that, and be filled with the love of God, what happens when we come together to meet? *Well, we love each other, we accept each other, we know God is dealing with us.* We don't have to have these fights. We don't have to have hassles. We don't have to have any of that stuff. You don't have to wonder what's going on. You'll know what's going on. God is working in your life and the lives of everyone.

Verse 12: "Giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified... [Isn't that interesting?] ...for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light... [How many times have you heard it, 'Oh, brethren,

you've got to do this to be qualified.' *No!* You go to God the Father and through His Spirit, through His Word, through His character being built in you, *He qualifies you*, because you belong to the Father.] (Never forget this): ...**Who has personally rescued us...**" (vs 12-13). Now it depends on the severity of your situation. Have you ever been in a very severe situation where you needed to be rescued?

Well, as I wrote in a recent letter, think about the miners 2,200 feet below, down there for 17 days they didn't know whether they were going to live or going to die. They didn't know whether anyone knew they were there or not. Someone says, 'Well, there weren't 33 down here, there were 34, because God was with us.' Can God be with the workers down there? Let's not be so stupid and foolish as to think that God only works with those who are supposed to be His and nobody else in the world. Can God answer prayers of anybody in the world anywhere? *Yes!* Were they down there praying? *Yes!* Were they sincere? Boy, if you're 2,200 feet down in the tomb, you're going to be sincere—right? 'Oh, Lord, help!' *He did!*

He put it in the minds of the officials to drill a hole down to that safety chamber to see if they were there, because they couldn't pronounce them dead until they officially knew they weren't alive. So they drilled down there and they said, 'Hello, we're here!' Then they were rescued. ***God the Father has rescued us—personally***—from Satan the devil. Now think of what that means. It means this: Why go to the false Christian religions of this world and say, 'Oh, how should I worship God'? They don't know because God is not there. God could be. Many things that they do are right. They're blessed because of it, but that doesn't mean they're converted. What did we start out with? '*If anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.*' So they belong to the many that Jesus said would believe and follow, though they preach the name of Christ.

"...made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light; Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness and has transferred us unto the kingdom of the Son of His love.... [That means *unto*, not *into*. Why? Why are you not *in* the Kingdom of God right now? *You're unto!* *You're physical!* 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' So what was one of the first doctrines we heard years ago? 'Oh, you're already in the Kingdom of God.'] ...**unto** the kingdom of the Son of His love; In Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins; Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* firstborn of all creation" (vs 12-15). Now what does that mean? Some people read this and say, 'Oh, well, Jesus was a created being.' What does this

mean? It *means of all the created beings*, which were being created in the image of Christ—right? Was Christ the firstborn from the dead? That's what it's talking about, not His physical birth.

"Because by Him were all things created... [Now if He was created, how could He create all things? Did He create Himself? *No!*] ...all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist" (vs 16-17). By His Word He holds up all the universe (Heb. 1-3).

Verse 18: "And He is the Head of the body, the Church... [We're all connected to Christ. The Church is the body of Christ, not the corporate organization. *The body of Christ consists of everyone wherever they are that has the Spirit of God.* So as God looks down on the earth, His view of the Church is far different that when we come together to meet on the Sabbath Day.] ...Who is *the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead...* [Now that's what it means 'the firstborn of all creation.' He was the firstborn from among the dead to become resurrected as the very Son of God Who was God before He became Jesus in the flesh.] ...so that in all things He Himself might hold the pre-eminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell; and **having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven"** (vs 18-20). Then it talks about how we were alienated by wicked works, etc.

Paul talks about completing the Word of God (v 25). Verse 26: "*Even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints." Now think about this:

- How much of the Word of God do we know today? *We know a lot!*
- Do we know more than other generations in the past? *Yes!*
- Are we living in the end-times when it was told Daniel that in the end the wise shall understand, but none of the wicked shall understand?

If we're wise and have understanding

- Where does that come from?

We just read it here. *Wisdom comes from God!*

So everything we know, brethren, let's never get conceited and get puffed up, church against church, or brethren against brethren. And say, 'Well, we know this, you don't know that.' And 'where have you been all this time?' That's not the way it should be. But we have given to us the greatest opportunity of any generation in the history of the

Churches of God. And unfortunately, there are too many who fall into that nasty Laodicean spirit—right? I think the best way to overcome being a Laodicean is this: We have been Laodiceans from day one—right? That's where all of our problems are coming from—correct? But we can repent, can't we? *Yes!*

"To whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (v 27). That's where we started—correct? '*If any have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*' and '*if any does not have the Spirit of Him Who raised Him from the dead...*' If you do, He's going to quicken your mortal bodies.

I'm not going to go through all of Colossians 2. We have quite a few sermons online concerning this (Colossians series), but here is the intrusion of pagan doctrines into the Church. And remember that at the end he says, 'When you're done reading this in the Church of Colosse, have it read in the Church of the Laodiceans as well.' So this is a message for us today.

Colossians 2:6: "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him; being rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (vs 6-7). And we saw earlier, *growing in grace and knowledge*. You know, brethren, as long as we live, as long as we study the Bible, we can grow in grace and knowledge. We're never going to learn everything that's in the Bible, even though we have the whole Bible. Why? *It's inspired by the mind of God! Every word is God breathed.* And there's precept upon precept and line upon line, and here a little and there a little. So we grow in grace and knowledge continually.

The whole thing we need to do, brethren, is learn as much as we can and have that all ready for those who come after us. A lot of us mistakenly thought—I remember years back we thought, hey, we'd never get old, but look at us now. Then the question becomes: What are we going to leave for those who follow us? *They're going to follow us!* I think that a good number of us grey hairs, senior citizens, we're going to go to our place of safety, and that is spelled g-r-a-v-e. Won't you be perfectly safe there? *Yes, indeed!*

Those who die in the faith have assurance that they're going to be resurrected. So when that happens, it'll happen with us, it happened recently. So what is our focus, those of us who are still alive? That we're going to meet them in glory. So we need to double down and do better—right?

Just a little sidebar here: I believe that when we're resurrected, God is going to implant in our minds all the same language. Otherwise, how are we going to communicate? On the Sea of Glass, when the saints are resurrected to meet Christ and all be there together—correct?—it's not going to be another tower of Babel where no one knows who's saying what. 'Hello, who are you? I'm looking for Moses?' *No!* We're all going to have the same language. There are going to be some great things take place on the Sea of Glass.

So focus on that and realize what God is doing to us and realize that our lives are like that little speck on the piece of paper. And when the resurrection occurs, we're going to go, 'Whoa! Look at that!' Just how all that's going to work out, that's all in God's hands. Our job is to make it to that place of safety, six feet under. For those who are alive, it's your job to witness for Christ and whatever may come, may come. Now there will be some few taken to a place of safety, but believe me, it's not going to work out the way that most people think.

Verse 8: "Be on guard... [So we are to be on guard and watch out. This is what has to happen internally within the Church. And every one of us are responsible for this.] ...Be on guard so that no one takes you captive... [Or as the *King James* says, 'makes a prey of you.'] ...through philosophy and vain deceit..."

What is philosophy? *The foundation of the religions of this world!* Remember what happened? Remember we had that long series, *God Is?* Remember the booklet that came out, *God Is?* Someone asked me, 'What do you think of this?' I said, 'This is designed to confuse you, so they can change the doctrine.' That's why you have to be on guard. Now if you're not praying, if you're not studying, and if you don't know your Scriptures, then the subtleties can come in and you become a prey.

"...according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; And you are complete in Him... [That tells us what? We don't need the philosophies of men. We don't need the teachings of other religions. **We need Christ!**] ...Who is the Head of all principality and power" (vs 8-10).

Let's come to Colossians 3; this gives us, and leads up to: What is the government of God? Here is the goal to always keep in mind, because we're also going to learn: What is the government of God in your life? Colossians 3:1: "Therefore, if you have been raised together with Christ... [from the watery grave] ...seek the things that are above, where

Christ is sitting at *the* right hand of God. Set your affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died... [through baptism] ...and your life has been hid together with Christ in God. When Christ, *Who is* our life, is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory" (vs 1-4). Now notice how Paul does this. Over and over again you will see this is the design of the Bible, because it's inspired of God or God breathed.

- God gives the goal
- He gives the instruction
- He gives the warning

and then He tells us what to do. See that right here? Here's what we are to do:

- keep your mind on Christ
- keep your eyes on the goal
- keep your heart right with God

and then do this to the flesh: "Therefore, put to death your members which *are* on earth—sexual immorality, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (v 5).

That's called in one word: *overcoming*. It's called in another word, '*bringing every thought into captivity to Christ.*' When something comes up, because a temptation will come along, be sure and go through the sermon, *Seven Steps to Sin*. Temptation or a thought in the mind is not sin, but it can lead to sin. So what do you do when a temptation comes in?

- you mentally grab a hold of it
- you mentally cast it down
- you ask God for help and strength to overcome
- you ask for the Spirit of God to have the *washing of the water by the Word*

You take all of those things, because everything that we are—and this is why all the church wars that we go through are really so terrible.

- it creates *emotional problems*
- it creates *doubts*
- it creates *fear*
- it creates *inordinate control* over the brethren
- all those combined create *mental angst*

Ever gone through that? You ever come home from church just all tied up, feels like everything is grating the wrong way? *That's mental angst!* Put that all on Christ. *Get rid of that!* The reason is—and I'm convinced, much of the sickness that we have within the Church is because of *church wars*. So get out of the way of the line of fire, and I mean *serious things*. That's why it's important that we forgive. That's why it's important that we ask God to deal with those who perpetrate such things.

- Pray for their repentance.
- Pray that God will lead them to the Truth.

Now they have it right there in front of them. Will they do it or not? Don't be mad at them and let that linger in your mind, and let that build up resentment and let that build up bitterness, because you can be guaranteed you're going to come down with something very serious if you do. Stop and think about that!

Verse 9: "Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have put off the old man together with his deeds, And have put on the new man, who *is* being renewed in knowledge according to *the* image of Him Who created him" (vs 9-10). That's the whole purpose of conversion, brethren. Do you see it? See how far that when there are church wars, they miss the mark. 'Follow this man, follow this man, follow the other man.' Stop! Whoa! Time out! **Look to Christ! Follow Christ!** That's what to do. Ask God to help you and lead you in what you need to do. And those of us who have been through it and have found peace and knowledge and understanding, be a helping hand to them; be a helping hand so that they can recover themselves.

Now v 12: "Put on then, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness *and* longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another... [That's the key thing.] ...if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you *should* forgive. **And above all these things put on love...**" (vs 12-14). That's the key: **Love God with all your heart and mind and soul and being!** We have to pray about that every day. I pray every day, brethren, that God will lead all of us to

- **walk in faith**
- **believe in hope**
- **live in love**

That's what it has to be. If there is not the love of God out there and Christ and God the Father to lead us, to inspire us; God wants us to be inspired. When you're inspired, you can overcome—right? Can you overcome if someone is up there with a whip beating you and lashing you with words? *No!*

- we all come to Christ
- we all come to the Truth
- we all desire the love of God

—that God would inspire us, and He will, and He does. "And above all these things *put on* love, which is *the* bond of perfection" (v 14).

Now, here is the government of God directly in your life. It's not the Church.

- it's not the minister
- it's not the deacon

- it's no one else but God the Father and Jesus Christ to you

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." (v 15). *That's the government of God!*

Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God." *That's the government of God.* Yes, we're to follow those who are serving you. What is the role of the ministry and the elders in all of this? What should that be? And how, if that is properly done, all of us together, we can overcome these things. We don't need church wars. We don't need church fights. We don't need to have anything against anyone else. If there's a problem, pray that God will help them overcome it. If there's a difficulty that is so bad, we have the process that Jesus talked about as recorded in Matt. 18, you go to your brother—right? *Yes!*

Don't go to someone else, go to the one involved. If you're afraid to go to the one involved, then you start out by saying, 'Well, I do need to talk to you, but I'm kind of afraid to talk to you.' Now you phrase it that way so that you will disarm the person so that they won't get really angry and mad at you. Now if we're all doing that, and we have right here, Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..."

And where did Paul start out? Colossians 1:2: "Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ."

Colossians 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..." *That is the direct government of God to you.* It is spiritual, internal, and not outward, I mean not from outside from other people to you, but *from God through His Spirit directly to you and in you and through you.* That's where it is.

When we get together, do we have order and things here? *Yes, we do!* Unfortunately, some run the churches like it was an army. Never does! Look, brethren, *we're all in this together;* that's what we need to understand. That's what we need to realize. So again, the current church wars just starting to heat up again, **pray for the brethren; help them to see.**

It gets so bad that even some Churches of God stand up in the pulpit and say, 'You cannot go visit any other Church of God. You cannot talk to anyone who belongs to any other Church but this one. You cannot even talk to your own relatives because they're unconverted.' Well, how's that for the love of God? *That's not the love of God!*

Did Jesus talk to people in the world? *Yes!* What does it say there about the husband and the wife? *1-Cor. 7:* If you have an unbelieving husband or unbelieving wife—what is it? *You win them over by your conduct, by your love!* You don't say, if you're a woman, 'Well, I don't have to submit to you because you're not in the Church.' A husband



might say to his wife who is not in the Church, 'Well, I'm going to treat you differently, because you're not in the Church.' God doesn't want that. Does He even want carnal people to love one another? *Yes!* Well, how much more all of us.

That's why if you have brethren in some other church, you want to go visit them, go visit them. Call them on the phone, talk to them, have them over to your house. If we're all in Christ, what are we afraid of? *There's nothing to be afraid of!* But that's a spirit of fear and control. Who is to rule in your life? Christ or the edict of a minister? ***Christ!*** That's what it's all about.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Romans 8:7-11, 9
- 2) John 14:15
- 3) Revelation 14:12
- 4) Matthew 5:48
- 5) John 14:16-17, 13-14, 21-24
- 6) Colossians 1:1-20, 26-27
- 7) Colossians 2:6-10
- 8) Colossians 3:1-5, 9-10, 12-15
- 9) Romans 8:14
- 10) Colossians 3:15
- 11) Colossians 1:2
- 12) Colossians 3:15

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Ephesians 3
- Romans 1
- Hebrews 1-3
- Colossians 1:25
- Matthew 18
- 1-Corinthians 7

Also referenced:

- Sermons:
  - ✓ *Fourteen Things to Happen in Prophecy Before the End Comes*
  - ✓ *Seven Steps to Sin*
- Sermon Series:
  - ✓ *God's Grace & Commandment-Keeping*
  - ✓ *IF Statements of the Bible*
  - ✓ *The Spirit of God, The Seven Spirits of God*
- Booklet: *Lord, What Should I Do?*
- Bible computer program: *Accordance*

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