

Elder's Conference Report

Fred R. Coulter—May 16, 2015

Website Updates:

I had a very long two weeks or 12 days. All the plane flights were on time for me, and I made it really well. I first went to South Bend Indiana because that's only 40 miles from Ron and Erin Cary who do the web mastering for **cbcg.org**. We went over a lot of things, clarified a lot of things. It has to be continually updated.

Every week they have to put on the audio, the transcript and the video. Then they receive all of the e-mails coming into **cbcg.org**: all of the orders—we're getting a lot of orders. We had to reprint *Lord, What Should I Do?* And we had to re-order the reading of *Lord, What Should I Do?* We went through 6,000 of those.

We are sending out a lot of material, and people are responding. We are getting close to 200,000 distinct visitors a month. This last report we had: 176,000/month. All of those combined. The time on the website was 7 minutes and 5 seconds—average time for all of them. They've downloaded a lot of material: audio, video, booklets, and then over on **afaitfulversion.org** we are now getting close to 30,000 distinct visitors, and the time there is a whole lot longer, because people use it for Bible study and things like that. As Ron said, that probably will end being the most used website of all; which I hope so.

In going over everything we needed to do there, what we needed to update, how we handle all the things. When Ron gets the orders, he sends those all in to Kimberly, and she takes the orders and begins filling them out, and then Terry and Bonnie help out with that. I spent three days with the Carys.

It's very interesting; Erin is into special seeds, rare seeds. They showed me one stock of four plants from one seed that each head had over 60 grains in it. That is 240%. The Bible says: 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold; here's 240!

They are getting those rare, rare seeds to reestablish a line of them. He's getting wheat, barley and rye; also getting beans and corn. We had some beans for lunch and they were really good and were gas-free. What can I say? *They were delicious!*

Ron is also into chickens. He orders these rare fertile eggs and then hatches them. Since they live in Michigan and it's cold there, he sent off and got some eggs from Iceland. So, he has a couple of Iceland roosters and they're really something! He's going to send off for some eggs from Siberia. They have a down underneath the feathers that keeps them warm. That works real good.

International Update:

Then I went over to Cincinnati, actually Florence, Kentucky where the Hilton Hotel is, and we've had our elder's conference there for 15-plus years, I think this was 16 years there. We had a real good turnout. We have a total of 16 elders altogether.

Roy Assanti and his wife took a very long extended tour. They left Australia, came to Italy. He went to South Africa while she visited her folks there in Italy. Then they had Danko Wylupek and his wife from Croatia over and he and his wife were baptized.

Then they went up to London and spent some time with the brethren there and David Obey and his wife—he's our office manager. David said, 'You have to go over to Holland.' So, he called over in Holland and he talked to a Franz Peeters. Roy said he would come over for one day, and Franz said, 'No, you have to stay two days.' Roy got over to Holland, and this man has been in the Church—he's 74—for well over 50 years. He speaks fluent English, has translated a lot of material for another Church of God that he has now departed from. He's serving the Dutch brethren. He's got a website and every thing setup.

He asked me by e-mail if he could setup a website and translate. I said yes, as long as 'you do it properly and are faithful.' I didn't know who he was or his background, or anything like that. It was obvious that they needed an elder there, so Roy called me and said, 'What do you think about ordaining him; after telling me all about it, I said yeah, go ahead and ordain him as an elder. So, we have a new elder, Franz Peters in Holland.

Then in South Africa, Roy went down there, and Helmut Berger who is an attorney and he manages the office down there. The brethren are all scattered in So. Africa, but they get together somewhat on the Holy Days. We also had him ordained as an elder, too, because they need that down there.

So, we have a total of 16 elders altogether now, and we're very happy that God has raised them up in that area to serve the brethren.

While we're small here, everything is growing every place else, and we're happy about that.

Conference Report:

Then at the conference, the main thing we covered was—which related to the conference last year. Right toward the end of last year's conference (2014) Roger Kendall and Marlin Fannin, both elders, came and told me that with new elders coming in, 'What do you think about an elder's manual?' I said that was a good idea, why don't you two write it!

So, during this past year they wrote an elder's manual, and we covered a great part of that during the conference this year. Let's see the basis for everything: elders, brethren, teachers, all that come to God. Everything that is done must fit these Scriptures that we are talking about here. Everything that is in the New Testament and the Old Testament, and our relationship with God, understanding the Word of God is all based upon this.

I'm going to go over this and then I'm going to tell you one of the greatest problems that the brethren have when they get together, if they don't get together on a regular basis, and for those who have been in Worldwide (formerly Church of God) that presents some great challenges for everybody.

Matthew 22:35: "And one of them, a doctor of the law, questioned *Him*, tempting Him, and saying, 'Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?' And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'" (vs 35-37). ***That has to be primary in everyone's life!***

Too many people—especially in the world—have God in this corner that they go to one day a week, and then they live their life the rest of the week according to how they want to live. Even that affects some people in the Churches of God. Our calling is to eternal life and it's a full-time learning, tutoring, growing, overcoming, based upon this: ***love God with all your heart, soul and mind!***

Verse 38: "This is *the* first and greatest commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets**" (vs 38-40). That's what it's all about!

Matt. 28 applies to anyone who is an elder, anyone who is teaching, and to all the brethren they are asked questions, and how they point it out to others from the Bible. You should have a Bible so that you have learned enough of the Bible, that you can talk about it without necessarily turning there. This is what we are dealing with, because a church is not an organization for ministers to rule and dominate. That is the antithesis of what God wants from the elders.

Matthew 28:18: And Jesus came *and* spoke

to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations, **baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things** that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.' Amen" (vs 18-20).

This is an ongoing thing that we need to do. Let's look at another Scripture as to how it is to be in teaching the brethren. In John 21 Jesus made this three times for Peter because Peter denied Him three times, but it is here for anyone who is going to be an elder or teacher. It is to help *perfect the saints*, to help them have *a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ*.

This is so very important for us to understand, because no minister can—or nobody else—do what you need to do! There can be ***no man in authority between you and God!*** All the elders are to be like teachers on the sidelines teaching the brethren on how to live their lives, overcoming and keeping a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

- Enter in *traditions*, and what did Jesus say about traditions? ***Condemned them!***
- Enter in teachings and suppositions of men, ***no way!***

Here's what Jesus said to Peter, John 21:15: "Therefore, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, **do you love Me more than these?**...." What does that do? ***That eliminates politics!*** You cannot have political favorites.

"...*And* he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'" (v 15). {note Ezek. 33}

- What happens with the ministers who don't do that?
- Ruling over them with a heavy hand?
- Trampling down the spiritual pasture that they should be feeding in?

Verse 16: "He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me?' *And* he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.'" In that the shepherd ***leads*** them.

There's something about sheep that's very interesting: ***They follow***; you cannot ***drive*** them! Cattle you have to drive. ***Sheep follow!***

Verse 17: "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do

you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'" This is so we can all grow in grace and knowledge.

Here is another one that is greatly lacking in too many places, John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you..."—a special commandment. This is very difficult because God calls different people from different backgrounds and things like this into a fellowship or congregation. We're all different, and we are all in various stages of learning, growing and overcoming.

"...**that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you**, that *is how* you are to love one another" (v 34).

This, in the discussions we had at the conference, is one of the greatest missing things in the fellowship groups. We'll talk about this a little bit more.

Verse 35: "By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—**if** you love one another." This is one of the difficulties that has happened through all the church experiences that has happened with nearly every one of us who have come through various Churches of God **because**:

- we've been *offended*
- we've had to *stand for the Truth*
- we've had to *resist the tares* that came in amongst us
- we've had to *fight false prophets*
- we've had to *fight false doctrines*
- we've had to *fight against the hierarchy* ruling over the brethren with a heavy hand

That has left its spiritual and emotional mark in the lives of too many brethren! That is very hard to change and overcome!

Steve Durham—our elder in Indianapolis, Indiana—ordained last year and what he has done with the fellowship group he has, about 18-22 people. All of them have come through the same church experience we have come, and he ended up with the same problems there.

He asked me what he should do, so I said that he should get the *Love series*, and Ken is making many, many copies of the *Love series*. It contains 26 messages on the love of God, going through the whole Bible. We have it in our *Transcript Book* form, and what Steve did is order the CDs, which has all the messages, and he said, 'I want you to study one sermon during the week, listening to it and going through the transcript at the same time. Then when you come here Sabbath, what we're going to do is go through it again, but we're also going to talk about your impressions of it as you were listening to it, and what did you learn?'

He says that has really been tremendous and brought the whole group together. It was over a period of time to do that. Then he is following up with the *Grace of God* series:

- *Grace of God in the Bible*
- *Grace of God and Commandment-Keeping*
- *Grace Upon Grace*

What you will find in all of these studies is you will see how we progress, how we all learn together and grow in grace and knowledge, and understand new things as we come along.

We are to continue to grow in grace and knowledge. That's what being *perfected* is all about. Tying in with *Grace Upon Grace*, which is our personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, that is the most important.

What you need to do with those things is let those sink deep into your heart and mind so you can learn to love God.

There are some brethren that hold grudges, that hate different one, that actually have told people: 'I despise So and So.' How is that for the love of God? *That can't work! That won't work!* Your behavior must also reflect that!

We're all carnal and there are going to be times when we're going to 'lose it!' Sometimes you have to deal with people strongly, because after many, many repeated efforts otherwise, in a milder manner, they don't get it! So, sometimes you have to warn them: *if you continue in the way that you are going, you need to ask yourself: Will you be in the Kingdom of God?*

I've got a message on *settling the differences that you have with brethren*, because **you must do it!** You must, God says, 'When there is *repentance, forgive!*' Jesus makes a very strong statement in Matt. 18.

We covered all those various things on what we need to do to feed the flock, to serve the brethren, to bring them the Truth, and how we can all grow and overcome. Every elder must grow and overcome. We must be continually learning. After all, ***these are the words of eternal life!***

Eternal life is going to be much greater than from the day you were born until wherever you are now in life in the flesh. It's going to be so much greater than that! We have all the Word of God so we can learn. But:

- ***IF*** we learn knowledge and not love
- ***IF*** we have understanding but not faith

then we must get into those areas and grow and overcome!

After explaining why we need forgiveness, and Peter thought he was generous when he said, 'Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother in a day? Seven times?' This is a test of patience! This is a test of Truth!

Jesus said, 'NO! Seven times seventy!' Then there was the parable about the servant who owed the debtor 10,000 talents, and the debtor forgave the servant. Then the one who was forgiven went out and he found a man who owed him a hundred coins. He took him by the neck and said, 'Pay me what you owe!'

The man told the servant, 'I'll pay you when I get it.' The servant wasn't happy with that and threw him into prison.

Well, when the debtor [God] found out about it, what did he do? When the debtor [Lord] forgave the 10,000 and the servant was brought before him, he said, 'I forgave you 10,000 and you didn't forgive him 100. I'm going to deliver you into the prison or tormentors until you pay every last thing, *because you didn't forgive!*' Those are pretty strong words! Yes, indeed!

Matthew 18:35, Jesus said: **"Likewise shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart."**

This is not talking about doctrinal offenses. That's a different case; that's right and wrong, Truth and error. If there is no repentance there then they are to be put out, or go find someplace else.

As we grow in grace and knowledge, we learn things and some things are difficult to understand, and it takes some people longer to learn them. That's fine! But when someone comes in... And we all have experienced it, and this is why we have this shield of protection around our emotions and feelings. After you've been 'beaten up' and had enough trouble, you don't want it again!

This is the major problem, and I think that the way Steve Durham did it was the best way to solve it. It can be on an individual basis or a fellowship basis, whatever, and it takes time.

A message on forgiveness will be forthcoming. That is the substance of the Elder's Conference and we will include many message, especially Roy Assanti's message on his globe-girdling trip that he took. That was quite a thing that he did. I was very happy that he was able to do that, and very happy that we have two more new elders serving in an area where they really, really need an elder. I'm sure that God will bless them and God will be with them in what they do.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 22:35-40
- 2) Matthew 28:18-20
- 3) John 21:15-17
- 4) John 13:34-35
- 5) Matthew 18:35

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Ezekiel 33

Book: *Lord, What Should I Do?* by Fred R. Coulter
Sermon Series:

- *Love*
- *Grace of God*

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