

=====
A Sermon Transcribed
=====

RESTORE CHURCH UNITY NOW!

By: John Elliott
(August 10, 2019)

I'd like to talk about some of the most irrational things that exist in the Cosmos.

We live in a world where you and I have been given an anchor. We've been given a rock, to hold on to. We understand that the planets spin around, the world spins around, society spins around, and yet we can have peace in God and we can be stable. But there are some irrational things that we witness and more and more as time goes on, we will see things that are just absolute craziness. For instance, people in the same nation, people in the same government, people with the same goals and values and ideals, same country, same laws, the same aspirations for their country - tearing it apart, ridiculing the country, ridiculing each other, ridiculing the leadership, ridiculing the very laws, dishonoring each other, openly. People who are trying to contribute to the government, ripping apart the government, on the world scene, and embarrassing the nation, embarrassing one of what you might call the "Guardians of the Free World", freely and openly, for all to see.

But these actions merely mirror what's happening in so many other levels within the human domain. You have a company. A company is a blessing, it has an objective, it has an end product. And that company is supported by its employees who support families, who support communities. People rely on that company. They are of a similar mindset, similar goals, similar hopes. They need it. And yet people today rip apart the company. They sell off its secrets. They ridicule the company. They ridicule the leaders of the company. In front of the whole world, they bring that company into disrepute on the global stage.

Couples in love, the most special, sweet thing that exists in humanity, that God gave husbands, wives, men and women, boys and girls, the opportunity to have that thrill of somebody loving you, loving them back, having a family. Couples in love, criticizing each other, tearing each other apart, to others, ridiculing, making fun, poking fun, telling stories - in public. Getting lawyers, going on the news, saying how bad the family is, how horrible the other person is. Defaming their own family, their own future, and really their own children and grandchildren, leaving a legacy of shame.

In 2 Timothy 3, verse 1, we find that this mindset is a hallmark of the times in which we live. It says, but know this, that in the last days, perilous, dangerous, times will come. For - *the reason they're perilous, the reason they're dangerous is this* - For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters of themselves, proud of themselves, blaspheming others, disobedient to

family, to parents - unthankful of what others have done for them, that have enabled them to even get there, to contribute. Yep... Unloving, unforgiving, slanderers without self-control, brutal towards others, despisers of things that are good - traitors to the ones who love and support them, traitors to those who are loyal to them - headstrong, haughty, inflated.

Verse 5, having a form of godliness. Uh oh. Having a form of godliness... Could you and I, living in the end time, with a form of godliness, stray into any of these mindsets, any of these deeds that would affect our family, our country, our mouth, our view of other people? Could we take on any of these elements ourselves, in the Church of God?

Let me tell you probably the most irrational, craziest thing that exists in the entire universe. The last remnant of Church members, that God has called, who have - doctrine in common, God's Spirit in common, the goals and the values of God's law in common, the Kingdom of God in common, Jesus Christ the Lord, the Savior, God the Father, all in common. The same opinions, the same beliefs. This group, picked on by outsiders, sometimes persecuted by outsiders. Biblical prophecy talks about it will try to be exterminated by outsiders. These people have chosen division, separation, criticism, defaming one another, individually, in groups, on the Internet, ***for all the world to see.***

And we call ourselves the One body of Christ. Could you and I have fallen - into an end-time mindset - that God predicted that a world with pride, criticism, despises of good, will absorb? We are to come out of this world. We're not to be part of this world. Satan broadcasts the same mindset everywhere. He wants to tear up and remove good relationships and unity wherever he can.

So today let's examine what we should be thinking, doing, and saying, as this end time scenario rolls out that has been prophesied, as we move closer to the finish line, for all of the members of the Church of God and the body of Christ. The title of the sermon today is "Restore Church Unity Now". Now, you might think, hmm, I wonder where he's going with this. I'm not going anywhere personally. These aren't the ideas of John Elliot, and if you see any, please disregard them. *We're going to actually look in the Bible. We're going to see what God the Father and Jesus Christ, we're going to see what the Head of this Church says, we should be doing, and what we should not be doing.*

I ask myself, can I hold two mindsets at the same time? Can I hold agape love and hate in the same body? Can this fruit tree be of one type of fruit that's good and the other type bitter at the same time? Jesus asked that question. Can I have humility and arrogance in the same mind? Let's look in Titus chapter 3 and verse 1, and see what God's ministry was inspired for, the ministry, to tell the members, to encourage the members of the Church. Titus chapter 3 and verse 1, just as an introduction, remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities. Not critical of them. We weren't called somehow with a greater mental understanding because we have God's truth and now we can slice and dice everybody on our radar.

In our home, in our church, in our leaders, in our community, in our companies, in our church leaders, I mean our world leaders. We can just, we are so smart. It doesn't say that. Mind then to be subject to rulers and all authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. That's the spiritual result of God's Spirit, the good work. To speak evil of no one. Ever hear the word no? What does that mean? No one. Speak evil of no one. To be peaceable, from the Greek word that means harmonious, harmony, gentle, showing all humility to all men. Not arrogance, not pride, not assertiveness.

The *opposite* of what the end-time mindset will be is what we are told to be subject to and to pursue in our lives. Verse 3, for we ourselves were also, just like Timothy described, we were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasure - notice, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. We were there, we've been there. We may still be there to a degree, because we have to overcome and grow, don't we? We're not just perfect immediately. These should be the things that we are working towards getting rid of. We're called to repent. Jesus said the kingdom is coming, therefore repent. He didn't say, therefore criticize, therefore feel bigger and better and exalted and proud. No.

Can we in the body of Christ hold both oneness and separation? Humility and ridicule? Can love of God exist in 500 bodies of hate and division? Again, these are some questions that you and I may *justify* in our own lives in various scenarios and various situations, but can we, in the light of the Word of God? Let's look today at the Word of God, because we humans can get full of ourselves, full of our knowledge, *full of our group*, full of our traditions. We can compete, we can criticize, defame. And in doing so, what are we doing? We're defaming the very body in which we are called to grow, to develop, and defend.

Let's start with, how does God view us? If there's anybody who could criticize, who would it be? It would be God. Did Jesus come to criticize? He says, I came not to condemn, but to save. Let's go to 1 Peter 2, verse 9. I'm really struck when I read this, that the God who knows me inside and out, knows my weaknesses, knows my foibles, and knows my past... right, would say this, 1 Peter 2, verse 9, you are a chosen generation. I chose you. He says this to us. You're a royal priesthood. He didn't say you're some low ball, can't do anything, can't do anything right, you know, tearing us down, ripping us apart. A royal priesthood. That's what we're to be. A holy nation. His own special people. That's how God views us, and He wants us to step it up a bit. He wants us to be more like Him, more holy, more the people of His, more priests of His way, of His Kingdom.

When we look in the Bible, one thing that I find is absence is criticism of politicians, criticisms of politics, criticisms of policies in society, criticism of national governments, criticisms of national laws. You know, just look through the Bible and find that. Here you have the people of God traversing through the kingdoms of Egypt. We don't even hear about the specific laws or the individuals or how we go into Assyria, Babylon, Neo-Persia, Greece, Rome. And why isn't God just carving up the politics and covering up the politicians? You know, right in Jerusalem on the

Temple Mount, here's the Temple, and the Bible is talking about the Temple and all that goes on the temple.

Right there is the fortress of Antonia, with a garrison of Roman troops. And as you come through the city, you see people, evidently, hanging on stakes, crucified, screaming and talking to you. There's a lot of that (that) went on, up and down the roads all the time. There was taxation that was horrible by the Romans. There was Roman leaders all the way to Rome and back doing all imaginable things. Where is that in the Bible? Why don't we hear about that? Why do we feel so entitled to rip apart our society and think that, oh, somehow, we have all this insight and so we're better and we can just chew on everything and get our noses into society and be critics.

The Bible doesn't do that. It's not even looking at all the unfairness. And yet, the universal propensity of humans is to be critical. It's just something that you and I have as part of our nature, because we all feel a little insecure, our self-worth is a little low, so we can level the playing field by criticizing anybody. A spouse, a child, a friend, a neighbor, any leader, any government, anything else, and just swell up. Just swell up. Is that what the Bible tells us to do?

Oftentimes, an individual feels free to criticize his spouse. What does Jesus say? Ephesians 5, 22. Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the Head of the Church and He is the Savior of the body. The husband is to be there for the wife to save, to save the family. In other words, protect, bring life to, embellish. Therefore, verse 24, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be their own husbands in everything. And husbands, verse 25, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.

There's a couple of challenges, you know. Oftentimes a lady might find it difficult to submit to defective leadership, and be very critical of it, you see? And so there's a logical explanation for not... you see? But in doing so, we deny the miracle that God can provide for illogical decisions and the blessings that God can bring when we obey Him, even when it doesn't seem logical. And to a man, it's a little illogical sometimes to provide the ladies with what she needs, when he's so goal-oriented, challenge-oriented, needs to conquer, needs to solve. The focus is away from an individual. And so again, we can say well, my thoughts or my actions are justified here. But what are we told?

We're told to pull together. We're told to love. We're told to respect authority. We've seen it already told us, for governments, we're, we're to support it in any situation. People like to criticize parents. I say like to, it's, it's common. You know you have a parent who decides to go through all of the issues of pregnancy, and finally delivery, and all the diapers, and all the personal challenges, and all the expense, and the rearrangement of the home, and the lack of sleep, and the extra food, and the extra clothing, and all the schooling, and on and on and on, only to have the child finally grow up and turn around and say, I had lousy parents. And then the process kind of repeats itself. If you really have issues in life, go get some counseling and the counseling will say, well, let's start with your parents.

Let's find some things that they did wrong. And we'll just carve them up and slice them up. And when you really learn to hate your parents, then you can make the next step and go on to love yourself. And you can really blame all your problems on your parents. Is that in the Bible? It's part of our society. But in chapter 6, in verse 2, God says, honor your father and your mother. Honor them. Which is the first commandment with promise. You see, there's a miracle that can come when we honor authority, honor family, honor spouses, honor commitments, honor God. They come with promises. They come with miracles.

Verse 3, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. *God gets involved when we obey Him*. It doesn't matter how logical it is when we disobey Him, how much we can excuse it, how much we can rationalize it. Breaking apart and criticizing and ruining relationships - is not of God. We might say, well, but it's okay to criticize an employer. Verse five, "bond servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart as to Christ." This is a very different tact than we as humans will tend to use on our own. Verse 6, "...not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God, from the heart.

Okay well... at least we can criticize government. I mean, look at the news, really. That would be 1 Peter 2, verse 17. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King. See, when we step away from the Godly mindset, the mindset that Jesus Christ showed, what we're taught in the Scripture, and begin to justify and rationalize, we can start tearing apart the family, we can start tearing apart our companies, we can start tearing apart our society, we can start tearing apart - the body of Christ...

What did Jesus direct concerning divergent mindsets in the Church. This is a big one. What did Jesus command, direct, in His own Church, in His body? What did He say should happen with people of, slightly diverse mindsets? It's throughout the New Testament, but let's start in Matthew 13, verse 27. Again, this isn't from me. I'm not advocating anything except that we follow the Bible. Matthew 13:27, So the servants of the Owner came and said to Him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in Your field? How then does it have tares?

He's talking about the Church.

Didn't God sow good seed in the Church? How then does it have tares? And He said to them, An enemy has done this. Ah, that gives us the insight that, Satan the devil, would like to work through any of us, to have a divisive mindset, a haughty, self-expanding view of ourselves that is critical then of others and it causes separation. The devil does this.

And the servants said to him, Oh, do you want us then to go and gather them up? Shouldn't we deal with that? Shouldn't we just make this Church perfect? Shouldn't we just clean out people with other mindsets? The key here is, *do you want "us"?* And He answered, "no". Verse 29, He said, no, I do not want you... Lest while you gather up the tares, you also uproot the wheat with them. I've been attending church for 68 years. I can't tell you the number of wheat I've seen

uprooted through those years. You know, when people start criticizing, when people start infighting, when people start feeling superior, when people start making things in the Church what they want them to be, other people get uprooted, other people get discouraged. Jesus warned about offending little ones there in Matthew chapter 18. Jesus does not advocate dividing parties, factions, division. He said, remove you from the process. Verse 30, here's what He commands. Let both grow together. You know, there's another miracle that takes place there. God the father gives the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. They convince, They convict through God's Spirit. They convict through the Word of God, the written Word of God, through chastising, God can offer correction. God can bring repentance. God can perform miracles in people's minds. You and I don't need to try to do God's work for Him based on our own personal opinions. Rather, the Church is to be a binding agent - with God's Holy Spirit - of people at various stages.

Let's go to Galatians 5 and verse 20, and just consider here - from God's standpoint - what the Church is like. Sometimes we think we're all the same. Not two of us in this room are the same. Galatians 5 and verse 20. Some of these things we don't like to think about. But you break into the middle of this verse and you start with hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions. These can be leveled at the Church as we've seen it down through time, all the way from the beginning. Heresies, envy, murders, etc. And he says, of which I tell you that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

That should be clear to you and me.

If we're going to get involved in this criticism. We're going to get involved in contentions, and jealousies and selfish ambitions. We're not going to be in the Kingdom of God. We drop down. The fruit of the Spirit, verse 22, is love, joy, and peace. Total difference. We're now brought to the place where, if we're given God's Holy Spirit, it's love, as Christ commanded us, it brings joy and peace. And the peace, Irani, means harmony. Whenever you hear a choir sing a lovely song, nobody is singing the same. Think about that. First sopranos, second sopranos, first altos, second altos, tenors, first bass, second bass, there's not a single voice that's singing exactly the same. In fact, there are many things being sung there that are different.

Think about that. Different. And yet it's a beautiful harmony, isn't it? It's like the Church of God. Is everybody baptized on the same day? No. Some are just learning now and being called. Some might just be coming through the door. Some might have been in the Church 50 years. See, there are so many different places we are at, at various stages. The calling, happens for each at a different time. Knowledge then begins to come. We grow in the grace, the gifts of God, and the knowledge of God. At some point, you have obedience, it's through the doing, those who do the law of God have understanding. Understanding comes through doing. And after understanding comes, then we have wisdom. See? Along the way, people grow, along the way, people slide. All of us do. Some slip back, some come forward, some repent, some return... Hopefully, all develop God's holy, righteous character.

In 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3 - It's important for us to not think of ourselves more highly than we should, or to be separated and divisive. In verse 2, it talks about the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. Verse 3, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and Godliness. So we are given these things, we can't take pride or credit for them. Through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which we have been given exceeding great and precious promises. Notice, that through all of these, you may be, partakers of the divine nature. The divine nature of God is love and joy and harmony. Do we want that divine nature? Is that really what we're pursuing? In verse 5, it says, giving diligence to add to your faith virtue and virtue knowledge. Who has faith? Some don't have that yet.

Who has virtue and knowledge? Some are at various places. And to knowledge, self-control, and self-control, perseverance. To perseverance, Godliness. What if a person doesn't have Godliness, but they have knowledge? See, this is the Body of Christ. We're all unique, we're all different, we're all at different places. To Godliness, brotherly kindness. And to kindness, love, agape love, the mindset of God, coupled with some, at times, slipping like David, slipping like Paul, slipping like me.

We all are at various places at various times, and we are all called to be in harmony, as we pursue the Kingdom of God.

Philippians chapter 4 and verse 5, here the Apostle Paul speaks to the Church at Philippi, and he says in verse 5, let your gentleness be known to all. Not your, expertise cutting edge knife, not your higher than anyone else wisdom and knowledge, no, let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Verse 6, be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, appreciation for other people, appreciation for how you've been here, appreciation to God, appreciation to everyone.

Verse 7, and the peace of God, the harmony of God which surpasses all understanding ; just breaks through all these human, logical, things we do and feel. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. So finally, brethren, verse 8, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report. If there's any virtue, if there's anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. Fill our minds with those things. Loving others and looking at them higher than yourself and being thankful for whatever we see that is good. And these things which you learned and received, it says you do these and the God of peace will be with you, the God of harmony. You'll link up with this God of harmony. You'll be part of the harmony. That's what we're called to do.

I told you in the past that from Genesis to Revelation, whenever God shows up, people come together. Things draw together. Whenever Satan shows up, things break apart. So what am I an agent of? What does my life reflect? Is it gentle and peaceable, or is it divisive and breaks up relationships? You have Adam and Eve in the garden. Satan comes along and breaks it up. You

have Noah and his family and all the animals coming together. You have the Exodus and people coming to Ramses and going out. Let's go to Acts chapter two, Acts chapter two and verse one says, and when the day of Pentecost had fully come, this is the Church, this is the Church of Jesus Christ, rolling out.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. The Greek there, for one accord, from Thayer's means, they were all with one mind, with one accord, with one passion. See what happens. God shows up, Holy Spirit rolls out, it's just poured out on them, and they're there with one mind, one passion. Verse 44, now all who believed were together. Verse 46, so continuing daily with one accord, one mind, one passion. Christ returns, what's the first thing that happens? We all separate? No, it's quite the opposite. 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 17, I'm sure you'll remember this verse.

“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the air, and we shall always be with the Lord”. That's what happens. God shows up, we're there. He says, come sit with me on my throne. Soon as He came up from earth, He sat on His Father's throne. We sit. It's togetherness. God is a God of Oneness. Satan, of course, is about division.

I don't know if you've ever noted, but in Christ's assessment of the Church and the seven letters to the Church, in Revelation 2 and 3, out of seven, four of them have Satan mentioned. He's there. He's present. He is waiting. He is ready. He is ready for anybody who will let Moses' seat be filled with Satan's seat, with the Godly mind to do like Adam and Eve and change to a selfish mind. We need to overcome. It says at the end of each of those letters to the Church, he who overcomes.

That's what God wants. He wants us to overcome Satan. He wants us to put on that armor of God and stand. Stand in Godliness. So in 1 Peter chapter 2, and verse 1, the directive for us is, therefore, laying aside all malice and deceit and hypocrisy and evil and all evil speaking. We're to lay that aside. I can't turn to a scripture and say, brethren, let's start speaking evil.

It's just not there. I'm sorry. Sometimes I wish I could. I wish I could justify the mental machinations that humans go through - because it seems so right - especially if you've been hurt. Laying aside all malice, all deceit, all hypocrisy, all envy, all evil speaking. Verse 5, you also as living stones are being built up into a spiritual house. Take all these individual stones, God shows up, Church of God, they go into One house. You think about in the scripture what God says to us. These words will come to mind, come, gather, join, assemble, become one in one body, healed, stitched together, unity, oneness, peace, harmony.

That's what God and His Spirit are about. Love brings joy and harmony. You and I need to really focus on obeying, obeying our Husband, Jesus Christ. He gives us directives, and we need to obey our Husband. In John 13, verse 34, He said, a new commandment I give you. So He's speaking to me, speaking to you, speaking to those in His body, He says a new “Commandment” – this isn't a suggestion, it's a commandment He gives to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. This is special, this is for the Body of Christ, this is the family of God. He was the great God with

the Father on a throne in brilliance, and He gave that up to come down and be a human so that He could love us and serve us and make it possible to ultimately have everything that He has with Him and the Father.

Verse 35, by this we'll all know that you are My disciples. That's how people will know. They won't know because we have the right doctrine, they won't know because we have the right prophecy, or we're better than others. They'll know if you have that sacrificial love for one another, that He has for us. By this, all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. There's no way around this, there's no justification... of despising, denigrating, anyone, just loving one another. Have you become separated from another member of the body of Christ, then it's time you reconnected through loving one another, because love brings harmony. When doing this, it is not always reciprocated, but when doing this, it is a genuine, heartfelt appreciation and respect for another. Sometimes can be coupled with, and I'm sorry, I apologize. It's a command from your husband, the Head of the Body, to do so.

What does God want from us? You know, the book of James, if you want to just give a sort of a summary of the book of James, it's get rid of the self. James talks about almost everything in life and says, get me and the big "I" out of it. For instance, let's go to James chapter 3 and verse 14, But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, don't boast and lie against the truth. Don't say this is of God. Don't say this is excusable.

For this wisdom does not descend from above, but it is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy, self-seeking exists, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable. It goes back to that root, Irani, harmony, gentle. We're told to show our gentleness to all people, willing to yield. Yes, I don't have to have my opinion. I don't have to have my way. Full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy.

Now, verse 18, the fruit of righteousness is sown in harmony by those who make harmony. There it is, brethren. We can't walk away from these things. We need to pick up the phone, make the call, meet, connect. Oh, but he hurt me, she hurt me. Great. We do that as humans. So what? Let's go to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 12 and see what our Husband, Jesus Christ, see what the Head of the Church, the One who will either grant us salvation or won't, says about being hurt by others.

Matthew 6, verse 12, right in the model prayer outline, He says, I want you to pray this. I want you to pray this. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Which can be translated, don't forgive my debts if I don't forgive my debtors. Because it's the same thing. And to clarify it, in verse 14, for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also. But if you do not forgive their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. In other words, you won't be in the Kingdom of God.

As we've already seen, those who have this mindset of contempt for others, criticism for others, won't be in the kingdom. And I can't pay for my own sins. So if we want Christ's blood to pay for our sins, then we have to forgive others.

In James chapter 5 and verse 16, again we go back to James. This shows how, this shows the power of how relationships are healed. This shows how Church unity takes place, when there have been separations. James chapter 5, verse 16. Of course, we all liked the previous verse, how to get me healed, right? This one, you don't hear so much...

But here's what it says. Confess your trespasses to one another, in other words, apologize to one another. Apologize to one another, and admit you're hurting other people, and pray for one another - that you may be healed. The Greek word here means cured or made whole. You may be made whole. The Body of Christ is a unit, it's one, it's to be whole. The Hebrew for healed is to be stitched back together, two things apart, stitched back together. And this is how it's done, at every level. You know, you think of, whenever you have different organizations and they're separated, if the Leaders of those organizations were to confess trespasses to one another and pray for one another, guess what would happen? You'd have healing. But that's somebody else's responsibility. For you and me, whatever relationship we have, the Bible instructs us to heal it.

In Romans chapter 14, verse 4, Who are you to judge another man's servant? This is put to us about judging others in the Body of Christ. Now I don't give God's Holy Spirit, and neither do you, so we don't really know who's in the Body of Christ. We don't know at the moment who are wheat, or who are tares, who are sheep, or who are goats. It's not our business. So therefore, who are you to "judge" another's servant?

To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand for God is able to make him stand. Sometimes you and I want to condemn someone when God can bring them repentance and conversion. He can bring change and He can make them stand. God has that power. He can do the miracles. He can work with the mind. I should not impede that. I have impeded that in people in the past. In verse 5, one person esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike.

You know, we can start looking through, sometimes, the little differences. We, in the body of Christ, have the big picture. We have the faith. We have the knowledge. We have the truth, but sometimes there are some fragments that aren't as clear. I remember growing up in the Church, we kept Pentecost on Monday. And then at some point, clarity came, and we kept it on Sunday. But others, couldn't make the shift, and they continued on Monday. What does this say? Well, if one esteems one day above another and another every day alike, let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord after all. And he who does not observe the day to the Lord does not observe it, to the Lord. And then sometimes it's things that people eat or something here and they'll look in the scripture and they'll think, well, this, I could serve God better if I did that or if I dipped a little bit into the old covenant and did some of that

and added it and all this stuff. So you see this in the New Testament. And what is, what is Paul saying here?

He's saying, well, he who eats, eats to the Lord. He who gives God thanks, and he who does not, the Lord. He does not, and he gives God. This is between an individual and God. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord. If we die, we die to the Lord. Verse 10, but why do you judge your brother? Why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

None of our business what that judgment will be. Hopefully it will be merciful. Hopefully everybody is striving and trying to do the best they can. But that's, as we saw earlier, that's a responsibility of Jesus Christ, and He will make that decision. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 10, it says, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is a pleading, to the Church at Corinth, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you. So this is put out as a "Goal" for us in the Church. Right?

He says, speak the same thing, come to the pure knowledge, the understanding, the wisdom of God and let there be *no divisions among you*. I can't turn to a scripture that says, God wants to divide His Church. Yes, God wants to divide up the Body of Christ. He wants to take the rock and break it into a million pieces and we'll call it "the sand". No, that's not in there. That there be no divisions among you. Let's look at Jesus Christ's definition of His body. John chapter 10 and verse 14. John 10 and verse 14.

I am the Good shepherd, Jesus said. So just note, nobody else is the good shepherd. He is the good shepherd. I know My sheep, and I am known by My own. So the Head of the Church, the focus here, is on Jesus Christ. And as the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father." So God the Father and Jesus Christ know Their sheep, the sheep know them. What's the purpose of ministers, me, leaders, Church members? We're going to see that in a minute. He says, I lay down My life for the sheep.

So He has a role that's far above yours and mine. He has an investment in this Church that pales yours and mine, and our opinions, into insignificant. In verse 16, now He says, And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, it says. Now, some people say, oh, well, there it is. There's the open door for having all kinds of sheep folds, everywhere. Except there's a problem with that. If you look more carefully, He's on the Sabbath at the temple, and as a Jew, He's in the court of the Israelites. Other sheep I have which are not of this, if you look up the word fold, it's actually court. He's in the court of the Israelites, and right beside them is the court of the gentiles. He has other sheep, that are not of this court.

And He says, them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be One flock and One shepherd. The Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter, went to the Gentiles. The Gentiles have been a big part of the Church ever since. And in the end we see every nation, tribe, and tongue as part of the firstfruits. But, as He said, there is One flock and One shepherd.

What is the role of the ministry? Let's go to Ephesians 4 and see the bible tell us what the role of the ministry is. And what is the role of the members? Let's go to Ephesians 4 and see what the role of the members is for. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11. No one takes these roles to themselves because it says, And He Himself gave some to be apostles - this is Christ Himself, - some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for - their purpose is for - the equipping of the saints for the work of service. Right? That's what agape love is. The work of service - for the edifying of the body of Christ. We're not here to tear it down. The ministers aren't here to break it up. We're not called to divide it, have factions, to be arrogant. We are called to equip the saints to build, help Christ build His Body.

Verse 13, until we all come to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, to a whole complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children. Notice verse 15, But we, as the Church, as the members of the Church, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ. See, Christ shows up, we are now growing up into Him who is the Head, unified, from whom the whole body, notice, the whole body is joined and knit together, not separated, not broken apart, not five million pieces... knit together by what every joint supplies. You and I are to be agents of peace and love and joy in that body. We have a command to love one another.

According to the effective working by which each part does its share, does its share in what? Causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Building up, the edifying of itself in love. There's no excuse for, divisions, there's no excuse for condemnations, criticisms, superiority of anyone inside the One body of Christ. *The true apostles of Jesus Christ encourage oneness*, not separation. First Corinthians chapter 4 and verse six. Here the Apostle Paul, along with others he was with, in the context here, he says that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written. Sometimes people within the body think beyond what is written.

This is a challenge, because, well, you know, there's kind of a stretch here, and the next thing you know, it doesn't actually say that, but if you put this and that together, pretty soon you're off into things that aren't written.

Do not think beyond what is written...

Is there something in the Bible that says factions are okay, that divisions are okay, that under certain circumstances it's alright to berate, defame, condemn. Going on, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one another.

Ouch. Puffed up. For who makes you different from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? I stand before you today with nothing that I have that I didn't receive. Nothing. From life, to the Word of God, to a calling, to a certain level of understanding, to overcoming, to being able to speak God's Word. This is not of me. Nothing. So, he's saying, what do you have that you did not receive? What can you take credit for on yourself? What makes you so wise or important

or better than others. Now, if you did indeed receive it, after all it's not from you, then why do you boast as if you had?

See, why do you take credit for it? Why do you say, Oh, as if you'd authored it? He says in verse 8, you're already full. Remember, God said you're a holy nation, a royal priesthood, you're His own sons. You're already full, you're already rich. Why do we have to get in on the condemnation, the criticism?

I think you probably know, and anyone would who has a pastor, that we're stretched thin. We can't cover all the bases. It's often that we show up at our congregations and they'll jokingly show you the guest book, because you're really stretched thin. And sometimes we'll fall back on that scripture where Jesus said, you know, the fields are white for the harvest, so pray to the Lord of the harvest that more will be called...

Sometimes you have to ask the question, how many does He need to call? He's already provided hundreds and hundreds of ministers around the world. Of course, we have to duplicate everything, don't we? We have to duplicate organizations, we have to duplicate administrations, we have to duplicate gospel messages, duplicate printing. It really begins to get crazy sometimes when you're on the same road or the same flight with other ministers in the Body of Christ. They're going to the same destination you are to serve congregations that duplicate the hall rent, duplicate this, duplicate all of that, duplicate the labor, Feast sites, duplicating everything. Is this really of God? ***How many more ministers does Christ have to provide if we keep dividing up the Body?*** Maybe there's already a surplus if we just obeyed our husband, Jesus Christ.

In John 17 and verse 20, Jesus prayed a heartfelt prayer just before He left earth. John 17 and verse 20. I do not pray for these alone, there in the first century, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word. And here we are. We're part of those that believe. And He is praying for us. He is praying for us. Beseeking God, that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be One in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me."

Now there's the key...

How will the world believe that the Father sent Jesus Christ - in His own words - if we are One with Them. Because if we're like the world, and we're like every other organization, and every other faction, and people that are strapping bombs to themselves, and people that are just out there, you know, just causing desolation, we're not going to look like God, are we?

No, but He says, be One.

That they may be One. Be One because that they, that the world, might believe that You sent Me. Remember He said, by this all will know that you are My disciples - if you think and act like We do. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, the Holy Spirit, that they may be One, just as We are One. I and them, You and Me, that they may be made perfect and One and that the

world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me. We need to set that example to the world. All this stuff about the gospel of the kingdom and the coming of Jesus Christ is just part of the message of God.

The living it, the light to the world. We are called to be lights of the world, salt of the earth. That's how people will know.

God's relying on us, to do that...

What does God say you should do if someone strays from the truth? Should we drive a wedge? Should we defame them? Let's go back to James again. Sometimes it's difficult to go to James because, again, it's things that aren't humanly logical. Right after the book of Hebrews, we come to James 5, verse 19 now.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the Truth - criticize him, slander him, run him off. Is that what it says? If anyone among you wanders from the Truth and someone turns him back, the word back there means, if someone helps him come again. Thayers, if someone helps him return, if someone helps him be reunified. Remember how when God shows up and Godliness shows up and His Spirit shows up, things harmonize. If you now, on the behalf of God, turn someone back, let him know that he who turns, same one, reunifies someone, a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

That's God's saying, "That's what We do". You do it too. We'll give you extra credit...

One way of phrasing that. You know, sometimes a person drifts. Right in the Church, like in 1 Corinthians 5, a person sins and just commits a glaring sin. We don't compromise with sin. The body of Christ doesn't compromise with sin. We don't embrace sin. We don't tolerate and somehow get involved in sin. There's a time that a person who departs from Godliness needs a little tough love, like the Proverbs said, you know, the wounds from a friend. Those are good. Wounds from God. He scourges and chastises those He loves. There's that as well. And the person in 1 Corinthians 5 was restored in 2 Corinthians.

So that works well. Again, that's the process there. Just remember this. Agape never fails. Remember that in 1 Corinthians 15? Love never quits. It never stops, it never fails.

In Hebrews 12, verse 14, as we wrap this up, let's just note, a command from God. A command from God, again, don't let this be my words. Let these be God's words. Reflect on them. Together we can ask God to direct us, as individuals, as to how we apply His word. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14. Pursue peace with all people. Which people? All people. How do we get around the word all...? Human nature will want to do that. Pursue harmony with all people. Now, don't do it like the world. He's going to say here very clearly, don't pursue peace like the world pursues peace. Jesus said, I give you peace, but not like the world gives peace, right? Dis-harmony. Pursue peace with all people and holiness. Don't separate those two. Pursue peace with all people and holiness. Without which, no one will see the Lord. We've read that earlier. If we have that other

mindset and do other things and break God's laws, we're not going to see Jesus Christ when He returns.

So pursue harmony and holiness. Verse 15, looking carefully. Now, other people have different ideas. Other people will be in different places in their conversion or their calling or their beliefs or whatever. So look carefully, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness, springing up, causes trouble, and by this many become defiled. You have to watch. You have to watch yourself. You have to put on the armor of God. Verse 16, lest there be any fornicator or profane person, etc. etc. So here we are to pursue peace and holiness with all people.

In conclusion, I'd like to finish by reading Romans chapter 12, verses 16-18. Romans 12 and verse 16. The Apostle Paul was familiar with all of the issues in society, in the Church, in various churches, coming in from various cultures, people at various stages of their development, and also with various influences from other philosophies and ideas.

And He says, be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. Verse 18, If it is possible, as much as depends on you as an individual, live in harmony with all men. So brethren, let's reflect on the words from Jesus Christ, from God the Father, from the apostles. Let's reflect on what the mindset of the family of God, and that which we seek in the Kingdom of God that will make it wonderful, what that is and how we can pursue it. Don't demean others, look critically or criticize others in the Body of Christ.

Let Christ manage the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. But you, reach out like Christ did. Reach out like God continues to do. And love one another. And by doing this, you will be recognized as a disciple of Jesus Christ...

End.