

## LOVE AND HUMILITY, OR IDOLATRY?

*“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee  
from idolatry.”*

~Apostle Paul

People often think of the Church as being the mother. This is true with Catholics as well, in which some place the importance of the mother of Jesus (Mary) over that of God or Christ. So it has become for some in our fellowships as well. Some fellowships have placed the words of their church (mother) and leading ministers OVER that of the Bible's! **This is idolatry!** Is the church and/or some in its leadership becoming an idol?

True humility and the approach once set out so very well in the booklet “Church Government and Church Unity” can help prevent internal idolatry or self-vaunting. *The one thing* that kept Moses from entering the promised land was when he put the focus upon himself and Aaron *instead of glorifying God* when he said; “ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock” (Num.20:10)?

Do *our* words and deeds demonstrate humility? Brethren, I beseech you as a true friend to consider these words in a spirit of love, and please in no way think of it as an attack on anyone or their motives. Some may mean well and have good intentions in their hearts. But we all know that good intentions are not good enough. Only God and His Word is good and leads to life. Presumptuous self-glorying is devilish (Jm.3:13-16).

Please do not mistake my boldness as anything other than to encourage us all to seek to please God – not men. Paul said he could not be an easy “yes man” and still please God. ***“If I seek to please men, I cannot be the servant of God” (Gal.1:10).*** Do you suppose that what it takes to please God as a faithful minister, is any different for us today?

Not everything helpful is easy to say. But I fear for you my dear brethren, more than I do for the flack I expect to get from some who might not yet have ears to hear, and who disagree. Solomon said, “There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl.3:7). Now is a time when I fear before God to keep my silence; more than I fear before men to speak.

Some have asked me to modify or close the *Church of God in Peace and Truth* website, because they don't like what it says and stands for, or because they think it “competes” with their “more viable” church website, and because

they say it “empowers and enables the independent people in God’s Church, so they don’t feel the need to join the ‘main body.’” Is Christ divided into “main” and “minor” bodies? Is it the *corporate structure* that makes us part of Christ’s body, or is it being led by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:14)? Many don’t appreciate the freedom to choose where we fellowship within the greater Church of God.

Others have not appreciated our website because they don’t like its clear focus upon God’s Statutes since they do not see the need to teach or obey them. Others see it as a threat to their “authority” or organization, or doctrine. We are not important! God and His Words are important! We’re not interested in setting up a “competing organization.” We’re interested in teaching God’s people to study God’s Word and thus learn to stand up and teach others (Heb.5:12).

Can we look in the mirror and be COLLECTIVELY HUMBLLED, and increase in LOVE, RESPECT AND APPRECIATION for ALL of our dear brethren wherever they are, without trying to set ourselves above them? Are we so fearful of what men and their organizations will think of us that we modify what we believe God’s Word says in order to fit in and avoid their disfavor?

Can we learn to be kind and humble, while remaining strong and uncompromising with God’s Word? If we are being led by God’s Spirit, the answer is YES, but how many are presently following that lead?

BRETHREN, CAN WE SEE – OR ARE SOME OF US SO “LAODICEAN” THAT WE CANNOT SEE? A hard question – yes. Not “PC” (politically correct), I know. Would you rather I told you how everything is OK, and about how pleased God is with us? Do you seek the smooth words of reassurance, more than the truth (Isa.30:10)? Would you rather be told, “We’re the main group, the greatest, the foremost, the ones doing a ‘viable’ work, the leading group, etc.?” It may be “smoother” to hear, but would it be true? It may be appealing, but is such boasting Godly? This approach has brought upon the Church of God much of the unnecessary division we have suffered in recent years, hurting the individual member spiritually and hindering our ability to preach the Gospel as a result of the division this approach fosters. We all need to humbly repent! As a minister, should I “cry aloud,” or hold my peace (Isa.58:1)? Should I only speak smooth things (Isa.30:10)? The wise preacher said, “*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*” (Pr.27:6). Each will have to judge if these words are faithful for themselves.

Obviously there are some who wish I would not speak so openly with you like this. But we seek **first** to please God, not man. Yet I believe that this will also please many of you, for we share that same true love for God and His Word – first and foremost. Those of you who truly know me, know that I am seeking to help you as a genuine, faithful friend and minister of Jesus Christ. Yet some have considered me an opponent because of open honesty and straight talk from God’s Word over tradition. I am sorry about that, for I love God and His people, and sorrow over the division and parting of company.

I implore us all to begin to fast and beseech God in humility to help us draw closer to Him and one another, and for an understanding of His truth without the fear-producing constraints of the governance of men. The truth shall make us free!

1 Have we learned to humble ourselves so that we do not need to be debased, knowing God will exalt us in due time (1 Pet.5:6)? 2 Do we know that ONLY God can be exalted today (Isa.2:11)? 3 Do we know that NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY in His presence (1 Cor.1:29)? 4 Are we kind, compassionate, gentle, forgiving, and esteeming

each other better than ourselves, both to those in the church and those who are not (Phil.2:3 & Tit.3:2)? 5 Can we be recognized by all people as Christ's disciples by the loving fruits of our lives and WORDS toward all of our brethren (Jn.13:35)? – OR – 6 Do we like to strive and argue with our fellow brothers (and others), to our ruin (2 Tim.2:14)?

Recently one leading evangelist tried to justify his frequent exaltation of himself and his organization with scripture, by comparing himself to Paul and saying that Paul “boasted.” He quoted one part of one verse out of context to “prove” it (1 Cor.15:10) where Paul said “*I labored more abundantly than they all.*” Did Paul teach boasting as being appropriate behavior for the saints? Friends, don't we all understand the inherent dangers of taking scriptures out of context? Notice what Paul was really saying:

9 “*For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*” (1 Cor 15:9-11)  
(Emphasis ours throughout.)

Paul was not boasting. Indeed, just the opposite, **he claimed to be the “least” of all the apostles!** His abundant labor was due to God's grace to make up for the time lost by his being called later than the other apostles (verse 8). **Paul's focus was on BELIEVERS – not preachers.**

Paul taught the Gentiles not to boast against their Jewish brethren (Rm.11), and when he “boasted in the flesh” briefly – he said he “*spoke as a fool*” to make the point of how foolish it was (2 Cor.11), and to counter the boasting and self-glorying of false ministers (2 Cor.11:12).

You see, Paul actually taught “*love does not vaunt itself*” over others, pretending to be better. “*Love does not parade itself,*” “*love is not puffed up,*” “*love does not seek its own,*”

and “*thinks no evil*,” and “*love is not rude*” (1 Cor.13:4-7). Therefore love is cautious about condescension or leveling charges when it speaks. Love is the merciful application of God’s Statutes and Decalogue (Rm.13:8-10). **John was loving – Diotrephes was not!** Are we loving? What do our fruits show? What God’s Church really needs now is a lot more loving and a lot less judging! For the very SIGN that Christ gave to identify His true disciples, was ***not*** church government, it was not even the vitally important preaching of the Gospel or doctrine – it was LOVE (Jn.13:35)!

James issued an even stronger warning against putting oneself forward and boasting:

*14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.*

*16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there (James 3:14-16).*

As true servant-hearted leaders, let’s encourage everyone to look to God and His Word, not to us! Let’s cease comparing ourselves among ourselves. Let’s properly utilize the God-appointed offices of the ministry – NOT to have dominion over others – but to serve, build, expound scripture, and be helpers of their joy (Neh.8:8 & 2 Cor.1:24). For if we in the ministry are without **true humility**, and we allow or encourage the people to look to **us more than** to the Word of God – OR – **if** any of us are allowing ourselves to act and teach presumptuously, and **if** any of us are being lukewarm and blind, **WE WILL SURELY FALL AGAIN** (Ps.127:1)! By the grace of God we will stand!

Many people “pay and pray.” Tithing and praying to God is good, but are you able to grow in the truth – are you growing in the knowledge of God’s Word? Are you learning to show love to all your scattered brothers and sisters in Christ, and to live peaceably among God’s family – even if some are in a different fellowship of the Church of God? Or do you let men separate you from your spiritual family, in their apparent attempts to strengthen their own numbers, power or tithe base – or for a church corporation? **Is the emphasis on YOUR personal fellowship organization – OR – is the emphasis in staying with Christ and His truth, and learning to love your neighbor?**

How about you? Are you able to grow in the knowledge of the truth and live and practice God’s words freely, or are you bound by fear of men? Are there certain Bible “topics” that you cannot discuss openly, out of fear? Have you ever been misled to place your loyalty toward those “superior exclusivists” who say “follow me,” and give you all the reasons why they are better than other ministers and why their (perhaps your) organization is better than all the other fellowships in God’s Church; and have you been told that if you want God’s blessings, you’d better fellowship with them exclusively?

Have you ever felt “forbidden” and “threatened” by your minister, for fellowshiping with another “branch” in God’s Church? Many solid, long-time sermonette men have found

themselves off the speaking roster, simply for visiting a sister congregation in another fellowship of the Church of their God. Incredible! Yet many put up with such abuse (2 Cor.11:4, 20). Such arrogance and attempted mind control by church leaders is contrary to scripture, contrary to God's Law, and is contrary to God's Truth.

To follow such men is to place such importance upon them, it is idolatrous! Further, IT INHIBITS GROWTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL, and limits the spreading of the Gospel by causing division contrary to scripture. My friends, cannot we all see this (Rm.3:27 & Acts 5:36 & 1 Cor.1:11-13,29)?

**To continue following such leaders requires a brain-washing based upon fear, and is similar to the mentality that led to the drinking of the Kool-Aid in Jonestown!**