

Why Are There So Many Divisions?

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God's Church has been through many, many divisions since the death of Mr. Armstrong. I think we all know that. Those who cruise the internet can see hundreds of split-offs from the Worldwide Church of God. And from our viewpoint—Dale was talking about it in his sermonette from the viewpoint of we all have different viewpoints and perspectives, but—from our viewpoint, we can think that the divisions we have seen in the last twenty years or twenty-five years, they're unusual and it's never happened before, but the Bible says differently. Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and see that there were problems with divisions in the New Testament Church. And we ultimately know that a false church came in and took over. During that process, over several hundred years, there were many divisions and many splits. And 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and the first three verses give us an indication that this was happening at the time of the apostles. 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 1:

1 Corinthians 3:1. *And I, brethren, [Paul is talking to the Brethren in Corinth.] could not speak unto you as unto spiritual [meaning spiritually oriented people; he says], but [I have to speak unto you] as carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (KJV)*

Now this is a condemnation of the Corinthian Church. And let's understand that today we look back at Corinth and Corinth at the time is the equivalent of somewhere between New York City and Las Vegas today—every imaginable evil, a huge mixing pot of different cultures, different races, different backgrounds! And he's telling these Brethren, who are all new in the Church by the way, he's saying, "You're carnal. I have to talk to you like I would talk to a baby."

Verse 2, he says:

1 Corinthians 3:2. *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: (KJV)*

He's saying, "You're so unconverted, you're so carnal, you can't stand strong food." He says, "You can't handle it." He says:

1 Corinthians 3:2b. *...for [hereunto you] were not able to bear it, neither yet now are [you] able [to bear it]. (KJV)*

He says, "I can't talk to you the way I'd like to talk to you because you can't handle it. You'd get offended or you'd run away or you'd get upset. Or you'd start throwing rocks at me or something like that."

Verse 3, he says:

1 Corinthians 3:3. For [you] are yet carnal: (KJV)

Meaning: at that time that he wrote it! And he says—and why are they carnal?—he describes:

1 Corinthians 3:3b. ...for whereas there is among you... (KJV)

At that moment in time, he says:

1 Corinthians 3:3 continued. [There's] envying [People jealous of one another!], and strife [People fighting and arguing! Throwing rocks at each other!], and divisions, [He says,] are [you] not carnal, and walk as men?" (KJV)

And he was condemning them for that!

Now the word that he used for "divisions" is Strong's 1370, and it means division obviously. It means disunion or dissension.

And there was disunion and dissension in the Corinthian Church. There has been disunion and dissension in churches down through history as the false church moved in and took over. There was disunion in the Worldwide Church of God as there was an attempt to change it into a protestant church. And we see it today.

But back then, you see, their divisions—we won't do the research today—but their divisions were about their loyalty. Who were they loyal to? In chapters 1 and chapter 3, Paul brings that out. He says "Some of you say that I am of Apollos, or I am of Paul or I am of this or I'm of that."

And in chapter 11, they were divided about hair length. They had men wearing long hair and women wearing short hair. And there were arguments and divisions about that. And then also in chapter 11, there were divisions about how to keep the Passover. They just polluted the Passover. And some came to the Passover drunk. Some came to the Passover hungry. It was a meal. And they were totally misguided in their keeping of the Passover. And some did it one way. Some did it another way. And there were divisions and fights among them in the Corinthian Church.

But the fact is, see, the thing we need to realize:

God allowed all of that division.

Now we have to think about that. He allowed it! God could have stepped in and stopped it, but He did not. He allowed the division. And He has allowed the division in today's Church where we see splits and re-splits and re-re-splits. God has allowed it to the point now the last estimate I heard—I don't spend a lot of time on the internet, but the people who do tell me—that there's probably four hundred or four hundred and fifty different divisions out of the Worldwide Church

of God. The fact is God didn't stop it. Did He? He could have stopped it, but He chose not to.

And it is my belief that these splits are prophesied to happen. This is all according to God's plan. This isn't something that's out of control and God can't bring it back together. It's not something that God is just sitting there wringing His hands about and "Oh, woe is Me! What are We going to do?" No, it's all part of God's plan as we're going to see.

We have to understand that He could have stopped it, but He chose not to. Now if that's the case, we have to ask the question: Why? Why would God not intervene and stop it? What is His motive? What is His reason? Why would He do that? He must have some very important reasons for allowing these divisions to continue and go on from way back in the time of the apostles. What is God's purpose in allowing it to go on?

So in the sermon today, we're going to answer two questions.

1. Why has God allowed so many divisions?
2. Why has God allowed so many groups, corporations—(whatever you want to call them)? Why has He allowed them to form?

Why? What's behind it all? So we're going to have Five Points today, reasons why God has allowed division in the Church.

The First and the most important one: Why does God allow divisions?

I. To reveal those who are true Christians.

God allows division to reveal to everyone who are the true Christians and who are not. That's a very, very important point. God uses divisions to reveal the wheat from the tares, so to speak.

Let's go back to Matthew chapter 13 and see that parable. God uses splits in the Church to reveal who is the true wheat, His true wheat who He will harvest—as Dale was talking about in the sermonette—who is the true wheat or who are the tares and that they will be burned in the Lake of Fire. Matthew 13, we're going to read verses 25 through 30 and then jump to verse 36 through 43. Matthew 13 verse 25:

Matthew 13:25. *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

26) *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. (KJV)*

So you could tell to a degree which was which.

Matthew 13:27. *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, [didn't you sow good wheat] good seed in [your] field? [Wasn't it pure?] (KJV)*

They thought it may have been polluted or contaminated by other seeds or something like that. It was obviously the case. And they said:

Matthew 13:27b. *[Well, then where did the] tares [come from if the seed was pure]? (KJV)*

Verse 28:

Matthew 13:28. *He said unto them, An enemy [has] done this. [Then] the servants said [back to the householder or the landowner], [Do you want us to] go gather them up [gather the tares up]?*

29) But he said, [No, I don't want you to do that]; lest while [you] gather up the tares [people stomping around and all of that, making mistakes, [that you] root up the wheat also. [We want to preserve the wheat. We don't want the wheat damaged in any way.] (KJV)

Verse 30 now, He says:

Matthew 13:30. *Let both grow together until the harvest: [at the time of the harvest, then] I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the tares, bind them in bundles [and] burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (KJV)*

Now jumping to verse 36:

Matthew 13:36. *Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and [He] went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, [and said, Tell us what you mean by this] parable. [What are you trying to tell us?] (KJV)*

And in verse 37, Christ:

Matthew 13:37. *...answered and said unto them, He that [sows] the good seed is the Son of man [referring to Himself];*

38) The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom [the wheat]; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39) The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world [or the end of this age]. (KJV)

Verse 41:

Matthew 13:41. *The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [referring to the tares, who are the product under the influence of Satan the Devil];*

42) And shall cast them into [the] furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43) Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. [He says, "If you have] ears to hear, [you'd better] hear. [Christ is telling us today.] (KJV)

And what' He's saying is there's always been tares among God's people. Always have. Always will be! As a test, as a test for God's people to see and recognize who are the tares and who are the true wheat. We're responsible for making those judgments. In the last sermon I gave, I gave a sermon on judging righteous judgment. That's one of the judgments that needs to be made. Division is sometimes necessary to separate true Christians from those who are led by Satan. I'll say it again: Division is sometimes necessary to separate true Christians from those who are led by Satan.

Another reason God uses divisions to reveal true Christians from those who are not is to reveal those are what the Bible, New Testament, refers to as "clouds without water." The Bible talks about this in two different places. Peter talks about it. Jude talked about it. And they describe individuals as "clouds without water."

Now, you could say, "Well, hmmm. What's a cloud without water? It couldn't be a cloud if it didn't have water." The fact is that they appear to be clouds, but there's no water. There's no substance. And water, we know, is a symbol of God's holy spirit.

So, let's turn to Jude now and see what he had to say about this situation. Jude—we're going to skip though the book, but we're going to start in verse 3. Jude 3, he says:

Jude 1:3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that [What?] [you] should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (KJV)*

Now this is the purpose. The implication is that they've drifted from the faith once delivered. And he is trying to bring them back to the faith. Contend for it. Fight for it if you have to!

Verse 4:

Jude 1:4. *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, [He said, They're] ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, (KJV)*

That means lawbreaking. It's okay to break God's Law. It's okay to do this or do that against God's Law.

Jude 1:4b. *...and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

Denying Christ! Saying, "Christ is a created being," or somehow diminishing Christ.

Verse 5, he says:

Jude 1:5. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though [you] once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that [didn't believe]. (KJV)*

Verse 7:

Jude 1:7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh [homosexuality and the like], are set forth [as] an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (KJV)*

Now verse 8, he says:

Jude 1:8. *Likewise [like unto them thousands of years ago, likewise] these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, (KJV)*

He's talking about people in that day and obviously referring to our day.

Jude 1:8b. *...despise dominion, (KJV)*

That means they despise any form of government or somebody that might be over them. Anarchy, in other words!

Jude 1:8 continued. *...and speak evil of dignities. (KJV)*

Or speak evil of somebody that might have an office or a position and they cut them down.

Verse 10:

Jude 1:10. *But these [speaking evil] of things [they don't] know [anything about]: (KJV)*

And I think we've all experienced that. People become experts on situations that they were never even there! But boy, they're an expert on what happened, but they weren't standing there!

Jude 1:10b. *speak evil of things [which they know not]: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. (KJV)*

Verse 12:

Jude 1:12. *These are spots in your feasts of [love], (KJV)*

Now that means these people attend the Feast. The Feasts of love of God's people, they are there! But they're spots.

Jude 1:12b. *...when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: [he says,] clouds they are without water, (KJV)*

They appear to be somebody with God's spirit, but they have no water. They don't have God's spirit.

Jude 1:12 continued. *...carried about of winds; (KJV)*

You know talking about this thing this day, a big problem over here. Something else over here or this doctrine's an issue. Or that person's an issue or we should have done this or we should have done that. Or didn't do this or didn't do that.

Jude 1:12 continued. *...carried about of winds; trees whose fruit [withers], (KJV)*

And we are told in Matthew 6 to judge by fruits. And he says:

Jude 1:12 continued. *[They're fruit is withering], without fruit, twice dead, (KJV)*

Meaning they're going to die a physical death, but they're also going to die a spiritual death. They are twice dead already.

Jude 1:12 continued. *...plucked up by the roots; (KJV)*

Verse 16:

Jude 1:16. *These are murmurers, [and they're] complainers, [and they walk] after their own lusts; and their [mouths they speak] great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. (KJV)*

Meaning they are suck ups and respecters of persons. And Peter and other apostles talk about being a respecter of persons—James also. It's very clear we shouldn't do that. But these do so to gain some kind of advantage.

Verse 17:

Jude 1:17. *But, beloved, remember [you] the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
18) How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. (KJV)*

Verse 19:

Jude 1:19. *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. (KJV)*

Meaning: a cloud without water!

Now it's interesting. The Greek word for "separate" is Strong's 592 and it means "to disjoin, or made a division, or make a separation."

They cause a separation or they cause a division because obviously the clouds without water have nothing in common with God's people who have His spirit. And so, they're not going to walking down the same road. They're not going to be walking down the same path. And so when you have those groups together, guess what's going to happen? Ultimately you'll have a division between those who have God's holy spirit and those who do not have God's holy spirit.

God uses division also to reveal those—not just clouds without water or the wheat from the tares, but also—who are hirelings and who have a different motivation and a different agenda let's say.

Let's go back to John chapter 10 and see what Christ had to say. Christ is talking about the Parable of the Sheepfold. And back in His day, sheep were penned up in a fold. And the walls were made out of rock and made in such a way in kind of a pyramid fashion so the sheep couldn't jump over. And it discouraged predators from coming in. And then there was a gate. And there was a gatekeeper. In John 10, we'll read verses 7 through 16. Notice:

John 10:7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, [He says, Truly], I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

8) *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep [didn't] hear them.*

9) *[He said,] I am the door: by me if any man [enters] in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture [as Dale was talking about]. (KJV)*

But He's saying, "You have to go through the door. And I'm the door. You have to come through Me."

Verse 10:

John 10:10. *The thief... (KJV)*

And He is talking about Satan and the individuals that Satan uses. He says, "The thief comes not but to do three things:

1. to steal, meaning to take people away from the truth; and
2. to kill, meaning people will die as a result of that—a physical death; and
3. to destroy." That means in the Lake of Fire, they will be permanently destroyed as though they never existed.

But the first step in that is to steal, to take away. Just as a wolf would come into the sheepfold and grab a little lamb and drag it off. And then go kill it and eat it.

He says, "I am come"—He's drawing a contrast now between Himself and the thief.

John 10:10b. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (KJV)*

Look at the contrast! Look at the contrast between the farming practices in the Millennium according to God's way and what we see today. Small farmers are being run off the farms. Government is taxing them into oblivion. And the big corporate farmers are the ones that are taking over, but look at the difference in the Millennium.

And Christ is saying, "I'm here to give you life and to give it just abundant life! But the thief comes and he wants to steal you and kill you and destroy you."

Verse 11:

John 10:11. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd [gives] his life for the sheep. (KJV)*

Back at that day when He said that, they didn't have a clue what He was talking about. They would, in due course, fully understand that this Shepherd did give His life for the sheep.

Verse 12:

John 10:12. *But he that is a hireling, (KJV)*

Now we get to the point, the subject matter.

John 10:12. *But he that is a hireling, and [is] not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, [he sees] the wolf coming, (KJV)*

And guess what he does? He runs away! He flees.

John 10:12b. *...and the wolf [catches] them, and [scatters] the sheep. 13) The hireling [flees], because he is a hireling, and [cares] not for the sheep. (KJV)*

And I've seen that happen. And when Worldwide broke up in our hometown, which Dorothy and I used to go back to maybe once a year, and all the Brethren in the Worldwide days met together and all of that. And I got to know those people over time. And then when Worldwide broke up, during that crisis the pastor there left. Moved to another area of the country because he'd always wanted to live in another area of the country and this was a good time to do that. And guess what? The people were left without a shepherd going through all of this turmoil! And to this day, there is not another Church of any group that I know of in our hometown because they were scattered. The sheep were just scattered because a hireling didn't take care of the sheep.

Verse 14, Christ said:

John 10:14. *I am the good shepherd, (KJV)*

Meaning, "I'm not a hireling. I'm not going to run away. I'm not going to turn my back on the sheep." He says:

John 10:14. *...and [I] know my sheep, and am known of mine. (KJV)*

Meaning the sheep know Christ.

John 10:15. *As the Father [knows Me], even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

16) And other sheep I have [He says,], which are not of this fold [meaning not of that day and not of that time]: them also I must bring, (KJV)

Referring to God's people down through the ages and referring to us today.

John 10:16b. *...and they [are going to] hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (KJV)*

And today, there is one fold and one shepherd, as we're going to see. God doesn't recognize corporations. There is one fold and there is one shepherd.

But my point is that division was used and it was used in the days of Worldwide. It's used today to reveal who is a hireling, who really is in it for the money or a job or prestige. And then when tough times come, the hireling runs away or hides. And then who are God's true shepherds under Jesus Christ who look to Christ—not to look to a man or an organization or an administration—and who are interested in taking care of the sheep and who are not.

And let's understand; too, as we've said many times, there are true ministers and true sheep in all of the corporations, all of the different groups. But the fact is, as we're going to see, we're all part of the Body of Christ.

Now God uses divisions also to reveal the wheat from the chaff. And if you look at all of these parables, there's a powerful message there. And if you put them all in application to today, it tells us a great deal about why there are divisions.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 3. Christ [John the Baptist] is, as he did quite often, is railing on the religious leaders of the day—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And they came to see his baptism. And he could have kept his mouth shut, but he chose not to. And again, we have to ask, "Why?" And we have to learn the lesson from what He's trying to teach us. Matthew 3 verse 7, we'll read through verse 12. Matthew 3 verse 7:

Matthew 3:7. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who [has] warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (KJV)*

Who has warned them? It was him. He was doing it right then!

Verse 8:

Matthew 3:8. *Bring forth therefore fruits... (KJV)*

The King James says "meet." It means suitable or as a demonstration of your "repentance." He's saying, "You need to repent. And I'm going to watch and see if you bring forth fruits of repentance."

Verse 9:

Matthew 3:9. *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham [who is] our father: (KJV)*

And, of course, we have people today like them. They say, "Well, we have Abraham. We're part of his lineage. You can't touch us. Nobody can touch us. By blood, we're the right group." And people today say, "Well, we have this guy. He's our leader." Or, "We have that guy. He's our leader." He's their Abraham. Same thing happens today. There's nothing new under the sun! Nothing new at all under the sun! We have people saying that today. Looking to an administration or an individual or a corporation and because they're there, they're going to be saved. Christ said, "That's not so." He says:

Matthew 3:9b. *...for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (KJV)*

If God wants a certain leader, He'll raise up a rock and make that happen.

Verse 10:

Matthew 3:10. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: (KJV)*

Meaning the trees are going to be cut down.

Matthew 3:10b. *...therefore every tree which [brings] not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (KJV)*

And what he's saying is "You will know true Christians by their fruits." (Matthew 7 verses 16 and verse 20.) He's saying to them, "Look, they're going to be cast into the fire. You're going to see by the fruits who is a true Christian and who is not, who is wheat, who is chaff, who is a hireling and who is not."

Verse 11:

Matthew 3:11. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy [spirit], and with fire: (KJV)*

Meaning: trial and tribulation and trouble.

Matthew 3:12. *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into [the barn or] the garner; [and] will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (KJV)*

And so what I'm saying is this is precisely what is happening in the greater Church today. God is showing us through trials and trouble and through division who is the wheat and who is the chaff. God is calling on all of us to repent of bad fruit in our life and to bring forth good fruit. We can't just rail on the Pharisees or the religious leaders back in those days. We have to look at ourselves as we're going to see to make sure we're bringing forth the fruit that shows, that demonstrates we repent of our thoughts, our wrong attitudes, our wrong deeds.

Now in closing this First Point, let's look at the most important Scripture of all. I believe it's a prophecy. Not only a condemnation of the day, but a prophecy for us today. Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 19.

Remember we were in chapter 3 earlier and Paul was talking about how they were carnal and there were divisions and there was trouble and all of that. Now Paul is telling them why this happens, why all of this division and trouble and controversy. 1 Corinthians 11 verse 19, Paul says:

1 Corinthians 11:19. *For there must be also heresies among you, (KJV)*

It's not saying they happen occasionally. He says, "There must be heresies among you." Why?

1 Corinthians 11:19b. *...that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (KJV)*

Now the Greek word for "heresies" can, yes, be translated "heresy," but understand it can mean the following: dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and diversity of aims. We would say today "agendas". Divisions arising from different purposes, different agendas. Some caused by tares. Some caused by clouds without waters. Some caused by chaff. Some caused by well-meaning people that just get off track for a while.

So Paul is saying "There must be dissensions. There must be divisions." And if he says that it applies to us today. We're not immune today. So, let's understand that. "There must be divisions," and then he says why.

1 Corinthians 11:19b. *...that they which are approved may be made manifest [that means 'apparent'] among you. (KJV)*

It's so that you will know who is approved and who is not approved.

Now the Greek word for "approved" is Strong's 1384. We've talked about that before. It's the Greek word *dokimos*. And it can mean "acceptable." Or it can mean "legitimate." And if you were back in Paul's day and you used the word

dokimos, everybody would understand what you were talking about because it was most commonly referred to coins.

Now back in those days, they had a mold. It was generally made out of stone, carved out of stone. And they would take the molten metal and pour it into the mold. Let the metal cool. The mold was in two halves. They would pull the mold apart and there was this metal coin.

Now the molds weren't perfect in those days and they had all kinds of flashing on the outside. The coins were round generally and there were all kinds of pieces of metal around the outside of the coin from imperfections in the mold. And so, then the coin maker would file off all the imperfections, but he couldn't file too much because then the coin, made of a precious metal—silver, gold, whatever—would weigh less than it should. So he filed enough and then put it on a scale, a certified scale, to make sure it weighed what it should weigh. And it was smooth and properly dressed.

And so if a coin was *dokimos*, that means it was made of the proper metal and it weighed what it should weigh. Therefore it was legitimate to use and proper to use in trade. You knew that you had a worthy coin.

Now a lot of unscrupulous manufacturers in those days, or other people, would shave off the outside edges of the coin so the coin maybe only weighed ninety percent of what it should have weighed or seventy percent of what it should have weighed. They took those filings, put them in the pot and re-melted them. So they could make more coins for the same amount of metal. That was an unscrupulous coin. It didn't have the proper weight.

And so, when Paul is saying here, he says, "Those which are approved," meaning it's a legitimate coin or a legitimate Christian. It's an approved coin or an approved by God and Jesus Christ Christian.

The New International gets this one right. It says:

1 Corinthians 11:19. *No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. (NIV)*

Divisions show everybody who are legitimate Christians and who are not. And this is one of the great purposes that God uses in allowing divisions to occur in the Church. God causes and allows them to occur to bring to light ministers and Brethren who are legitimate.

Now what our job is is to make sure we are *dokimos*. We are legitimate. We are approved. And we do that by changing our mind, changing our conduct, changing our words to be like Jesus Christ.

So the First Point is that:

I. God uses divisions to show true Christians from those who are not.

The Second Point: Why do we have divisions?

II. God watches us to see who we associate with.

When divisions occur, people's true colors come out because in a division, there is all kinds of pressure, all kinds of turmoil. People have to make decisions. And when division comes, it forces Brethren to choose. And even in the turmoil of the division or in the turmoil of choosing, it can be a gut-wrenching thing. Emotionalism can come in. Anger can come in. Upset can come in. We've all been through that.

Now back to our example in Corinth—we won't turn back there—but Paul was condemning them for divisions. Paul was condemning them for a bunch of different things. And it's very interesting that, just as an example here of who you associate with, one of the problems was hair length. And they had people violating that in the Corinthian Church. And, as we know, women should have long hair and men should have short hair, but the opposite was true in Corinth and Paul had to condemn them for that.

And isn't it interesting that if you went back to the Corinthian Church after Paul's letter, after they received Paul's letter, give them a month or two and then you walked into Sabbath services in the Corinthian Church, you could tell by their hair length who was obeying Paul or who was going to do it their own way. If you walked in after Paul's letter, after they had a chance to digest it and think about it and pray about it and you walked in and you saw some guy with hair down to his shoulders, then you knew automatically that he was not going to follow Paul's correction and it would be obvious where this guy stood. Or you see a man with short hair or a woman with long hair, you know where they stood. But you saw a woman with a buzz cut—not that they had it back then, but something really short—you knew where she stood. And so, people would associate with like-minded people. So you could walk in, in that particular case, and see where people stood.

That's precisely what happened with the demise of the Worldwide Church of God. It was plain to see who was following the Protestant traditions and who was not. It was plain to see who was keeping Easter and Christmas and eating unclean foods and those who were not. It was very obvious—ministers and members alike. And so, then people would associate with like-minded people.

When a division occurs, people do just that. Let's go to Amos 3 verse 3. We know the Scripture by heart, but let's apply this in the context of why God allows divisions, why God is allowing so many groups to form. Amos 3 and verse 3, a very important principle in human behavior:

Amos 3:3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (KJV)

You won't walk together very long. And what often happens is you have like people that left Worldwide or people who have left other groups and form a group. They get together because of their opposition to a common enemy. And

that's what unites them, but after a while, after a few months or a year or two, then they look at each other and say, "I'm not very like you. You're not very like me. I don't know that we should be together." And then another split occurs and then another split and another split occurs. We've had that.

But the fact is that two will not walk together unless they have like-mindedness, unless they agree. That's why it was so wonderful in the Business Committee Meeting to see guys get together and work for a common purpose. And everybody was on the same page. Everybody had the same goal. And it makes coming to a consensus a joy, really because everybody was walking down the same road. Nobody's yelling and screaming at each other.

And you see what God is doing at the time of the division and thereafter, people then—I used the term—"file" themselves. I'm not the person that invented that term. A minister a long time ago that I highly respect said that after the demise of Worldwide. He said, "It's like a big file cabinet and there's a lot of hanging file folders and each one has a different label. And people put themselves in the file folders according to who they are like-minded with."

And for those who want to worship a man, they go into a certain folder because they're comfortable with that. And there's a man that says, "Worship me." And they want to worship a man. So, they go in that folder.

There are some who want to worship an organization, want to hold this human corporation up and say, "We're sacrificing for this corporation. We're sacrificing to do this. And so, they file themselves in a file folder that's labeled "Worshipping a Corporation.

Some, who want to do a work, go with a corporation or a group that feels that it's their responsibility to do a work. And I'm not saying that's good or bad. I'm just saying they go with like-minded people.

Others want a social club every Sabbath. And the potluck is the most important thing or the fellowship is the most important thing or seeing these two or three people are the most important thing. And so, they want to go where the social club is. And they file themselves accordingly.

Others want to be more like the world. Think we're too separate from the world. We need to be more like the world. So, we need to kind of more like them. And so, they file themselves in that folder or go with that group.

Others want to love God with all their heart, with all their mind. They want to love their brothers as themselves. And they want to meet in peace and harmony and serve one another. And so, they go in another folder.

And so God gives us through by allowing division the opportunity to associate ourselves with people that are like-minded—good or bad. It is a test for all of us. It really is. And God watches us after a division occurs to see what we're going to do. Where are we going to file ourselves?

Let's go to 1 John 4 and verse 6. It's a test for all of us. This is what we have to come to the realization of. This happened for most of us in the days of Worldwide and we had to come to grips with the principle in this Scripture, 1 John 4 verse 6. John is—I love his writings because it is so direct and so plain. He says:

1 John 4:6. We are of God: (KJV)

Point! Second Point:

1 John 4:6b. ...he that [knows] God [hears] us; (KJV)

Since we're of God. Third Point:

1 John 4:6 continued. ...he that is not of God [doesn't hear] us. (KJV)

Very logical!

1 John 4:6 continued. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and [there's a] spirit of error. (KJV)

The spirit of error comes from the thief, the one that jumps over into the sheepfold to steal, to kill, and to destroy. There is a spirit of error. There is a spirit of truth. And one of the ways we judge properly and judge righteous judgment is to judge the truth from the error. It's a test to use God's Word to judge doctrine and to judge fruits correctly. We have to judge the fruits correctly.

It's a test to join with those who are Christ-like and to know what it's like to be Christ-like, because some people are totally confused of what Christ was like. They don't understand what Christ was like. And so they join with people that they think are like Christ, but they're not like Christ at all because they haven't studied enough into the Bible to know what Christ was really like.

Look at Philippians 2 and verse 5. We have to know not only the beliefs, the teachings of Christ, but we have to know Christ's behavior and how He behaved when He was on this earth. Philippians 2 and verse 5, that's why this is so important. It says:

Philippians 2:5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in [Jesus Christ]: (KJV)

We have to understand that. One of the goals we should have as Christians is to incorporate His mind. We don't want our way. We don't want our agenda. We don't want our thoughts. We don't want our deeds. We want what Christ would do if He was walking in our shoes right here right now.

Look at Colossians 3 and verse 10. This is what we have to transform ourselves unto. Colossians 3 and verse 10, at the end of the day, this is what we have to become. Notice what Paul says:

Colossians 3:10. *And have put on the new... (KJV)*

Now, the word "man" is in italics. It could be "new person," "new woman," "new man."

Colossians 3:10. *[We have] put on the new [person], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him [referring to Jesus Christ] that created him [the new person, through the power of God's spirit]: (KJV)*

And so, we must transform ourselves, not by our own power, but through the power of the holy spirit to be in the image of Jesus Christ. God is on His throne right now, watching to see what we will do, who we will associate with because we know—we won't turn there, but 1 Peter 4 and verse 17—"Judgment is on the house of God." Judgment is on the Church and God watches us at the end, of this Point Number Two, to see who we're going to associate with during a division or after a division.

Point Three: Why Divisions?

III. So that we can learn about ourselves. We can see our blind spots.

All of us have them! All of us have spiritual blind spots. And we can learn about ourselves through a division because a division is a pressure cooker. It really is. And we've been through that more than once.

The cause of division in many cases is a lack of conversion among the ministry and among individuals. Let's go to Romans chapter 8 and see this because if somebody has God's spirit and then somebody is right next to them without God's spirit, there is going to be division. It's just going to happen because they don't have the same mind.

And if we sometimes walk astray for a period of times in our lives, we don't have much of the mind of Christ. And we can get off track too. And sometimes the pressure cooker of a division can show us that. Romans 8 verse 5:

Romans 8:5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; (KJV)*

That's their prime concern!

Romans 8:5b. *...but they that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. (KJV)*

I know a lady once. She's in the Church today, but she got off track for a while. And at the Feast she came up and said, "The Feast site was picked to be this Feast site." I didn't do the picking. And she highly objected to that! She said, "Well, what's in it for me? Going to the Feast, what's in it for me?" because it didn't have this amenity or that facility or this tourist activity or whatever. And she said, "What's in it for me?" And the point was she totally lost track of why you go

to the Feast in the first place! And people get off track that way. We've all done that.

Verse 6:

Romans 8:6. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*

7) Because the carnal mind is [an enemy, is the enemy] against God: [and it's] not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (KJV)

And sometimes we go astray and we reject God's Law.

Verse 8:

Romans 8:8. *So then they that are [of] the flesh cannot please God.*

9) But [you] are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, [if it is true or] if it so be that the Spirit of God [dwells] in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (KJV)

And so what we have to do is be open to the fact that we can have spiritual blind spots and we're just totally unaware of it! And sometimes a division reveals that. It certainly has in my case. You thought you were okay over here or you thought you were doing well in this area. And it turns out, you weren't at all! And a division can reveal that to each one of us.

Over the years, God has allowed pride and carnality and selfishness and self-righteousness to exist in the Church. Sometimes we've been part of that. We've gone astray for a while. And He has allowed carnal conduct and carnal attitudes and carnal approaches which, in time, cause splits. We don't want to be part of that. We don't want to be the cause of it, but sometimes we go astray. Sometimes God's people go astray. And that's why in any kind of split, there is wrong on both sides because we're all human.

But we have to look at ourselves. We can't change other people. We must look at ourselves and ask God to show us any blind spots that we might have because going through a split or in the middle of a division, you can look often in hindsight and see your own sins and your own faults. I've seen that in me. And like I said, "You didn't think you were weak in this area. You didn't think you had this problem, but after going through the pressure cooker of a split, you look back and say, "Oops! I wasn't as guiltless as I thought I was." Or, "I wasn't as lily-white as I thought I was."

Division puts stress on all of us. And God uses that pressure to see what we're made of and God uses that pressure to see if we're going to act like Christ or not. When people are getting emotional and yelling and screaming, or people are accusing or whatever, do we fall in the same mode? Or do we act like Christ? God wants to see. And under this pressure, God causes us to see ourselves because sometimes we let it rip and we say things we shouldn't say or do things we shouldn't do. And then we look back and say, "Oh, how could I have done

that! How could I have said that?" But it's revealed because of the pressure situation that we're in.

1 Corinthians 11 verse 31, let's look at that. Our job is not to judge the other person or the other group. Our job is to judge ourselves. 1 Corinthians 11 verse 31, Paul, again, is talking to the same Church that has all these problems. He says:

1 Corinthians 11:31. *For if we would judge ourselves, [Then God wouldn't need to judge us, because we'll shape ourselves up; we'll see ourselves]. (KJV)*

And this is one of the reasons God allows division because they cause us to see where we fall short.

Now look in the next book, in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5. This is about the time of year we start quoting this verse in looking forward to Passover. 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5, here's this famous word. It says, "Examine." Now the Greek word can mean to make a distinction between one thing and another thing; to make a distinction. So he says, "Make a distinction with yourself."

And notice, he says, "Examine yourselves." He doesn't say, "Examine others." It doesn't examine your brother or your sister. He said:

2 Corinthians 13:5: *Examine yourselves, whether [you] be in the faith; (KJV)*

He's saying, "Make a distinction whether you're really with it or not."

2 Corinthians 13:5b. *...prove your own selves. [Don't you know about] your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [you] be reprobate? (KJV)*

That's what we need to examine or make a distinction. Is Christ really in me? Am I allowing Christ to be in me? Or am I not? Am I allowing the spirit of error to be in me? Or am I allowing the spirit of truth to be in me?

And hopefully, out of all of that pressure, we come to the following realization that we find in Romans 2 and verse 4. Let's go there. We come to the realization that God allows or causes division to get us to this point we find in Romans 2 and verse 4. Paul says:

Romans 2:4. *Or [despise you] the riches of his goodness [God's goodness] and forbearance... (KJV)*

That means putting up with us and all of our faults and sins.

Romans 2:4b. *...and longsuffering [His patience with us]; not knowing that the goodness of God [leads you] to repentance? (KJV)*

It takes time. We don't see it just like that [snapping fingers]. Sometimes it takes months. In my case, many times it's taken years or even decades to see something, but God, during that time while He's working with us, allows us to function. He doesn't blow us into smithereens. He's very patient and very kind and very gentle. And He leads us along. It may take years or it may take decades for the light bulb to go on and you say, "Oh my! How could I have done that? How could I have been in that thought process?"

And so you see, we examine ourselves. And the real thing we need to ask is "Is Christ in me or is He not? Do I have the mind of Christ or do I not?"

We see our sins. We repent of them. We learn and we grow through pressure situations. And so these divisions and pressures that come upon us, we began to see ourselves in those. We then, through the spirit of God which leads us to repentance, we began to see it and repent. And then, we begin to change. We become different people more like God and more like Jesus Christ.

The key is—and we've said this before—is found over in Romans 8 and verse 14. This is the key. Now we read earlier in Romans 8 that if God's spirit isn't in you, you are reprobates. We read that earlier, but the key is the following. We can have God's spirit, but that's not enough. Romans 8 and verse 14, it says:

Romans 8:14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

We have to allow God's spirit to lead us. And the question is when we examine ourselves in difficult times, "Am I really being led by God's spirit? Or am I being led by another spirit? Or am I just allowing God's spirit to be dormant in me and I'm not allowing it to lead me? Am I being led by another kind of spirit?" And that's where pressure situations, divisions, and splits are used by God to shake us up, wake us up.

Fourth Point: Why there are divisions. And that is:

IV. To further develop the Bride of Christ.

Now this is not the most important point, but it is nevertheless important in that it allows God's people to develop further.

Now think about this. With smaller churches, say a Church this size, or a Church of twenty, thirty, forty people compared to a Church of six hundred or seven hundred or twelve hundred, look at what happens.

In a smaller Church, more people can be involved in serving. More people can be involved. Look at our Feasts. Before when we went to the Feast at Worldwide, it was all done by the corporate hierarchy. It was just there. It was all set up. I know a lot of people put a lot of work into it, but the average church member just went there and soaked it up and really didn't do a whole lot to make it happen.

But at a smaller Feast site where you have a hundred or two hundred people or fifty people, everybody pitches in. Everybody works. Everybody helps. Look at Luke chapter 22 and verse 25 and we'll read through verse 27. We have the opportunity to serve more in smaller groups. Is this God's design? Well, God is using it—I'll say that—to involve more and more of His people. Luke 22 verse 25:

Luke 22:25. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

26) *But [He says, "It shouldn't be so with you; it shouldn't be that way]: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that [does] serve.*

27) *For [which] is greater [Christ says], he that [sits] at [the meal], or he that [serves the meal]? Is [it] not he that [sits] at [the meal]? [He says,] but I am among you as [One that serves, I give], (KJV)*

And so, Christ said, "I came to give. I didn't come to lord it over and crack the whip. I gave My life for mankind." And He said, "I want you to do the same thing."

And in smaller Churches, we have more opportunities to do that because nothing's going to get done unless we all pitch together and get it done. And after services today, this room's got to be torn down. So there's going to be a bunch of people—it won't take long. Many hands make light work and it'll get cleared out and so, years ago when you had a church of seven hundred, that didn't happen. People can disappear.

Look at Galatians 5 and verse 13. This is an admonition that we can put to practice in smaller groups, Galatians 5 and verse 13. Paul is telling the Church, he says:

Galatians 5:13. *For, brethren, [you've] been called unto liberty; (KJV)*

Yes! Freedom! Freedom from sin. Freedom from death.

Galatians 5:13b. *...only use not [that] liberty for an occasion to the flesh, (KJV)*

Don't go back into sinning!

Galatians 5:13 continued. *[He says,] but by love serve one another. (KJV)*

And in a smaller group, you have the opportunity to do that.

Another reason with a smaller church: Brethren can't ignore brother or they can't be ignored. In a church of a thousand, people can disappear. People can come and go and you never meet them. You never know they're there. They're innocuous. And they can avoid not getting along if you just come and kind of mix

and hide and then disappear. Nobody even knows you're there. And some contrary person can go and leave and there's not a problem in a church of a thousand or five hundred.

But in a small church, we all get to know each other very, very well. And in that sense, we're forced to get along. Because if you have a church of twenty and you have one that just doesn't want to get along, he's sticks out or she sticks out like a sore thumb. On the other hand, if you have one that's always serving and helping and caring, that's very apparent also.

Look at Ephesians 4 and verse 2. In a small church, in order to have the cohesiveness in a small group, everybody has to pull. Everybody has to work together. Ephesians 4 and verse 2, it says:

Ephesians 4:2. *With all lowliness and meekness, with [all] longsuffering [that means patient], forbearing [that means putting up with one another—*forbearing*] one another in love; (KJV)*

And the Greek word "forbear" actually means suffer! And sometimes we have our idiosyncrasies. And we have good days and we have bad days. And so we endure. It means endure or suffer and sometimes we do that in order to help one another, in order to remain friends, in order to serve one another.

In a large church, also you can avoid serving and you can avoid being involved because there's so many people. And nobody knows whether you're serving or not serving and you could just kind of disappear. And in a large church, people who need service, people who really need help can slip through the cracks. And they can be kicked to the curb and left by the wayside.

But in a small church that can't happen because we know each other so well. And we love each other so much and we're more aware of each others' needs and we're more aware of the service that is required to help one another on a daily basis. And that's a good thing because then more people get involved. It's an opportunity to serve and not just get lost in the crowd.

In a small church, we get to practice the following two verses. Let's go to Philippians 2 and verse 3. This is two verses before the verse that says, "Let this mind be in you, Jesus Christ." And so, Paul was leading up to this point. Philippians 2 verse 3, he says:

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [meaning trying to puff up yourself]; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem [the others] better than themselves. (KJV)*

And this is very apparent in a small group. It's very apparent. And if people are like-minded, the person that's trying to aggrandize themselves or puff themselves up is going to be awfully alone because they would stick out like a sore thumb.

Let's go now to 1 Peter 5 and verse 5. So we need to esteem others better than ourselves and Peter adds to that in 1 Peter 5 and verse 5. He's talking about age here in the beginning. 1 Peter 5 and verse 5, he says:

1 Peter 5:5. *Likewise, [you who are] younger [younger in age], submit yourselves unto [those who are older and have more experience; but he says, Yes], all of you [every one of you] be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: [because] God [resists] the proud, and [gives] grace to the humble. (KJV)*

And so to make a small church work, everybody has to have a humble attitude. Everybody needs to consider the other person better than themselves and be subject to their wants and their needs.

And that's what we try to do at the Feast. You try to put yourself in the other person's shoe and say, "Well, what do the elderly need? And what do the young single moms need? And what do the young families need? And what do the young adults need? And how can we serve them better?" And what that does is get your mind off yourself. You know, "What's in it for me?" And you begin to look at other people and how they can best be served.

In smaller groups, there is more opportunity to serve. And frankly, there's more opportunity to be trained by God. And that is a side benefit of all of these divisions.

So Fifth and Last Point and this is something we need to keep in mind:

V. Despite the divisions and the splits that have occurred in God's Church, that are occurring to this day, true Christians are part of the Body of Christ.

There is no division in the Body of Christ. True Christians are part of the Body of Christ. And some people have a hard time getting this concept.

When God looks down from heaven, He does not separate His people by humanly devised corporations. Can you imagine God doing that? "Oh, I won't consider them because they're not of this corporation!" Or somebody in Central Africa, "Well, they're not part of this corporation. So I'm not going to have anything to do with them." God doesn't think like that. God doesn't even recognize human corporations. He doesn't recognize human administrations.

God looks at His people and His true ministers all over the earth as little shining lights. As the world turns, I'm sure He can see His spirit in all of those people. And that is what He considers. That is the Body of Christ. It has nothing to do with humanly devised administrations or corporations. Those who are truly converted are the Body of Christ. We have to get that understanding.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12 and we're going to read verses 25 through 27. And Paul is saying that there shouldn't be any division in the body. And there really

isn't because the body should all have the mind of Christ. It should be like-minded. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 25:

1 Corinthians 12:25. *That there should be no schism [or division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (KJV)*

The same care one for another! Carol Schmidt attends United, but she is part of the Body of Christ. She is a true Christian. She is setting a wonderful example. And I could care less where she attends. And all of you could care less where she attends. We love her! She is a sister. It doesn't make any difference.

Verse 26:

1 Corinthians 12:26. *And whether one member [when one member suffers]... (KJV)*

As she is suffering or other people in God's Church—Pansy in New York—are suffering with cancer.

1 Corinthians 12:26b. *...all the members suffer with it; or [when] one member be honored, all the members rejoice... (KJV)*

Dale's sister isn't part of the Body of Christ right now, but she's a child of God. And God is going to use her someday down the road. And God's going to call her. So in that sense, she is a child of God and we need to when she suffers, we suffer because we're all God's children. We're all God's people ultimately.

Verse 27:

1 Corinthians 12:27. *Now [you] are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (KJV)*

It doesn't—it would be like somebody saying in Corinth, "Well, you don't attend the Corinth Church. And so the Corinthian Church, if you're not a part of the Corinthian Church, then the Church in Philippi, we won't have anything to do with the Church in Philippi because you're not part of us." See how ridiculous that would be! And the same holds true today.

We should always pray for our Brethren, our true Brethren, regardless of their affiliation, regardless of where they attend. And we should love and communicate with true Brethren regardless of what corporation they fall under or where they attend. If they have the spirit of God, if they have the mind of Christ, if they're being led by the mind of Christ, they are true ministers and true members and we should understand that they are part of the Body of Christ. And in that sense, there is no division because true Church members and true ministers—while we're not perfect—we all want to be like Jesus Christ. And, therefore, we are like-minded in that regard.

So let's understand and in conclusion now, let's look at one Scripture. We've already looked at it. I'll just call it to mind. John 10 and verse 10, it was the Parable of the Sheepfold. Remember Christ said, "The thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy."

And the author of all division, obviously, is Satan because He tried to divide God's throne. He tried to take over God's throne. He tried to overthrow God. And we know that Satan is the author of division. He incites division in order to cause destruction.

And we have to understand that God knows that and God is allowing that. And He's using Satan like a puppet on a string. He's using Satan to attack God's people to see what we're going to do. Are we going to resist and fight? Or are we going to give in? And so He watches during all of this turmoil and all of this trouble in God's Church. Are we going to look to the spirit of error and to the shepherd of error, which is Satan? Or are we going to look to the true Shepherd? And are we going to be part of the true sheep, the Body of Christ?

And what happens with the spirit of error and the author of error, ultimately, there is destruction. There is death. But what did Christ say in John 10 verse 10? "I am here that people can have life and have it more abundantly."

And so why are there so many divisions? Why are there so many churches? It's the same answer as why is there so much suffering? Same answer! God is teaching us things we would not otherwise learn. Let's understand that. Through these divisions God is teaching us things we would not otherwise learn.

He is seeing where we really stand. Not that we're standing for this corporation or that corporation, but do we stand by the true Shepherd? Or do we not? Do we stand for what is right and good? And do we obey God? Or do we not?

And it makes no difference what the corporation is. God is watching us to see "Will we follow Him and follow His way? Will we turn the other cheek? Will we walk the extra mile? Will we return evil with good, as Christ said, or will we not?" Are we on the sidelines looking at a fight and having compassion and empathy for people? Or are we on the sidelines throwing rocks and making accusations?

So what God is doing, what Christ is doing as we go through these division is to see what we really stand for and what we really stand up against. And the whole point is to bring us into the image of Jesus Christ through all of this, and then, ultimately, to become the Bride of Christ. So this is why God allows divisions. Let's understand that and not be dismayed about it, but let's understand that it's part of our training to become the Bride of Christ.