

Self-Governance Through Self-Discipline

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Let's begin the sermon by reading from The Good News Magazine in February of 1939. This was an article Mr. Armstrong wrote and I'm going to quote the last couple of paragraphs from this article to introduce the sermon. Mr. Armstrong said:

Brethren, let us have the kind of cooperative fellowship based on love that was practiced by the early saints as recorded in the Book of Acts. Let us work together in unselfish effort to give of the gospel truth to the world.

Then the second paragraph says:

But, let us drop all efforts to build up a movement or an organization. Let us quit working for organizations and work for the Lord and the salvation of souls. What has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? [He asks the question.] Nothing but organization, which has led to politics, ministers lusting for rule and for power, striving against each other, lining up brethren on their side against each other. It is such preachers who have split up and divided our brethren. Organization and church government has brought us only strife, jealousies, divisions, bitterness. It is not of God and it can bear no other fruit.

Last paragraph:

The Church of God needs more of the power of God, more of His love, of His holy spirit, that the work may now begin to go forth in mighty power. We ought to be ashamed of the pitiful, puny, weak, feeble work that has split up the brethren and divided the brethren, reached but so very few with the message, and almost no real conversions. All this while leaders desire power to rule and send out misleading, exaggerated, deceived statements designed to convince tithe payers that the work is progressing. What a mockery! What a tragedy! What a pity! Let us obey God.

He closes his letter.

Those words were true seventy-five years ago and they're true today but my only comment was "My, how things have changed since those words were written!" And it's proof that Satan does not give up. Satan comes after God's people and if we win a particular battle against Satan, he'll come in another door. He'll come in the back way. He'll come under the carpet or whatever. He will try to get God's people.

And the fact is that church government has been a hot and a controversial subject over the years. And, sadly, church government has been misused to control and to coerce

brethren. I gave a sermon on church government twenty years ago and I remember a woman coming up to me and she said, “I cringe every time I hear the two words ‘church government.’” And I gave the sermon in Portland and a fellow came up and he said, “When you first started,” he said, “the hackles on my back started coming up.” And he was thinking to himself “Here we go with another sermon on church government.” And the fact is that over the years, many people have been hammered by that subject—hammered into submission. Now, I’ve heard Mr. Armstrong personally say—I was in the room when he said it and he said it in print too—he said, “The Kingdom of God is the government of God.”

Now, it’s interesting that the term “government of God” is not in the Bible. The word “government” is in the Bible. Of course, God is in the Bible many, many times. But “government of God” is not found in the Bible. And the reality is the Kingdom of God is so much more than just the government of God. So that being the issue, it begs the question “What is God’s ultimate goal or ultimate purpose of church government?”

Is it to have top-down dictatorial power in the Body of Christ where the brethren blindly follow what somebody says about God? I know people who don’t study the Bible directly. They study what their leader says about the Bible. They don’t go in and have a personal Bible study just looking at the Bible.

Or is the ultimate goal of government to have order and discipline enforced by several layers of bureaucracy as it has been in the past where obedience and rigor are forced upon the brethren—meaning with a spiritual gun to the head so to speak with the threat of being disfellowshipped or the threat of going into the lake of fire? Or did God intend something different regarding the government that should be in the Church—something far more fundamental, something far more basic that maybe we’ve appreciated in the past?

Now remember that there is a simplicity that is in Christ. 2 Corinthians 11 verse 3 tells us that. The Greek word can also mean a *singularness*—very clear, very simple, singular purpose in Jesus Christ. Doctrines, concepts, precepts are not complicated.

Let me read a comment by a scientist. His name was Jacob Bronowski. He was talking about Einstein. This is to the point of the simplicity that is in Christ. “Einstein was a man who could ask immensely simple questions. And what his work showed is that when the answers are simple too, then you can hear God thinking.” Simple questions followed by simple answers and you can hear the mind of God at work.

God’s fundamental principles are so simple. Government shouldn’t be complex. Doctrines shouldn’t be complex because there is a simplicity that’s in Christ. So what we’re going to do today is look at a very simple principle of God’s government and that simple principle is self-governance through self-discipline. That’s the title of the sermon:

Self-Governance Through Self-Discipline

Point number 1: History clearly shows there was no centralized government in the early New Testament Church.

Now what we're going to do first in the first point, we're going to look at a brief overview of how God's people were governed down through the ages—just to get a very brief overview of the different forms and types of government God used from the time of Adam and Eve until the present day.

God in the beginning first dealt with families. Adam and Eve were the first family. God dealt with them and their children. Then He dealt with Abraham. He dealt with Isaac. He dealt with Jacob and their families. During that period of time the government was a family government. The children looked to the father. The grandchildren looked to the grandparents and their parents. And organization was based on the family entity.

Then, when Israel came down to Egypt and then over a few centuries they were taken into slavery, God called Moses to take them out into the promised land. We know that—we won't turn there, but—in Exodus 18 we were told that there were rulers of thousands. There were rulers of hundreds. There were rulers of fifties and there were rulers of tens. And a top-down organization to take several million people from Egypt all the way into the promised land.

Now, after Joshua took Israel into the promised land, we come to the time of the judges and there was no government like that. There was a prophet who was a spiritual leader who taught the people God's will, but there was no organization like we found in the time of Moses. During the time of judges, there was a prophet. And we know the cycle that they went through of disobedience and, then, turning to God. And then God would bring them another prophet to lead them in the right way and that would last for a period of time.

But after a bit of time the people wanted a king like the nations around them and they rejected God. We won't turn there but in 1 Samuel 8:7 the people came to Samuel and just beat him up about "We want a king. We want to be like the nations around us. We want to look to a man." And Samuel was distraught and he went to God. He made this appeal to God: "This is what is happening with the people." And God, if you recall, in verse 7 said, "Samuel, do what they tell you to do." He said, "They have not rejected you. They've rejected Me that I would not reign over them." And so, as with Adam and Eve, God let them make a decision and the time of the kings began. They wanted to look to a man, look to a human. They wanted somebody they could touch and feel and hear. They did not want to look to God who they couldn't touch or see physically. And why did they do that? They did it because they didn't have the heart. They didn't have God's spirit. Deuteronomy 5:29 tells us that.

So, the kings held until Israel went into captivity to the Assyrians and then Judah went into captivity to the Babylonians. Then, from that time forward Judah—we know the ten tribes were dispersed, but—Judah was under the government of their conquerors all the way through to the times of the Maccabees and to the coming of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, there were no patriarchs. There were no Moses-es. There were no kings. Judah was under the government of Rome. Yes, they had the Temple. Yes, they had the high priest, but Judah was under the Roman government. And historically, in the New Testament, there is absolutely no evidence of a central government. There is no evidence of a dictatorial head despite what the Catholics say about Peter and contrary to what was taught in the Worldwide Church of God during its last twenty years of existence. There was no dictatorial head. There was no centralized government because look at the communications back then. Look at the transportation systems back then. It would be virtually impossible.

Now, let's look at a couple of examples of that fact. We've talked about that before but let's just pick up a couple of examples. The first one we're going to look at—you can begin turning to the Book of Acts chapter 6—is that the apostles asked for advice as to who should be ordained a deacon. The apostles asked the people. And I say “apostles” because all of them. Not Peter. Not John. They asked for advice as a group. Let's go to Acts 6 verse 1.

Acts 6:1. *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, ... (KJV)*

The Church was expanding exponentially and it created its own set of problems and this is one of them.

1b) ...there arose a murmuring of the [Greeks] against the Hebrews [or the Jews], because [the Greek] widows were [being] neglected in the daily ministrations. (KJV)

Providing food, clothing, and shelter to the Greek widows. There was a respect of persons going on and the Greek widows were not receiving the same degree of care as the Jewish widows. That was a problem.

Verse 2, notice:

2) Then the twelve [altogether] called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not [a good] reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables [meaning to take care of the widows].

3) Wherefore, brethren [you brethren], look ... out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy [Spirit] and wisdom, whom we [meaning the apostles] may appoint over this business.

4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they [the whole multitude] chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy [Spirit], and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: (KJV)

Now we see here that the apostles, yes, had the final say, but the brethren did the choosing. And the apostles approved of the choices they made and deacons were ordained for the first time to take care of business like that.

The point is here that a singular man did not dictate this at all. The apostles reached a consensus of what to do about it. The brethren made the choice. The apostles approved the choice. It was a consensus.

Now let's go to chapter 8, Acts chapter 8, and see another example. Notice this Acts 8 verse 14. Notice what it says:

Acts 8:14. *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem ... (KJV)*

And this implies that some of the apostles weren't in Jerusalem. Maybe they were traveling somewhere.

Acts 8:14. *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria [which is the area formerly occupied by the Northern Ten Tribes north of Jerusalem, that area] had received the word of God, they [the apostles at Jerusalem] sent unto them Peter and John: (KJV)*

Now, if Peter was a dictatorial head, we would read that Peter decided and here was what was going to happen. But the apostles got together and said, "We want Peter and John to go to Samaria and to help the people up there understand more of the gospel." The apostles arrived at a consensus to send Peter and John, guided—and this is especially important—guided by the holy spirit. God guided them to reach this conclusion and to solve this problem this way.

Then, we won't turn there, but if you look at Acts 15, it is very clear in that conference that there was no dictatorial head. If you remember the cause of the conference is there were a group of Jews in Jerusalem that said in order to become a Christian, you had to be a Jew first and you had to keep the Law of Moses first. Now how would you like to be an 80 year old convert and find out you had to be circumcised? I mean I hate to even think about that, but the fact is that's what they believed should happen.

And so this created a furor. Paul went up. All the apostles were there together. The brethren and the Jerusalem congregation were all there together and they had this conference. (I gave a sermon, a whole sermon, just on actually that Acts 15 conference in June of 2009 if you want to get the details and we have a copy of that if you'd like that.) But the fact is that Peter had his say. John had his say. Paul had his say. James had his say. And then they arrived at a consensus guided by God's holy spirit. It's obvious when you read that.

Another example is that the instance where Paul openly criticized Peter in Antioch. We won't turn there but it's in Galatians chapter 2. Remember? It was revealed to Peter

that God was calling the Gentiles. And in Antioch, Peter was fellowshiping with the Gentiles, teaching the Gentiles. Paul was there too. And then a group of Jews came down from Jerusalem and Peter withdrew himself from the Gentiles and went to the Jews. They were obviously sitting in different parts of the room or different tables. And when he did that, Paul stood up in front of everybody and said, “Peter, you should know better than this. How can you do this? We’re all one in Jesus Christ and, yet, you’re separating yourself from the Gentiles by going back to the Jews.” And Paul criticized Peter openly.

Can you imagine that happening in the Worldwide Church of God twenty, thirty, forty years ago? But it happened because there was no singular head. They were all equal as apostles and if somebody stepped out of line, they felt free to deal with the situation.

Also, if you look at the tail end of Acts 15, that conference again—we won’t turn there. These are just examples. Remember when Paul and Barnabas had the dispute over Mark? Mark had left them in a journey and Paul took exception to that and didn’t feel like Mark was worthy of going on a second trip. Barnabas felt differently. If you read the account and you look into the Greek, they had very heated words and they split. They went their own way.

Now, if there was a dictatorial head, somebody at headquarters (if you take the Catholic view or the previous teaching of the Worldwide Church of God), Peter would have made the decision and said, “Okay, Paul you go here. Barnabas you go here. Mark you do this or that.” It didn’t happen because there was no dictatorial head in the early New Testament.

There was a consensus government by the apostles. Peter went to the Jews. Paul went to the Gentiles as Galatians 2 tells us. There were apostles, if history is correct—certain aspects of history—some apostles went as far as India. We know some apostles went to Great Britain. And the apostles were scattered everywhere. And there were affiliated churches under the apostles, but there was no headquarters. There was no centralized government. You couldn’t send tithes from Ethiopia to Jerusalem. It just wouldn’t work, didn’t work in those days.

If the early church was loyal to church government at any price, at any cost, we would all be Catholics today because in the fourth century when the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, when Passover was changed to Easter, if there was loyalty to church government at any cost, all would have followed that process that we know was a corruption of the truth.

So my point is in closing out this first point is that: History clearly shows there was no centralized government in the early New Testament Church. That came after the Catholic Church began to be formed—300s, 400s A.D. and on.

Okay, with that established, let’s go to the second point.

Point number 2: Christ came to reveal the true purpose of government within the church, within ourselves, within us as individuals.

Now let's look at first principles. Let's go to Isaiah 9 and verse 6. In December we hear this sung in Handel's *Messiah* over and over again for about a month and then we don't hear it for the rest of the year. It is beautiful music, but Isaiah 9:6 is quoted, used in Handel's *Messiah*. Notice what it says, a prophecy about Christ.

Isaiah 9:6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: ... (KJV)

Now notice this next phrase.

6b) ... and the government shall be upon his shoulder: ... (KJV)

Now stop and think about that. If something is on your shoulder, that means you are lifting it up. You're carrying it. It says, "The government is on His shoulder." It doesn't say, "The government is under His boot." Huge difference! Government is there to serve and not to put down.

Going on:

6 continued) ... and his name shall be called Wonderful, ... (KJV)

But notice this next word.

6 continued) ... Counselor, ... (KJV)

Not Fuhrer. Counselor. A Counselor is somebody who helps and aids and supports. And Christ does that for us. Going on:

6 continued) ... The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of ... (KJV)

What? Trouble? Politics? Violence? No!

6 continued) ... The Prince of Peace [which is another function of government]. (KJV)

We see here that Christ came to carry the government on His shoulders, to support it. He came to be a Counselor.

Now with that in mind, let's go to the New Testament, Matthew 28:18 and see something maybe we haven't thought about before in this regard. Matthew 28 and verse 18, now Christ is speaking to the eleven. Judas is dead. They haven't replaced him yet. This is after His resurrection.

Matthew 28:18. *And Jesus came and [spoke] unto them [the eleven], saying, ... (KJV)*

Notice what He says. This is an incredible statement.

18b) ... All power is given unto me [meaning all power] in heaven and [all power] in earth. (KJV)

Now He qualified for that when He defeated Satan when He was tested and tempted by Satan. So, at this point, Christ is saying (He is now resurrected.), He says, “I have all power.” Now that means Christ can do anything He wants. If He has all power in heaven—God has given Him that—and all power on earth, He can do anything He wants to do.

And yet, notice what He did. Did He just go willy-nilly? Just “Hey, now I’ve got the power. I can do what I want to do.” Notice what He did. He disciplined himself. Let’s go to John chapter 5 and read verse 30. He didn’t strut around and say, “I finally got what I wanted. I can do whatever I want now.” Notice what He did, John 5:30. Notice what He says. Christ says:

John 5:30. *I can of [my] own self do nothing: as I hear [meaning from the Father], I judge: and my judgment is just; ... (KJV)*

And then He explains why.

30b) ... because I seek not [my] own will, but the will of the Father [who has] sent me. (KJV)

Now this being that has all power dropped to His knees and said “I can do nothing of Myself. All I want to do is what the Father tells Me to do. I want to please Him. I want Him happy with Me.” He set us that example.

Then when Christ came, He changed the emphasis and the purpose of government. It’s very clear and I think over the years and certainly in the Worldwide Church of God, this just went right over our heads. We didn’t get it, didn’t grasp it. Christ changed the emphasis and the purpose of government. Now, let’s begin turning to Luke chapter 22, but I when we read this, I want you to look at the stark contrast that Christ paints of the way things are happening in the world and what He wants to happen in the church—huge difference. Luke 22, we’re going to read verses 24 through 27. So we see here that the disciples were having a problem.

Luke 22:24. *And there was also a strife among them [that’s the twelve including Judas, and the strife was about], which of them should be accounted the greatest. (KJV)*

Human vanity, human pride right at the forefront and they were all promoting themselves. We've seen that so many times. Verse 25:

25) And he [Christ] said unto them, ... (KJV)

And I'll read the rest of the verse out of the NIV. He said:

25b) ... "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; ... (NIV)

And we're going to come back to that term in just a bit. There is one Greek word that means "lord it over them." He says, "But out in the world, out in this Gentile world that you see, the leaders lord it over those who are governed."

25 continued) ... and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. (KJV)

And we see that today in congress; state, national legislatures, it doesn't make any difference. They lord it over us because they decide who gets thrown some money and they are the benefactors. They give a little here, a little there. Generally they give the money so they can have votes to be re-elected the next time around. Nothing's changed. Verse 26, Christ says—now this is important.

26) But [you] shall not be so: ... (KJV)

Very simple, very clear. "Don't do it the way the world does it." It's a matter of people lording it over other people. And He says, "For you, you shouldn't do that." And this is in context of them arguing about who was the greatest. He says:

26b) ... but he that [shall be] greatest among you, let him be as the younger; ... (KJV)

Meaning: Younger men and women submit to elder, older men and women, as we do to our parents and grandparents.

26 continued) ... and he that is chief [who wants to be chief among you], ... (KJV)

And He was talking to the disciples who were arguing about who was going to be chief. He says, "Okay, you want to be chief? You want to be first? Then, you have to do:"

26 continued) ... as he that [does] serve. (KJV)

Meaning: In submission, as a slave would submit to his master, you serve those that are under your care or under your responsibility. Verse 27, He says:

27) *For [which] is greater, he that [sits to receive the food being served by the slave], or he that [serves the food, the slave serving the food]? is not he that [sits to receive the food]? but I am among you as he that [serves]. (KJV)*

Meaning: “I am among you as a slave. I serve you. You want to be the greatest? Then, you be the biggest servant.” So Christ here emphasized that government is there for the purpose of serving the governed. It’s there to serve those who are being governed.

Now, as Christ was subject to the Father that we’ve just seen, then we need to be subject to Jesus Christ. He willingly, who had all power, got down on His knees and said, “Father tell me what to do. I’ll do whatever You want. I want to please You.” We should do the same with Jesus Christ. Look at 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 5. Paul is telling this relatively new church—Jews, Gentiles, mix. The Corinthian Church today would be a combination of New York City and Las Vegas in the background and the atmosphere in that area of the world in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul says to the brethren and to us today; he says:

2 Corinthians 10:5. *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that [exalts] itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (KJV)*

Not just what we do, but what we think has to fall into obedience to Jesus Christ. Just like Christ knelt down before the Father and said, “Father whatever you want Me to do,” we must become obedient to Jesus Christ. And we know (and we won’t turn there) that Ephesians 2:19 tells us we are not citizens of this world. That’s why we don’t participate in politics. That’s why we don’t serve in the military. That’s why we don’t run for political office. That’s why we don’t get embroiled in all the politics and all the stuff that’s going on around us today because our citizenship is in heaven—not in this world. And a part of that citizenship, us as human beings, is we kneel down before Christ; Christ kneels down before the Father.

Are you starting to get a family picture here of what happens? You see Paul said—again we won’t turn there—1 Corinthians 1 verse 11, he says “Be you followers of me even as I am a follower of Christ.” He’s saying, “Look, if you see Christ in me, if you see me obeying the scriptures in my words and in my deeds, then follow my example because I’m following Christ. I talked to Christ face to face out in the desert. I was struck down by Christ. I know a little bit about Christ. So you follow me to the extent that I follow Christ.” The implication, obviously, is if Paul stopped following Christ, then we shouldn’t follow Paul.

And so we see here that Christ came to bring a mind-blowing concept of government. He tells us that we should be obedient to Christ. Christ came as a servant. Therefore, we must learn to serve and we must focus on serving. That’s exactly what Christ did. So this mind-blowing concept of government that Christ brought is that we are to serve those who are being governed. If we have any kind of responsibility and if we’re in the

body of Christ, we serve one another. We serve our neighbor. We serve our brothers and sisters in the church.

So, the second point is that Christ told us the true purpose of government. It is not to exalt individuals. It is not to exalt a class of people. It is to serve.

Point number 3: The third point we want to make is that the New Testament clearly tells us the governmental structure that should be in place in the church.

It's very clear as far as the purpose of that government and what the purpose of our lives should be in serving in that government.

First (again we want to go first principles) it is the Father in heaven—there is no doubt; the scriptures make this very clear—who has primary and ultimate authority over all things, over all matters—primary and ultimate authority over everything. Let's go to John 17 and verse 3. Christ is speaking. We could also use the scripture where Christ said, "I don't even know when the end is going to come. The Father's going to have to tell me and then that will happen." John 17 and verse 3, Christ is speaking. He says:

John 17:3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know [You] the only true God, ... (KJV)*

Christ is saying that about His Father. And then He goes on to say:"

3b) ...and Jesus Christ, whom [You have] sent. (KJV)

The Father sent the Son. And so, the Father has ultimate responsibility, ultimate authority in the universe, in the heavenly realms. And, as we saw earlier, Christ subjected Himself to the Father. We saw that in John 5:30. This time let's go to John 8 and we'll read verses 28 and 29. We're going to see here again for emphasis that Christ subjects Himself to the Father even though He has all power in heaven and in earth. John 8:28.

John 8:28. *Then said Jesus unto them, When [you] have lifted up the Son of man, then shall [you] know that I am he, ... (KJV)*

But notice this.

28b) ... and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father [has] taught me, I speak these things.

29) And he that sent me is with me: the Father [has] not left me alone; ... (KJV)

The Father never turned His back on Jesus Christ. The Father has not left Him alone. He says because:

29b) ... I do always those things that please him. (KJV)

Now how clear is that? Christ said, “All I want to do is please My Father.” And Christ did it not because He had a gun to his head. Christ did it because He wanted to! He wanted to make His Father happy. Christ willingly came under the authority of His Father and that was something Satan refused to do. He just would not do that. Satan wouldn’t come under the authority of Christ or the Father.

But we can’t be that way. Paul teaches us the authority structure in the church and how it should be implemented. And he tells us it is a family structure. Now Paul called the church—we won’t turn there, Ephesians 2:19—Paul called the church “the household of God.” Also called the Body of Christ, yes, but he calls it very distinctly the household of God—again referencing the family. We are God’s household. Just like we individually, if we’re married and have children, we have a household. And Ephesians chapter 5 tells us the outline of that family structure. Let’s turn there and we’re going to go to verse 1. Paul begins chapter 5 by encouraging us to imitate our older brother and His submission to the Father. Christ submitted to the Father. He’s encouraging us to follow that example. Ephesians 5 verse 1:

Ephesians 5:1. *Be [you] therefore followers of God, as dear children; (KJV)*

Again—talking about the family. And when your kids are three, four, five, six, seven, eight years old, the dad is “god.” Mom is “god” to the kid. They provide food, clothing, shelter, instruction, protection, safety. And to a little kid, their parents are like God. So we understand that. Now later, things change as they get older and leave the house. The parents’ role then changes from being “god” to being to being friend, to being mentor, to being helper.

But you see the manner in which authority within a family is to be exercised, Paul tells us here in Ephesians 5 how we exercise authority within a family and it’s based on a principle of mutual submission. Look at verse 21, Ephesians 5:21. Paul says:

Ephesians 5:21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (KJV)*

Submitting one to another. Christ submitted to the Father. So we should get in the habit of submitting our will to the will of others.

Now, we won’t turn there, but in Ephesians 2 and verse 3 we’re told that “nothing should be done through strife or vain glory” trying to promote the self. But we’re told “in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than ourselves.” And in others places in the Bible, we’re told to look on the interests of others, not just our own interests. And in that way we submit to one another because we’re looking out for the welfare of the other person.

Now, in Ephesians 5 Paul tells us the husband is head of wife but the key part here he says, “as Christ is head of the church.” And what Paul does is impose upon the

husband the responsibility to love his wife, to serve his wife, to take care of his wife the same way Christ serves the church. Look at verse 22.

22) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as [you would] unto [Christ]. (KJV)

With the sincerity you would submit yourself to Christ, with the humility you would submit to Christ, do the same to your husbands. Verse 23:

23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church: ... (KJV)

Now let's stop here and notice that a man is not head of the church. It's Jesus Christ. And wives submit to their husbands as the church submits to Jesus Christ. And it goes on to say:

23b) ... and he is the saviour of the body. (KJV)

The implication is the husband should be ready to sacrifice his life to save his life.

Now, jump to verse 25.

25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (KJV)

Husbands are to love their wives more than themselves. Husbands should be willing to sacrifice their very lives for their wife and for her benefit.

And so Paul teaches us here that as the church is subject to Christ, women should be subject to their husbands, but this also tells us the church is subject to Christ. Not an apostle. He could have said in this, "Well, be subject to me and then I'm subject to Christ." He could have inserted himself between the individual and Jesus Christ—put himself in there. "You look to me and then I'll look to Jesus Christ." I had that happen to me as an elder when I moved to Washington for the first time. And finally, after settling in and six months later I had a chat with the pastor. I said, "What do you want me to do. I want to do what you want. So, tell me what my responsibility is." And he says, "I want you to point the people to me." And he says, "I will point them to headquarters." Okay, now all of a sudden we've put him and headquarters in between people and Christ and God. We can't do that. Paul says, "Christ is head of the church." Not himself. Not any other apostle. Not Peter. Indeed, no man. Look at verse 24.

24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (KJV)

Because Christ was subject to the Father in everything, even though He had all power and all might. And the husband makes the final decision in the family, yes, but he

should look after his wife and make decisions that are for her benefit because he wants to serve her and he loves her.

Now the point here is that Paul concludes by saying, “The main focus here is not husbands and wives. What I say is true about husbands and wives, but the main focus is I’m trying to teach you about Christ and the church.”

Look at verse 32. He calls it a mystery.

Ephesians 5:32. *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (KJV)*

Now he’s giving the physical example of a family structure with husbands and wives. So, he’s telling us so clearly that that same structure should be in the church where we mutually submit to one another, we mutually look out after one another, and we’re willing to put our desires, make them second to the desires and the needs of other people. Very clear—very, very clear.

Governance in the family and, hence, in the church is patterned after the government in heaven. Christ willingly follows the Father because He wants to. The church should willingly follow Christ, its Head, because we want to. We should willingly esteem others better than ourselves because we want to. We willingly should look after the interests of others because we want to. Governance in a family and, hence, in the church is patterned after the government in heaven. The church is subject to Christ and not a man. Christ set the example of self-governance by limiting Himself and following the Father and we individually should follow that example—submitting to the Father because we want to, submitting to Christ because we want to. So that is the third point—what governmental structure should be like.

And I’m not diminishing the role of the ministry. The Bible is very clear on what ministerial responsibilities are. Ministers are shepherds. They need to look after the flock. Decisions have to be made. People are to be feed the truth and good food and all of that. I’m not diminishing that at all, but I’m just saying the motivation, the attitude we should follow Christ’s example.

Now, the fourth point, we’re slowly getting to the very subject.

Point number 4: The fourth point is we cannot properly govern in serving others if we can’t first govern ourselves.

How can we govern in the kingdom? How can God give us eternal life and responsibility over others if we can’t prove to Him that we can govern ourselves? God’s not going to have loose cannons in the kingdom. God’s not going to have little “Satans” in the kingdom who say, “Okay now that I’m eternal, now that I’ve got all this power, I’m going to do what I want to do. I’m going to exalt myself. I’m going to have my own little

kingdom over here.” Can’t do that! And that’s what we have to prove to God and Christ in this physical life—that we can govern ourselves.

Now James Madison was the fourth President of the United States. He is generally credited as being the “Father of the U.S. Constitution.” Let me quote from what he said. He understood this clearly: “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty is to first enable the government to control the governed.” But notice what he says secondly: “And in the next place, oblige it [meaning the government] to control itself.”

Now, 238 years later, look at the selfish government we have that is out of control and that is not controlling itself. Spending more money than we have. Spending money to get themselves re-elected. Not looking out for the good of the country or the good of the individual. Serving the self. Not governing the self. Not putting limits on the self. Perfect example in the United States government. It’s the height of hypocrisy to expect of others what we do not expect of ourselves. I’ll say it again. It’s the height of hypocrisy not to expect of ourselves what we expect of other people.

We’ve seen that in the church. There was an elite class. They abided by a different set of rule than the rest of everybody else. Can’t happen in God’s Church. Can’t happen in our lives. We’ve seen that as the norm in the modern day church in many cases.

Now, let’s look at Paul’s example of governing himself—self-governance. Paul established a congregation in Corinth. Let’s go to Acts chapter 18 and see that—brand new congregation, a wild and woolly city, people coming into the truth from all different backgrounds, all different races—Jews, Gentiles—and a horrible environment in the city of Corinth. Acts 18:1.

Acts 18:1. *After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; 2) And [he] found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; ... (KJV)*

He goes on to say why they came to Corinth.

2b) ... (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:)

Claudius was the Emperor of Rome. Hitler wasn’t the first one to persecute the Jews. He [Claudius] ordered all Jews out of Rome and so Aquila and Priscilla came to Corinth. Verse 3:

3) And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and [worked]: for by their occupation they were tentmakers [by occupation]. (KJV)

Now let’s understand Paul worked as a tentmaker in spite of the fact that he had the absolute authority, the absolute right according to God’s law to receive tithes from them. He had the right. He could have demanded it, but notice what happened. Let’s go to 1

Corinthians chapter 9. Paul is explaining why he didn't demand tithes from this newly formed church. 1 Corinthians 9, we'll begin in verse 6. He asks the question. He says:

1 Corinthians 9:6. *Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to [quit] working? (KJV)*

In his case, being a tentmaker. He says, "I've got the power to quit working," but he says, "We haven't done that." Verse 8:

8) *Say I these things as a man? or [says] not the law the same also?*
9) *For it is written in the law of Moses, [You shall] not muzzle the mouth of the ox that [treads] out the corn.... (KJV)*

He's quoting Deuteronomy 25:4. He goes on.

9b) *... [Does] God take care for oxen?*
10) *Or [says] he it altogether for our sakes?*

Is He really talking about oxen or is He using that as an example for us today to learn?

10b) *For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that [plows] should plow in hope; and that he that [threshes] in hope should be partaker of [this] hope. (KJV)*

Meaning: Being rewarded physically for his labor. Verse 11:

11) *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, [ministering to them, teaching and training them], is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (KJV)*

Meaning: Your tithes. He says that's logical.

12) *If others be partakers of this power over you, ... (KJV)*

Meaning: Other people have received your tithes.

12b) *... are not we rather [able to receive tithes from you]? ... (KJV)*

But notice this.

12 continued) *... Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. (KJV)*

Paul did not exercise his right to take tithes because he reasoned that to do so would cause a stumbling block among some members of the congregation. It would be a stumbling block to coming to Christ, coming to baptism. It would create a problem because of their spiritual immaturity. And so that required Paul to discipline himself just like Christ did. "I have the authority to do this, but I'm not going to exercise that

authority for your benefit.” He exercised self-discipline. So rather than assert his authority and risk offending, he imposed limits on himself and upon his authority.

Now, he did the same with Philemon and Onesimus. I gave a whole sermon on that episode July 6 of this past year, but you recall that Onesimus was a runaway slave owned by Philemon. Philemon paid money for Onesimus. Onesimus ran away. He wound up in Rome. He met Paul. He was converted and baptized and then began to work for Paul. And so, Paul wrote the letter of Philemon, back to Philemon that we have recorded in the Bible, asking Philemon to take this runaway slave back and he also asked him to give this runaway slave his freedom because he is now a brother in Christ.

Now the important point is that Paul asked. He did not dictate.

He could have ordered him. Mr. Armstrong ordered a lot of things. And Paul could have ordered that to happen but he did not. Why? Because he wanted Philemon to do it because Philemon wanted to do it. Not because he had a gun to his head, but because he understood that he is now a brother in Christ and despite running away and all what happened in the past, forgive him, take him back and give him his freedom. And Paul understood that a gun to the head doesn't work (We'll talk about that in a minute in the next point.), but that he wanted Philemon to do the right thing because Philemon wanted to do the right thing. And again, that is self-governance on Paul's part. He could have swaggered around and cracked the whip and ordered this and ordered that, but he put limits on himself. He disciplined himself. Paul practiced serving through self-governance and self-discipline.

And that leads us to the fifth and the last point.

Point number 5: Governing ourselves requires self-discipline. We must exercise self-discipline.

Christ disciplined Himself. He said, “I have all power, but all I want to do is what the Father tells me to do.” He put limits on His power all in accordance with what the Father told Him to do and wanted Him to do. Paul disciplined himself. He disciplined himself for the benefit of the congregation so he would not be a stumbling block.

The only way we can have true self-government, true self-discipline—only one way—that's through God's spirit. We can't discipline ourselves. We can't govern ourselves unless we have the mind of Christ in us to lead the way. Let's go to John 14 and verse 23. This is not long before Christ was going to be taken captive, was going to be tortured, was going to be murdered. John 14:23. Christ is answering Judas (not Iscariot). He says:

John 14:23. *Jesus answered and said unto him [the other Judas], If a man [loves] me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, ... (KJV)*

And here's the key.

23b) ... and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (KJV)

And, as I said last time, the Greek word for “abode” is the word “meno” and it means a *staying or a residence*. This was a new concept—the thought of God and Christ coming to live inside us human beings, mind-blowing concept. Then we have to ask, “If They’re going to come and live in us, why do they do that? What’s the point? What’s the purpose? What’s the goal? We find that in Ephesians chapter 4 and we’re going to read verses 22 and 23. We’ve read this so many times. The purpose of God and Christ coming to live inside us is to change us. Ephesians 4 verse 22, Paul says:

Ephesians 4:22. *That [you] put off concerning the former [conduct] the old [person, the old man or woman; and that old man or woman], ... is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (KJV)*

This is the point of the Father and the Son living in us.

23) [To] be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (KJV)

And Philippians 2 and verse 5 tells us that that mind should be the mind of Jesus Christ. They come and make Their abode in us so that one thing happens—we have Their mind motivating and guiding and leading us.

Now, the problem is our very nature resists that change. We know that. Our human nature doesn’t want that to happen. Remember we’re told the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the laws of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7) Our human mind is the enemy of God. It doesn’t want this process to take place.

And then we’re told by the prophet Jeremiah—this is one of my favorite scriptures. Jeremiah says, “O LORD,” he says, “I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps.” That tells us that apart from God’s spirit, we do not know how to put one foot in front of the other. If we’re going to follow Christ as He submitted Himself to God, the only way that can happen is through Them living in us to show us the way, to show us how it should be done because we know the Proverbs say (Proverbs 16), “There’s a way that seems right to a man.” We’ve all been there, done that. I was so sure I knew the right way and then it blows up in your face. “There’s a way that seems right to a man and it ends in death” if that way is not according to the will of the Father and the Son.

So, They make Their abode in us. Our human nature resists that. So the only way that we can make that happen is to discipline that human nature that resists God and Christ living in us. We have to discipline; we have to crush that human nature. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 27. Boy, Paul understood this probably more than any of the apostles. I’ll read it out of the New King James, 1 Corinthians 9:27. All of us have experienced this.

1 Corinthians 9:27. *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, ... (NKJV)*

The Greek word means *into enslavement*. I enslave my body; make it in subjection to my mind.

27b) ... lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (NKJV)

So you see in that process we govern ourselves by disciplining ourselves in order to change, to have the mind of Christ, to be like God and Christ.

Now, the fact is most marriage problems would cease to exist if the mates disciplined themselves, engaged in self-discipline.

A year ago I had to ask a man not to attend because he was not able to discipline his mouth. And he had some really divergent doctrinal views. Yet, the people knew him and it goes back to the Worldwide days. And I said, "Look, you can attend as long as you keep your mouth shut about where you diverge from our beliefs. If you want to fellowship and break some bread with us, that's fine, but you have to keep your mouth shut." He was unable to do that. He couldn't discipline his mouth. He started saying things that were shocking people and finally, you just have to say, "Okay, you're not able to discipline yourself. So until you are, you're not welcome to attend." He just couldn't discipline himself.

Now, look at what God says about exercising self-discipline. He says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). He says, "Work it out yourself." You have to discipline yourself to make that happen.

We're also told, "Prove all things. Hold fast to that which is good." We have to discipline ourselves to hold fast, 1 Thessalonians 5. We must discipline ourselves to make us hold fast to what is good and reject what is evil.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5, what the Bible says about self-discipline. 2 Corinthians 13:5. This will come in increasing evidence and practice as we get closer to Passover. It says:

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

That's what we're to examine ourselves about. Are we in the faith? And he says:

13:5b) ... prove your own selves.... (KJV)

That means put yourselves to the test.

13:5 continued) ... [Don't you know] your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [you] be reprobates? (KJV)

So, examine ourselves to see: Am I behaving, am I thinking as Christ would have me do if He's living in me?

Now the Greek word for "faith" here ("Whether you be in the faith") is the Greek word "pistis." "P-i-s-t-i-s" in English. And it means *a moral conviction of the truthfulness of God*. Does what God says in the Bible, is it true or not? Do we really believe it? It says, *"Especially in reliance upon Christ for salvation."* Zodhiates says about this word, "It is of Christian zeal and ardor in the faith."

So, when we examine ourselves, in the modern vernacular, we would say, "Am I really with it? Do I really get it? Am I following Christ the way I should?" Let's go to 2 John and look at verse 8. John is saying the same thing in different words about examining ourselves, exercising self-discipline. I'll read it out of the New King James. He says:

2 John 1:8. *Look to yourselves, ... (NKJV)*

Not to your neighbor. Not to your mate.

2 John 1:8. *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. (NKJV)*

Check yourself out to make sure we're doing what we should be doing, thinking what we should be thinking. Then jump to verse 10. Romans 16 and verse 17 says the same thing.

10) If there come any unto you, ... (KJV)

Meaning: each one of us individually. If anybody comes unto you individually:

10b) ... and [doesn't] bring this doctrine, [don't] receive him into your house, [don't give] him God speed: (KJV)

You see that's up to us to exercise self-discipline to do the right thing.

And let's go to Revelation 2 and verse 2. This is the first letter to the seven churches, the church at Ephesus, but we know these letters apply to all church eras at all times. Yes, there are church eras and it's directed at the church in Ephesus, but the principles apply to all of us. Revelation 2 and verse 2, notice what Christ says to Ephesus.

Revelation 2:2. *I know [your] works, ... (KJV)*

Well, He knows our works too. And He says:

2b) ... [I know your labor], and [I know your] patience, and how [you cannot] bear them which are evil: ... (KJV)

That's up to each individual. And He goes on:

2 continued) ... and [you have] tried them [tested them] which say they are apostles, and are not, and [you have] found them liars: (KJV)

That's an individual responsibility and we need to do that today. The last time I counted I think there were six apostles claiming they were the only apostle. And that they were going to lead people to the place of safety or that they were going to train the two witnesses or they were the only one God is working through. And nothing has changed. There's nothing new under the sun. And what we're being told here is it's our responsibility to discipline ourselves and not fall for some of this for people that say, "Look to me. I'm the apostle. I'm in the limelight. The spotlight's on me. Follow me." They didn't fall for that. They had patience. They had works. They had labor and they could not stand evil and people who brought evil.

The key here is personal loyalty to God and Christ. Sometimes we mix that up and put personal loyalty to a man or personal loyalty to an organization, but the key is personal loyalty to God and Christ. Let's go to Acts chapter 4 and we're going to read verses 18 through 20. This is a situation where the apostles were in trouble because they preached the gospel and the intelligentsia, the leadership of the day, were not happy with them. Acts 4 verse 18 and it says:

Acts 4:18. *And they ... (KJV)*

That refers up to verse 4—the high priest, the rulers, the elders and the scribes.

Acts 4:18. *[All of them] called them [referring to the apostles], and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. (KJV)*

Now, you can imagine that's a pretty intimidating group of people. And you're just fishermen and day laborers, the apostles, and here you have the leadership of the nation, religiously, united together saying, "You guys have to keep your mouths shut." Verse 19:

19) But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether [it's] right in the sight of God to [listen] unto you more than unto God, [you] judge. (KJV)

That's pretty cheeky because you didn't know what the result of that sentence was going to be, but they said, "We're going to obey God. We're looking to God more than we're looking to you."

20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (KJV)

And then in the next chapter over in verse 29, it says:

Acts 5:29. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, ... (KJV)*

This is the conclusion of the matter.

29b) ... We ought to obey God rather than men. (KJV)

And, boy, I wish we could learn that today in the church. There are too many that are obeying men. There are too many that are looking to men. We need to look to God and Jesus Christ.

The focus of the New Testament is God in us, God in you, the Father and the Son coming to live inside us through the holy spirit. That must mean then that we have to have a personal relationship with Them. They're living inside our own bodies, in our minds. Someday we'll find out how all that works, but They're living inside us. Therefore, if somebody is living inside you, you must have a personal relationship even though the human nature doesn't want that to happen.

Therefore, if They're going to live in us and motivate us, we have a personal responsibility to change from the old person to the new person, which is in the image of Jesus Christ. We have a responsibility, therefore, to govern ourselves and discipline ourselves to fall into the mold, the image, the mind of Jesus Christ. And we should love God and Christ so much that we obey because we want to. Not out of fear. Not out of a gun to the head, but because we desperately want to because we love them so much we want to please them.

Okay, let's conclude now.

Nazi Germany was the poster child for order and discipline. And they achieved that order and discipline through fear and through force. In fact, starting in 1935 when Hitler became the fuhrer, achieved ultimate power in the nation of Germany, from that time forward if you uttered a word of doubt or criticism ... You're just standing on the sidewalk and saying, "Well, I don't understand why they did it this way," or "I wish they would do it that way." Do you know what the minimum sentence is if that was reported? It was two and a half years in prison. So, the people learned very quickly to keep their mouths shut.

Order and discipline were enforced, but you see government based on fear only works temporarily. If you put a gun to somebody's head and you can make them fake what you want; you can make them act the way you want, but when you take the gun away, they go back to their former habits because they didn't obey because they wanted to.

And Christ brought a different way. Christ brought the concept that we need to internalize God's way of life because, after all, He and the Father are living inside us. Make it a part of us. And that we obey because we want to because we love Them.

Now, isn't that exactly what we wanted from our children? What parents want is when their children get old enough to leave the house and to get out of their own, they have the self-discipline to reject the world and they have the self-discipline to reject their human nature with all of its lusts and pride and vanity. That's what you want as parents. And you want them to follow God because they want to follow God because there's no gun to their head now. They're out from under the parents' responsibility. They're under a different roof. And you want them to follow by exercising self-discipline, having self-government, and to follow God and Christ because they have decided to do that themselves because they want to please the Father and the Son.

Let's close with one scripture, 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 24. Paul says something very fundamental that I think we've ignored over the years going back twenty, thirty, forty years. 2 Corinthians 1:24, Paul says something very fundamental here. He says:

2 Corinthians 1:24. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, ... (KJV)*

Now that Greek word for dominion was the same Greek word that we talked about earlier in Luke 22:25, "exercising lordship over." Paul says we cannot exercise lordship over your faith. He says:

24b) ... but are helpers of your joy: for by [your faith and the] faith [of Christ, you] stand. (KJV)

It's your faith. We can't make anybody have faith. We can't make anybody obey. He says, "You have dominion over yourselves." In other words, only we with the help of God's spirit have control over ourselves and only we can exercise self-control and self-discipline and self-government. So, before we can govern others, we must learn to govern ourselves and exercise self-discipline in the same manner that Christ exercised it with the Father and Paul exercised it.

Now, Passover is 78 days away—hard to believe—78 days away. So, between now and then, let's concentrate and focus as we examine ourselves, "Am I governing myself the way Christ governed Himself? Am I disciplining myself the way Christ disciplined Himself?" Let's make sure we do that so that we can follow the true governmental structure in the church of having self-government through self-discipline.