

The Faith Once Delivered

William P Goff

1/23/2021

Greetings Brethren,

I'd like to give a short background of my family's history in the cog that will lead into my message today. My wife Marie and I came into the church in 1984. It was very exciting times for us, having our eyes opened to so much truth, especially after being born and raised Roman Catholics. We attended WWC until 1990, when we left over the false doctrines that were then being introduced. Afterwards we were involved with Global cog for a while, and then continued to get involved a bit with quite a number of other "splinter" churches of God. But we never considered ourselves as "Global" brethren, or "United" or "Church of God in truth" etc. etc. Fortunately, we knew there was only one true church, and that it was a Spiritual organization, not headed by men, but by our Lord and Savior Himself.

One time after fellowshiping for a while on John Rittenbaugh's phone hookup, John was kind enough to travel out to our small local group and baptized our son Jason in our backyard swimming pool. Afterwards, we all sat down on our back patio and had a barbecue lunch. At one point during the meal, with all the chatter from dishes, silverware, people talking etc. A lady spoke up and said: "So Marie how does it feel to be member of the "Church of the Great God?" (Pin drop silence filled the air) Well the answer was a "no brainer" for my wife Marie; she spoke right up without even a breath of hesitation and replied: "Oh, I'm not member of the Church of the Great God, I'm just cog. She meant no disrespect to John, or anyone else, she was just stating a fact that was right in line with Scripture and the Truth.

Fortunately, we learned early on, that Christ is alive and well and quite capable of heading His church. Sad to say, not many realize that even to this day, but continue to follow and allow men to lead them, and to separate and divide them.

Let us remember, there is only "one" church, and Scripture defines it as "*The Church of The Living God, The Pillar and Ground of The Truth.* (1**Timothy 3:15**) Scripture also clearly states that membership in that one true Church, hinges on whether one has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, (**Romans 8:9**) And leading him: (**Romans 8:14**)

Let's realize something here concerning division in the church. According to God, there is division in His church. (How could there not be, being there are two separate paths, with one leading to life, and the other leading to death.) And the division is not confusing or complicated to comprehend, it's actually quite simplistic. Men may have the church divided into hundreds of separate splinter groups, but in God's eyes, there are only two groups out there, yes two, the Wise and the Foolish, the Sheep and the Goats. Now which group one reside in is totally one's own choice. But it's of utmost importance for all of us to choose the path we follow wisely here, because the sheep will be entering into His Kingdom, but the goats will not. (**Matthew 25:31-46**) The wise will be going into the marriage supper at our Lords return; but the foolish will find the door shut. (**Matthew 25:10-12**)

Brethren, we always have to be careful with men, concerning their ideas, their agendas, and of course, the words that come out of their mouth, and most importantly, their teachings, because the Scriptures are full of warning about being led astray by men.

Let us not forget when our Lord was asked about His return, and the end of the age, the first words out of His mouth was "*Take heed that no man deceives you, for many men shall come and deceive many.*) And Peter also warned us about men, stating: "*There were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*"

Brethren, we all know these verses, we've read them hundreds of times over, but do we comprehend what they say?

Let's read them again, but this time in their proper "tense" to drive their sobering warnings home. Those warnings were written in future tense almost 2,000 years ago. But it's time now to wake up and put them in proper perspective, yes, in present tense.

Our Lord and Savior's warning says this; "Take heed that no man deceive you, for many men have come in my name, and have deceived many." And the Apostle Peter says: "There were false prophets among the people, even as there are false teacher among you, who have brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and many are following their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of."

This is why it is so important for us to continually "Study, rightly divide the word of truth." "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."

That's how we "Grow – Grow – Grow."

We need to be very careful not to be confused by men, and to never ever follow any man. God did not place men in positions to "lead" us; the Minister's job is never to lead us; the minister's job is to "tweak" us. Leading is totally the responsibility of our Lord.

Let me quote an insert from previous message given discussing our calling to become Perfect titled "Perfect or in Part" [http://vwkog.org/Documents/Perfect Or In Part.pdf](http://vwkog.org/Documents/Perfect%20Or%20In%20Part.pdf) to clarify what I'm trying to say here.

(Cutting in)

"Ephesians 4:11 *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (For what?) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.*

(Now the word "perfecting" here is not the same Greek word that Christ concluded His "Sermon on the Mount" with back in Mathew five, where He said "Be Ye Perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect." But both words work together for our benefit.)

(Let's see that by defining the two words.)

The "perfect" that Christ instructs us to become in His "Sermon on the Mount" means: to be complete in growth, to be complete in mental & moral character.

The Greek word translated "perfecting" which the pastors & teachers have been given to perform in us, means: to complete thoroughly, or adjust) It's talking about "fine tuning" here, or to "tweak".

The Minister's job is to help us become complete, help us reach that goal of perfection, but he is never to be followed.

It's not uncommon to hear ministers say: "Follow me as I follow Christ." But nowhere in the Scriptures are we ever told to follow any man. (**1Corinthians 11:1** is mistranslation in KJV –should say imitate (not follow.) Imitate is big difference from follow. Everywhere the Scriptures uses the Greek word that does mean "follow" is attached to Christ, like: (*My sheep hear my voice and "follow" me.*) What Scripture does say about men fits right in the multiple warnings about men, like "*cursed be the man that trusteth in man* (**Jeremiah 17:5**) and there is that psalm we used to sing every week: "*Put your trust not in mortals*". (**Psalms 146:3**)

If we're looking for the right man to teach us, if we think some man is going to lead us into all truth, we're barking up the wrong tree. Scripture is quite clear concerning who our true teacher is, and who (or what) will guide us into all truth.

(Ephesians 4:21 1 John 2:27 John 16:13)

It's the Spirit (not man) that is to "guide" us into all truth. And even show us things to come.

Now let's be clear here, some men do have a role to teach in the church, as we read in Ephesians, God has placed some in His church to be pastors and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints." Perfecting = (to complete thoroughly) repair, adjust, (make) perfect.

But teachers have to be qualified or tested to be sure they are teaching sound doctrine. Even Paul warns us in his letter to Timothy about the many false teachers who are not preaching or teaching "sound doctrine" not teaching the "Word" not teaching "Truth," but instead fables.

2Timothy 4:2 (The NIV puts it like this: "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction." Why? The AMP puts it like this: "For the time will come (has come) when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction [that challenges them with God's truth]; but wanting to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold.

The bottom line when it comes to having the "truth" and walking in "truth," is studying, rightly dividing the Word. We always have to verify everything with the Scriptures. All of our beliefs have to be supported by Scripture. Our Lord's little flock, His true church is Sanctified (or set apart) by Scripture, by the Word.

(John 17: 17) Remember, Scripture is for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. **(2Timothy 3:16)**

Let us also remember, "Iron still sharpeneth Iron" This is why it is also important, very important not to just brush off someone who challenges our beliefs. Many in the cog today are quick to close their ears if they hear someone teaching or preaching what some call heresy. Many "Ministers" will do everything in their power to keep their flock from considering or even hearing anything contrary, or outside of their box. They treat heresy like the plague. But heresy is not the plague. Heresy is only something that is contrary to our "orthodox" or what is generally or traditionally taught and believed as right or true.

Brethren, try to understand something here, Heresy is not necessarily bad. Heresy is just something believed or taught that is at variance to what the normal or regular teaching is. (Anything contrary to the established beliefs.)

Heresy is not a bad thing; actually heresy is needed to help achieve accuracy. Even the Apostle Paul was accused of preaching heresy, and he was proud of it **(Acts 24:14)** It's damnable heresy that we have to be on guard against. And you better use much caution here, because we are living at the time when good is called bad and bad good, and even the way of "truth" is evil spoken of. Don't be surprised if you come to find out that some of the "beliefs" and "traditions" practiced and taught by men in the church today are contrary to the Scriptures.

That's why we have to "*prove all things, hold fast to that which is good,*" that's why you have to be free to think outside the box, to "*study, and rightly divide the word of Truth.*"

How about Jude, did he also warn about men? Yes, he not only gave us a Very Powerful Warning concerning men who have already led us astray, but also Powerful instruction concerning what we need to do about it. But sad to say, other men have already succeeded to water down and diminish Jude's powerful and important admonition.

Jude 1:1 starts out by telling us who he is speaking to. He is speaking to Christ's "small flock" here. Yes, His true church, and his message is for us today. As we know, many are called, and that includes all of us. That's where our Journey with the Almighty God started right, at our High calling? So this message from Jude is for all, all who have been called, (the many of them.) But Jude's letter is specifically addressed to the "sanctified" the "saints." The ones the Father not only put into His Son and our Savior's Hands, but who have also been responding to His teachings, and growing. (And His teachings, Scripture, not orthodox beliefs whose teacher is man.) Yes, the ones following His Voice, and growing, maturing and "towering up" as Paul says to "become a Saint" one has to tower up. And lets us remember, it takes more than knowledge to become a Saint. To be a Saint, one has to be doing, growing, changing from his old walk, and most importantly, one has to be Pure. Saints are pure, unblemished.

Strong's #G40 sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially, consecrated):-- (most) holy, saint. (separated not only ceremonially, but also morally.

Next Jude says he was going to write to the saints about common salvation, but instead realized that he needed to "exhort" them (exhort us, those in His church today.) And please understand the powerful meaning of many of the words Jude uses in his exhortation. Exhort here means: urge, advise earnestly - caution us, admonish urgently - to give urgent advice.

To understand Jude's level of urgency here, concerning the action we (the brethren in the cog) need to take concerning all the false teachers and teachings that our Lord, and Apostle Paul and Peter and more warned us about, one needs to picture the crowded movie theater as someone Screams "FIRE". Because Jude our Lord's half-brother is screaming Fire Here Brethren, urging us to take Urgent action!

Urgent action to do what? "*To earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*". "Earnestly contend" is another powerful word being used here. This is the word in the past only used concerning the Olympic contenders that are earnestly contending – striving for – fighting for, the "Gold Medal". The gold Jude is talking about here (that we all need to be deeply engaged in, and fighting for) is to "*get back to the faith once delivered to the saints.*" That is what Jude is urging us to do, to get back to that "Faith once delivered".

If you look at the commentaries concerning the "faith once delivered" (The faith, we need to be fighting & struggling to get back to) it's talking about "doctrines" it's talking about "Truth".

Well, if we need to get back to this faith, this truth once delivered to the saints, let's ask a question here. How did we lose it in the first place? The answer to that is no mystery Brethren. Jude tells us in the very next verse, and it's quite reiterating: "*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Brethren, do we comprehend the danger in following and relying on men to lead? Often times when discussing doctrines with brethren, I often hear many say: "Well what does Mr. so & so say?" We need to be questioning what the Scriptures say.

Do we put as much effort into searching for "Truth", as the Olympic Athletes put in fighting for the Gold Medal? I ask, Is Truth that important to us? Or maybe we think that we already have all the truth? That's what many pulpits have been falsely teaching and preaching for a long time, that we have already gotten back to the faith once delivered, that all we need to do now is hold on to it.

We should never think that we know it all, or that we have all the truth. That in itself is a Laodicean attitude, and seriously in need of addressing. Anyone with that mentality needs to take our Lords advice given to the Laodicean's, and anoint their eyes with that eyesalve so they may see, because we do not have all the truth, yet.

There are a number of doctrines that have been commonly taught and believed in the cog for a long time, which some brethren (the heretic's) claim to be incorrect, or not properly understood.

Now I'm not here today to point them all out, or push any of my beliefs on anyone. Some of the controversial issues have been echoed throughout the church for a long time now, but generally ignored by the majority of the brethren. What I do strongly recommend is that we be noble like the Berean's, who were "quick and prompt, to hear, with all readiness of mind, and then challenged any and all heresy by searching the Scriptures. We need truth Brethren, and truth can only come from studying, searching, and rightly dividing the Word.

There is one teaching, which I believe is a false teaching or belief that I do want to address, it pertains to the parable of the ten virgins, and it is pertinent to the subject being addressed here today. Most pulpits in the cog teach that the "oil" the wise virgins are continually filling up on, represents God's Spirit. But if you study that parable, "spirit" doesn't fit with the context. When the foolish virgins (the ones who have been neglecting to obtain this precious oil) when the foolish virgins realize they're in short supply of it, they are told to go and buy for themselves. You cannot buy the Holy Spirit, Simon Magus sure proved that (**Acts 8:18-20**) But what you can buy, and what we are told to buy, is truth. (**Proverbs 23:23**) And when it comes to using our lamp, "Truth" the "Word of God" is what is required to illuminate them, so one can see. (**Psalms 119:105**)

Brethren, time is money, one buys Truth by taking time to study, searching the Scriptures, proving all beliefs, rightly divide the Word. Truth is of utmost importance to us. As previously mentioned, Truth is what defines the church, "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*" (**1Timothy 3:15**) Truth is what sanctifies us "*Sanctify them through Thy Word, Thy Word is Truth.*" (**John 17:17**) Truth is how the Father wants us to worship Him, "*In Spirit and in Truth.*" (**John 4:23-24**) Truth is what "*makes one free.*" (**John 8:32**) And Truth is something that we need to have a Love for, because without it, without Truth, we will not be saved (**2Thessalonians 2:10-12**) Verse 13 says that those chosen to salvation, was through sanctification of the spirit and belief in the Truth, Yes, belief in the truth, not in fables.

This belief in truth seems to be lacking in the cog today. We can see this in (**Mark 16:17**) Our Lord tells us that "signs" shall follow those who believe. And that belief has to do with Truth. You can verify that in verse 20 where it says that our Lord was "confirming" the "word" the "truth" with "signs" following. Let me quote from another message here titled: "Preparing For The Kingdom."

http://vwkog.org/Documents/Feast_of_Tabernacles-2020.pdf

(Cutting in)

"Let's notice something back in Mark 16 concerning these "signs follow". This will help clarify what I'm trying to say here about "belief"

Mark 16:17-18 talked about the "signs" that shall follow those who believe.

Mark 16:19 "After the Lord had spoken unto them; he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." (That's where he still is today.)

(Now notice verse 20) "and they (the disciples) went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the "word" with signs follow."

That word "working" means "coadjutor" assistant. Notice they weren't assisting our Lord, our Lord was assisting them, and He was "confirming" their "word" with sign following. (Better put, confirming that what they were preaching was true, by the "signs" the "miracles".)

Confirming means = establish the truth or correctness of (something believed.)

Good News Translation puts it like this: "The disciples went and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and proved that their preaching was true by the miracles that were performed."

If we want our Lord to “confirm” what we are teaching, or preaching or believing, we have to be Teaching & Preaching Truth.

(Contemporary English version) Then the disciples preached everywhere. The Lord was with them, and the miracles they worked proved that their message was true.

All I’m trying to point out here is that there has to be “Truth” being preached (being taught) and being believed, in order for our Lord to be confirming. He is NOT going to confirm any false doctrines or false beliefs.

Our Beliefs, have to be based on “Truth” And supported by “Scripture.”

(End of Quote.)

There is something that I have noticed in the cog over the years. It seems that many sitting in the larger cog organizations still have the same beliefs today (same knowledge) that they were taught when first coming into the church, but we are to be growing in both grace and knowledge.

Now when I observe the smaller groups, the ones who are not so focused on pulpits of men, there seems to be much growth in both Scriptural knowledge and also in unity with one another.

My hope Brethren is that each and every one of us takes nothing for granted when it comes to doctrine. We need not fear proving and reproofing our beliefs. If what we believe is correct, if what we believe is true according to the Word of God, then all we will be doing is reproofing, and that is what the Scriptures are for, reprove. But if we find some of our beliefs to be incorrect, let us be quick to change and to adhere to His Voice, the Voice of our Lord and Savior.