

## **What Is The Work Of God Now? (Part Three)**

### **Why Disunity?**

**John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)**

**Given 08-May-99; Sermon #394**

This sermon is the third in the series on "The Work of God." I am considering this from the standpoint of the entire church, generally referred to as the greater church of God, not merely from the Church of the Great God. At the same time, I'm taking into consideration what the church as a whole has been provided with by God. What has happened to us has also happened to others as well, whether they be in Global, or Living, or United, or Philadelphia. We are, frankly, in a mess. We heard this week that David Pack and Global have parted company, and so we have evidence that the splitting has continued.

Now, what can be done? It's been my observation that what we have done in the past as "the work" must be set aside, or at least diminished for a while, until we take care of the immediate problem of being scattered in a large variety of organizations.

I read maybe six months ago a paper that somebody noted that there are now almost 90 organizations that have split off the Worldwide Church of God. Some of those split off quite a number of years ago, maybe back as far as the early '70s, but during the past 7 to 8 years, the splitting has intensified, and quite a number of groups have organized from that.

There is resistance in many people's minds to doing what I feel needs to be done. In the previous two sermons, I was examining some of the reasons that these people give why [they don't believe God could be behind the scattering of the brethren]. In this sermon, after reviewing my conclusion to the four reasons given, we're going to begin looking at what we can do individually for the time being.

First, I want to review those four points once again because I want to engrave this into our minds to see if, given the opportunity, there might be some of this in us.

Point 1: The notion that God couldn't possibly have scattered us because He is a God of unity.

Yes, God is a God of unity, but the unity must be on *His* terms. He clearly demonstrates in the Old Testament that He will scatter those who have made a covenant with Him if they are not believing in and living up to the covenant.

I want to examine a scripture or two that we have used before—not in this series, but in the series that I gave on The Providence of God. I think that you will see that there is a correlation between The Providence of God series, and the series that I am presently giving. Because, we have been provided with this scattering by God.

Some do not want to face up to what we might call "the dark side of God." I hope you understand that I am just using this phrase figuratively, because He is all light. But I say "dark side," because it's an aspect of God that sometimes we don't want to accept as a reality that we have to deal with.

**Isaiah 45:7** I form the light, and create darkness.

A contrast is being established. It is natural for us to expect that everything that comes from God will be good for us. Please understand that is not a wrong concept, but it may not look good immediately when it happens.

**Isaiah 45:7** I form the light, and create darkness [a contrast]: I make peace, and create evil [or, "create calamity"]:

Calamity frightens, which is the opposite of peace. There is the contrast: "*I make peace, but I also create calamity.*" That might scare the wits out of us.

**Isaiah 45:6** I am the LORD, and there is none else.

My wife was reading a book this past week, and she came across something that this man pointed out that I think has application to what we are going through right now. It's in the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk is praying because he's kind of upset at God. God has said that He's going to bring

somebody on Judah, on Israel, that Habakkuk feels is worse than Israel or Judah is. To Habakkuk, that doesn't seem fair that somebody worse should be brought to punish Judah and Israel.

**Habakkuk 1:5** Behold you among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, which you will not believe, though it be told you.

Here comes the "work." ...and you talk about calamity! You talk about evil!

**Habakkuk 1:6-9** For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs [meaning Judah and Israel]. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed off themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. They shall come all for violence.

You talk about calamity. You talk about being frightened. This God of peace has another side to Him that we need to deal with.

Will God scatter the church? Yes He will. Will it be good that He scatters it? Yes it will, in the long run. What He does, though, it is very difficult to deal with—difficult to accept—He does in order to discover those who really have faith in Him.

We have to get rid, some how or another, of this Protestant concept of a "goodie-two-shoes, fuddy-duddy grandfather God." Good He is, but He has resources for doing and bringing about good that are numerous and broad and very imaginative. God is not merely trying to save us, as the Protestants seem to believe, thus enabling one to believe just about anything that ones desires. But, through faith and through free moral agency, He is creating us in His image. Only the correct doctrines, and a humble and zealous devotion to them, will produce that image. Sometimes, brethren, what He brings upon His people might be frightening and painful, but God will be feared by His people.

This emphasis on the preaching of the gospel to the world is allowing some to ignore the real cause of the scattering. The Bible answers that the cause is sin, motivated by a loss of faith and devotion to the relationship with Christ, leading to worldliness—as God scattered the church. Yes, God is a God of unity, but the reality is that we are scattering. Therefore WE must not be meeting His terms for unity with Him, and with each other. Brethren, the sad fact is that many are not living by faith—God is not a reality to them—and He brought this about for our own good.

Point 2: The notion that if we just get out there and preach the gospel, unity will occur.

This one ignores the facts of history that the Bible again very clearly shows. The Israelites—our progenitors, our ancestors—are a rebellious and stiff-necked people. As Jesus said in John 8, "We will do as our father did." This is something that seems to be pretty deeply ingrained in our nature. This does not mean that we are not normally nice and sociable people. But, in relation to God, when push comes to shove, we will do what we feel is well and good for us.

Probably the outstanding example of this is during the period of the Judges. Two times in that book—[one being the very last verse in the book of Judges—He said that during this period of time, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." "In those days," He said, "there was no king in Israel." What He means is, there was no central authority that they would accept as being the pattern to follow.

I think that you can see the analogy there. We are being scattered all over the place. Here is this group, that group, and another group—and there is no "central authority." Each group is doing that which is pleasing in its own sight. We are following the same pattern as our ancestors.

When Israel was still in Egypt, wasn't the work of God under Moses to get Israel—a slave people—out of Egypt and into the wilderness, then to proceed on into the Promised Land? That was the work of God then.

In one sense, all the people had to do was to walk, which is simple enough. But the analogy is there. All we have to do is walk to the Promised Land. It has to be the right kind of walk, if you get my drift.

They didn't have the right kind of walk, but still they were generally proceeding toward the Promised Land. They were, in effect, "doing the work of God," and yet they were splitting all over the place, even while they were doing it—progressing toward the Promised Land, little by little.

The same thing is happening to us. We are gradually going toward the Promised Land, but we are splitting, even while we are doing it.

Historically—again, all you have to do is go back and read Herbert Armstrong's autobiography. Even as he was preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world, the church was splitting under him. During his time-period of doing that commission, the most serious split occurred in 1974. But when he died, all of the other things that were latent—that were being held together very weakly while he was alive because of a loyalty to him or whatever—spun apart. And we went all over the place.

Conclusion: All by itself, the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God will not hold the church together. The evidence is that we are following the same general pattern as our ancestors, because the problems lie elsewhere. Just having God's spirit will not unite us either, because this notion ignores the fact that the Holy Spirit will guide and lead us to choices—but it will not *force* us into a unity.

Point 3: The notion that the ministry is entirely responsible for the splits.

I think that there is no doubt that the ministry bears the greatest responsibility in this, and so we have to bear our measure of it. But the whole church went to sleep to some degree.

Again, the Old Testament clearly shows that God did not scatter Israel and Judah until—and this is the way He says it—"*...they were sick from the top of their head to the soles of their feet.*" This is an Old Testament equivalent

of "*going to sleep*." That is the pattern. When we were scattered, it indicated that we were in the same condition as they were.

Point 4: The notion that Satan scattered the church, not God.

This one fails to address the sovereignty of God. He is the Sovereign Ruler of His creation. He makes very clear that He is the Sovereign Ruler, most of all, of the church through Jesus Christ who is its Head.

Again the Old Testament clearly establishes that God scattered Israel, and that God divorced Israel. God will scatter, if that is what it takes.

We're going to look at three Scriptures. The first one is in Leviticus 26:33. It supports this concept that God will scatter those that have made a covenant with Him. This is "*the blessings and curses*" chapter.

**Leviticus 26:33** And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

There is the principle that is there. What we need to understand is that this is not an empty threat. It is a promise for good or bad.

**Isaiah 55:10** For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth...

That is an absolute certainty. When rain falls, the earth is going to be dampened. It's going to produce something there.

**Isaiah 55:10-11** For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Reflect this principle back to Leviticus 26, where He said *"If you keep the commandments, what I have said will come upon you for blessing. If you break the commandments, what I said will come upon you for curse. It will go forth. It is not empty."* He is saying, *"It will happen."* Therefore we can understand confidently, with great conviction. We are scattered, not because we're good, but because we've been bad. We've been sinning.

**Isaiah 45:23** I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Again, what God says is not empty. So if circumstances fit, we have to wear the shoe because it fits. And so what He says in Leviticus 26—that He will scatter those who have made a covenant with Him—has come to pass.

My major concern in all of this is that people see themselves as victims, rather than the cause. This is typical of human nature: it allows people to go on in their comfortable rut while pointing accusing fingers at others for being the cause.

The emphasis on preaching the gospel to the world diverts attention away from the cause—misleading us into ignoring it, and assuming that we are okay. There is the problem.

God will not accept that, because what He has done has a redeeming purpose behind it. In the overall sense, it is good, even though it is calamitous, disturbing, and might even be frightening. But He will not accept us the way we are. If we will not accept what He has dealt us, then there is only one thing that can happen: it will only bring more pain.

We cannot say to Him that we were not warned. In Acts 20, Paul warned the people in Ephesus—most specifically the ministry there. He was making his final trip through there, which would eventually lead him to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Rome where he was going to be put on trial. He knew that this was probably going to be the last time that he went through western Asia Minor, and so he warned them that the church was going to come under severe attack—"that wolves were going to come in and rend the flock."

In like manner, we were warned by Herbert Armstrong. I gave you just a little excerpt from that sermon that he gave on June 24, 1978, in which *fifteen times* he warned the Pasadena congregation "**WAKE UP!**" He shouted it like you would have to do to wake somebody up that was sleeping right through what was going on. And then that tape was sent out all over the world for everybody else to hear. It was not just the Pasadena congregation that was in trouble. The whole church was in trouble, and Herbert Armstrong knew it. And from that point on, he was preaching to anybody who wanted to hear that the church, like a train, was off the track.

I'm sure that any of you, who were in the church at the time, remember that as a constant recurring theme that he was speaking about. The church never did get fully back on the track. It bumped along until he was finally dead in 1986, and then things rapidly got worse.

Let's go now to John 17:20-23. This is Jesus' prayer just before He was crucified.

**John 17:20** Neither pray I for these alone [for those men who were with Him at that moment], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

That includes you and me now, because we have believed on Him through their word. Now notice verse 21.

**John 17:21** That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me.

That means a unity—"*that you might be unified, with the Father, in the same way that the Father and the Son are.*"

**John 17:21-23** And I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory [His word] which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one [in the same manner as the Father and the Son



are one]; I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.

I didn't emphasize it, because I wanted to draw attention to this scripture - in this way. Did you notice how many time He said, "may be"? Four times He said it. The English word "may" implies possibilities. It implies permission to, not certainty of.

In other words, Jesus' prayer shows that those in a covenant with God are going to have to desire unity in the same way that God does. It is a possibility that we can have it. We have permission to have it, but it is not certain yet. That unity hangs in the balance, depending upon the way that we react to the relationship. And so He is praying that it will happen, but it is a "*may be* ."

The reason we need to desire unity in the same way God does, is so that we can prepare for this kind of unity by doing God's will—exercising faith. Then we will be prepared to live in the same way that He does for all eternity with Him.

A husband and wife cannot be one, unless they are both prepared to live the same way as each other, and to make any sacrifices that might be necessary to blend the lives together. And so when they marry, it is a *may be*. The possibility exists—so that it can be that way—if the two will make the efforts to make the *may be* absolute.

We're going to have to desire this unity enough to make the right choices and the sacrifices in order to have the marriage with Jesus Christ in the kingdom. It's not a done deal yet. Let me go back to the Old Testament again to another example in Exodus 19:8. The people are before Him, but Moses is delivering a message to them for God.

**Exodus 19:8** And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

This was before God gave the terms of the covenant.

**Exodus 24:3** And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD has said will we do.

God's experience with Israel is recorded in the Old Testament. This shows that, at this point—right here at Exodus 19 through 24—these people very much wanted to make the covenant and to be married with God. But when the reality hit them of what this was going to cost them in the conduct of their lives as they journeyed through the wilderness, they no longer wanted it unless it was on their terms. And so when food got scarce, they wanted to back out. When water was in short supply: *"Well God, You never told me it would be this hard, that I would go dry-throat and dry-mouth."*

What did they begin to do then? They started accusing. And whom did they accuse? They accused Moses and Aaron and God, because after all, they were their leaders. *"It wasn't their fault that they walked out of Egypt after Moses, and after Aaron, in order to follow God."*

Unfortunately, this is what happens in many marriages, isn't it? Two people start off in love. Then the realities of the marriage begin to show up, and they are unwilling to make the sacrifices in order to continue the marriage and grow in unity. They begin to want the marriage on their own terms—*"Well, I'll continue this IF..."*

There are many, many examples when the Israelites wanted to back out. So God, in a sense, offered them concessions. He gave them meat for their lust. He brought water out of the rock. He gave them manna. Every morning it was there. He went on and on to try to meet their demands. But later on - when their descendants were in the Land of the Promise—they, too, were unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to make the marriage successful.

There is a little conclusion here now. We don't want to repeat the same mistakes that these people made. We have to learn to accept and adapt to what God provides, both as individuals, and as a body—that is, the church.

Think about this. The hardships of their pilgrimage in the wilderness were a consequence of a choice that they made to enter into the agreement with God. They didn't have to go into it. They could have returned to Egypt right away. They chose to enter into the agreement, and thus committed themselves to God's leadership. And so running out of food, running out of water, being attacked, the sun above, the sand beneath—all those things represent the hardships of their entering into this agreement. It was the consequence.

This of course is why, before we baptize somebody, we like to as much as we are able count the cost with them. That's a responsibility that the ministry has—not to try to stop the person from getting baptized, but to help clarify that they are going to have to meet the consequences of their decision. There is no way that either the ministry or those who are candidates for baptism are going to be able to know all that lies ahead. In principle, they are willing to accept the consequences of their decision.

The consequences of our choices are all too frequently things that we don't want to think about. In regard to sin, we either ignore the consequences and take our chances, or we simply go into denial that the consequences are a reality that must be dealt with. If we are that way, there is quite a lack of faith there. We might say a great deal of immaturity because this is the way kids are, and you know it.

Kids—the immature - don't think very often about what is going to happen if they do certain things. They just do it. They act. They react, and think that their parents are "old fogies" because we say, *"No, you can't do that."* And they say, *"Why can't I do it?" "Because. You can't do it because I'm the mama, and that's good enough."* It should be, but kids don't think. They dash out onto the street chasing a ball. They don't think.

They don't think when they're sixteen years old that what they're doing then might affect them when they're 55 or 60 years old, or it might affect them when they're 30 years old. They're just passionate about the things that they do—but they don't stop to think of consequences. When we don't stop to

think about spiritual consequences of the things that we do, it indicates that there is a spiritual immaturity there as well. God just isn't real to us, or we would be taking His advice as our Father about what to do.

**Proverbs 22:3** A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself.

A prudent person is one who is careful, who is thinking ahead. This is my act. What is going to be the reaction? This is my act. What is going to be produced if I do it this way? What is going to be produced if I do it that way? What is going to be produced if I don't do it at all? He thinks about consequences.

**Proverbs 22:3** A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself: but the simple [the young, the foolish, the immature] pass on, and are punished.

They bear the consequences. As an overall generality, Israel's experience in the wilderness shows that they could not deal with their liberty. Liberty imposes responsibilities that a slave doesn't have to face, because a slave has his choices made for him by somebody else. That's the lesson of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt and being in the wilderness. They never could get rid of their slave mentality and think on their own—the way God wanted them to think. Even though they were free of Egypt, they never got free of their slave mentality.

You understand the analogy that is there. Egypt represents sin. It represents a way of life. It represents a way of thinking. The wilderness represents the people being free from that, and at liberty now to make the choices that would determine whether they would get to the promised land or not. But all the while they were in the wilderness, they kept living like they were in Egypt. Their slave mentality kept making the choices for them. They didn't accept the blame. They blamed it on Moses, and by extension God, because God was the One who put Moses in that place.

Whom do you think today bears the main brunt of people's accusations for why the church is in the condition it is? Herbert W. Armstrong is blamed.

Being free imposes choices and sacrifices that only the faithful are willing to make. In the end, for the Israelites, being comfortable with slavery was more important to them—and they died in the wilderness, separated from the God who freed them.

Much later—actually almost 700 years later—God first scattered Israel. And then when Judah didn't learn from Israel's experiences, God then divorced them both as one nation that had made a covenant with Him. They were split from Him then in a far more serious way.

Again, put the church into this scenario. The church is receiving a very stern warning. God isn't done with Israel yet, but He did scatter them, and that scattering is a warning to us. We are scattered now, and the warning is that it's time to shape up.

Some people outside of the Church of the Great God have gotten the idea that I am against preaching the gospel to the world. I most certainly am not against preaching the gospel to the world. What I am saying is that we now find ourselves in a far more serious situation than the church has had to face as a body in this era. We need to analyze our situation and direct our efforts to solving the immediate problem first. This has to be faced individually and personally, regardless of what the main group is doing, or even the group that we are fellowshipping with is doing. The problem is to address the cause of the scattering.

Because I have used the analogy that the church as a whole is sick and needs to be taken care of first, it has in turn been suggested to me that, "*one can't stay in the hospital forever—that it's time to get out of bed and go to work.*" What they mean is, to "*go out to the public and preach the gospel.*" My response: if we are better, why are we still splitting? To me that's so obvious, it's dumb. The problems are still there. We are not coming together.

It's also been suggested to me that the church can do both at the same time—"preach the gospel to the world, and preach the gospel to the church," which is "feeding the flock." I agree! But at the same time I remind them that "*no*

*man* (according to what our Savior said in Matthew 6:24) *can serve two masters equally at the same time*"—one operation MUST receive less attention and care than the other.

A choice will have to be made between them. A choice will be forced by the very situation because what Jesus said, "no man can serve two masters" is a universal law. It cannot be violated. One will have to receive more effort, time, energy, money than the other, and my suggestion is, let us make a conscious effort that it be on "feeding the flock," until we get ourselves straightened out first.

To date, as far as my information goes, the emphasis has been on continuing to preach the gospel to the world to the detriment of feeding the flock. To make another analogy: that is like a husband and wife giving the overwhelming majority of their time and attention to people and things outside the home while their own family is falling apart. I merely want the feeding of the flock to be emphasized until we get ourselves straightened out. Brethren, that may take years.

Try to put yourself in God's position for just a little bit. If you were God—He is the Head of this church—do you honestly think that you would be motivated to bring people into a church that is so badly divided? I don't think so.

We are in a war—a spiritual war. We have received a very hard blow. It is a signal that it is a time to redirect our efforts in another direction, because the way that we are going as a greater church has proved to be wrong. We've got to go in a different direction than we are right now if this thing is ever going to be solved.

There is an interesting principle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7-10.

**Galatians 6:7-10** Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be

weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

A simple question: If we are still splitting—and we are—and we are going to reap what we sow, what, pray tell, are we sowing? If we're producing more splitting, we must be sowing whatever it is that causes splitting to occur. That's so simple. What we are doing certainly doesn't seem to be producing good fruit. I think that's evidence enough for those who love the church that maybe some changes need to be made in their own lives. As I said, this thing has to be faced individually and personally first, before it can be faced as a body.

I want you to notice the direction regarding Paul's advice about sowing. He says, "Don't be weary in well doing." *"Don't be weary in doing good. Don't give up. Don't faint."* He says, *"Keep on doing."* If we apply that principle to what's going on in the church—*"don't stop doing what is right."* Don't let that be a justification for going off the path that we have been taught—the right way of doing things. He says, "Don't be weary in doing good." To whom? *"To all men, but especially to the brethren."*

One very high-ranking minister—who shall remain un-named—stated that if a group concentrates on feeding the flock they have turned in on themselves. My answer to that is, "Feeding the flock" is doing good to your brethren. And Paul says to do that ***ESPECIALLY***. In other words, even in the best of times—the church comes before the world. Feeding the flock comes first—not preaching the gospel to the world—even in the best of times.

This is not best of times. It is a time to turn in on ourselves so that we can hold together the family, rather than see it continue to break apart. That ought to be our intent. We cannot force a unity, but we can set the stage for a unity which God will bring about IF we continue to do good regardless of what others are doing.

The "doing good" does not have to be intended to just bring everybody together. You know, to force the group together in a political marriage. That's not what we want. We want the unity to be of the spirit, and not merely something that is politically arranged in order to make a big group so

that we can make a fantastic work to the world. If God wanted to make a fantastic work, and He needed a big group to do it, we'd still be together. Right now He's not concerned about making a fantastic work. That time will come. Right now is the time of testing to see what we're going to do—even in, let's say, the worst of time for the church. Worst? It's not really as bad as it might get, yet.

Let's add a little bit to this. Go to I Timothy 5:8.

**I Timothy 5:8** But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, [now notice this], he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

**THE CHURCH COMES FIRST!** To fail to take care of the church disqualifies a person as being a Christian. They have denied the faith. I don't see how it could be any plainer and clearer.

I don't know who is in the first group that Paul mentions there—"If any provide not for his own." Maybe it simply means those who are only peripherally related to us, but still in-laws, let's say. And "those of his own house" are those who are directly related to us—father, mother, sister, brother, grandmother, grandfather, grandchildren, and so forth. I don't know. That's only a speculation. I don't know if anybody knows who "those others" are. But it may mean—if we can break it down a little bit—that "those who are of our own house" are those who are within our *own fellowship* and those who are beyond that immediate fellowship but are still part of the same church family, same group, are "the others." Brethren, if there was ever a time for doing good to the brethren, the time is now.

In its broader context, Galatians 6 has to do more with spiritual matters than it does, let's say, providing some food for somebody who might be hungry, or giving them a little bit of monetary assistance. Verse 1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault." That sets the stage for what he says in verses 7 through 10. That phrase is talking about somebody who has overstepped the bounds. In other words, we're talking about somebody who is involved in a sin, not merely somebody who may need some physical help.



**Galatians 6:1** If a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

There is a companion scripture to this principle of sin back in Hosea 5:10. This is kind of interesting too, because there is an interesting word-picture there.

**Hosea 5:10** The princes of Judah...

Remember, Judah is a type of the church, and the princes might be the leaders of the church.

**Hosea 5:10** The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound.

Do you know what He's talking about there? The colorful word-picture behind that statement is: back in the days in which this was written, they used stone pillars to mark out the boundaries of their farms. I guess they had a way of surveying, and so they would mark the corners by putting up a stone pillar. Maybe a hundred yards down, they would put up another stone pillar, and so there was a line of sight following the stone pillars.

What he is talking about here is that these princes of Judah came out at night, in the dark when nobody could see them, and they would move the pillars so that their adjacent property would get a little bit larger. We apply the principle here to living life, and the princes of Judah in relation to sin, in relation to the way that they live their life. When nobody could see them, they would do what we call today "pushing the envelope"—pushing the boundaries of what was considered to be safe and right and within the law of God.

What you do is keep pushing and pushing and pushing on the edges of what one considers to be acceptable and not sin until the conscience adjusts, and what formerly one would not be caught dead doing—because it would smite his conscience and he would feel terribly guilty—now he can accept as being not so bad. "*It's all right.*" Very interesting.

I wonder if the Sabbath is being kept in the same way it was twenty years ago? I wonder if we haven't pushed the envelope a little bit further, a little bit further, and a little bit further, so that what we wouldn't be caught dead doing twenty years ago we will now do without even thinking about it? Just take that principle into other areas of life.

That's what he's talking about here in Galatians 6:1. "When you see somebody that is overtaken in a fault..." What he is saying in the way of advice is that we are to do what we can to mend the breach that has appeared in these people's lives, to bring back to a former condition—a moral condition. These people have slipped, and it may be that they are not even aware of it.

In terms of the ministry, this means that the emphasis has to be on "the feeding of the flock"—working to restore faith. And yet brethren, we have men out there trying to change the very doctrines that were the very foundation of our faith, and which once brought us into the unity that we formerly had. Brethren, that in principle is exactly the same pattern that the Tkach regime followed. They split the church wide open. They were the instrument. And how was it accomplished? They brought in false doctrine.

We still have people in the church following that same pattern, and they are widening the breach *ever wider*. So what is it doing? It's destroying our unity. The scattering continues, and it can only lead to more splitting at this time. The only difference between what the Tkachs did and what is still going on within the greater church is that the specific doctrines that these men want to change are different from the ones that the Tkachs changed.

In addition to that, we've got others who are saying they are the only true church, and that everybody else is Laodicean. They've set themselves up as judges of everybody's spiritual condition. That kind of talk, at this time, only drives the wedges in between the groups even further and divides them.

The reality is that we were scattered. And people of every spiritual level are scattered through all the groups. No one group has cornered the market on those who are best off spiritually. The whole church is sick—sin sick.

We didn't get into this condition by doing well. It is a time which, of necessity, must be given over to healing, to repairing of the breaches. The most important breach—the one that lies at the foundation of the problem—is the one between us and God. It is the loss of faith, aided and abetted by a loss of devotion. Neglect to "so great a salvation." Drifting away from the doctrines given to us through Herbert Armstrong—"the faith once delivered." So in many, confusion reigns. Uncertainty reigns. Doubt and distrust reign.

We see this as a recurring theme in some of the Minor Prophets. Turn to Amos 4:1.

**Amos 4:1** Hear this word, you kine of Bashan.

Amos is really being vivid. He calls the women of Israel "cows." I'm not exactly sure why. He seems to have it aimed at those who are affluent and perhaps are using their affluence in a manner that God is highly displeased with. Looking at it spiritually, he may be talking about the various groups—a woman being a type of the church—and the groups that are present at this time.

**Amos 4:1-3** Hear this word, you kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters [meaning their husbands], Bring, and let us drink. The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks [they'll go into captivity], And you shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her [meaning single file, one after the other], and you shall cast them into the palace, says the LORD.

"Go out at the breaches." Do you know what a breach is? It's a split. It's a cleft. It is a break in a wall. Do you know what a wall is symbolically in the Bible? A wall is a symbol of protection. It is what was around cities to protect it from the bad influences—the enemy that is on the outside. Now get the picture. If the wall is split, that allows room for the invaders to come into the place, so that you are no longer secure. It also allows those who are

inside, an opportunity to go outside, and into the world. A pretty vivid picture.

God is telling the cows of Bashan that they're going to "go out" and into the world—but as captives.

**Amos 6:11** For, behold, the LORD commands, and he will smite the great house with breaches.

Actually, it says more vividly that He's going to smash the great house into bits. That's how great the devastation—"not one stone upon another" kind of picture.

**Amos 6:11** And the little house with clefts [cracks].

Turn now to Lamentations 2. This is that chapter in which over twenty times God says, "*I will do this...I will do that*"—taking the blame, the responsibility, for the scattering and the destruction of Israel.

**Lamentations 2:13** What thing shall I take to witness for you? What thing shall I liken to you, O daughter of Jerusalem [a symbol of the church]? What shall I equal [or compare] to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great [broad] like the sea [ocean].

The wall is down, and the invaders are running in and out.

**Lamentations 2:13** Who can heal you?

Who can heal you? The breach is so great.

**Lamentations 2:7** The Lord has cast off his altar, he has abhorred his sanctuary, he has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD [in the temple, in the church], as in the day of a solemn feast.

And so the enemy is exalting that the walls are down, and they have invaded the sanctuary of God's people. Is it time to come to the defense of the church?

Turn now to Isaiah 58:12. This is very positive.

**Isaiah 58:12** And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach. The restorer of paths to dwell in.

That's one that yet lies off in the future, and it gives us hope to know the breaches are going to be healed. There are going to be people who will play a part in it. And those who will play a part in it are those who will repent and get their own personal lives straightened out with God and continue to do good, as God defines good.

There are two very interesting factors regarding the church that I have discovered. I don't mean that they were suddenly inspirations of mind. They were there all the while. They are not things that only I have noticed. One I noted quite a long time ago, the other one was new to me. They are in Revelation 2 and 3 in regard to the seven churches. The next time, God willing, we will go on to that, because it is very interesting and timely for this time we find the church in.