

Unity And Godly Diversity In One Body

Mark Schindler

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I would like to preface my sermon with the last remarks Kim Myers made in his sermon two days ago, because I think it emphasizes the message of sermon I am going to give today. Kim said in describing God's warning in Galatians where the apostle Paul wrote,

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man [or country] sows, that he will also reap.

Kim said he added the word country to that verse, but his next remark that adds, “church” is vitally significant because we can easily become lumped in with that country. Kim said He, God, is not going to be mocked by what is going on in this country or by us in the church. I added this because it is so easy for human beings who have been able to participate in the providential blessings that God has provided the descendants of Abraham, to forget the reality of our true citizenship in the Kingdom of God. We waste the diversity of our God-given gifts that blend in service to the body of Christ by wasting our time by trying to set right a purposefully sinking ship proclaiming human diversity as the bedrock foundation of the United States.

On this very date in 1779, John Adams finalized negotiations with the British that ended the revolutionary war, a war that may not have even been necessary in the first place. Please, as we go through this, always keep God in the picture and what he has revealed in His call to His called-out family. God promised separation between Ephraim and Manasseh. But He did not tell us how we were going to have to do it. That was our idea.

The war began when men decided the British colonies in the lands that would become the United States needed to use force to throw off what they considered the yolk of oppression of taxation under a king. No taxation without representation. Give me liberty or give me death. Do not tread on me, all had become the battle cries of the colonies under the yoke of what their ancestors had fled in the first place. It is probably important to note here that John Adams himself had been what was considered a loyalist before the revolution. He was actually not in favor of the dissolution of the Colonial government under the authority of the king. Only through the persuasive arguments of others, primarily Thomas Jefferson, did he agree to put life and limb on the line, in war, to establish an independent government of united republics not subject to British rule.

Please, do not think I am disparaging the nobility of all those who risked life and limb to establish this nation which has proven to be a blessing for the whole world, even as the British empire was a blessing to the world. But it is necessary to keep in mind that God carefully uses everything to meet His plans, purposes, and promises, even when the minds of men determine what they consider the best way to do things like rebellion against the king.

Before going any further into this sermon, I would like to us to firmly set in our minds what God's Word has to say about taking governmental change into our own hands. Remember what He expects from those called by the Father to the Son to understand, in a world enslaved to, “what's in it for me,” mentality of Satan.

Proverbs 21:1-3 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Proverbs 24:19-22 Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked; for there will be no prospect for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those given to change; for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin those two can bring?

We will get back to that line last line in the verse, "who knows ruin that those two can bring," in a few minutes. Now, please turn with me to another set of well known scriptures from the apostle Paul.

Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Honor, interestingly, is almost always something about someone taking away material wealth. And yet if we stay faithful to God's revealed commands, we should not fearfully get involved in insurrection, even if only in our minds. Especially at this time. Brethren, we are living in a very dangerous time for God's people, because we may want to take sides in a society and government that is directly in the hands of God. Do we want to be on the wrong side of God?

Remember, we are here celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles while living in a world that is more evidently under Satan's thumb in all facets of life, as Kim Myers graphically pointed out the other day. We have the unparalleled opportunity to learn and live the very mind of God, apart from this evil world, in service to the body of Christ, using the diversity of God blended gifts. We live in a world, specifically a country, where even with the best of intentions of men, who might even recognize divine providence, leave minor problems in their wake and solutions.

However, we, by the grace of God, are to remain faithfully loyal to God without becoming entrapped in their affairs, and the downward spiral of sin. It is far from easy. When anything is not firmly established in the Word of God, in the submission to the very hands on sovereign Creator, unanticipated consequences and disasters will rule the day, as John Adams himself recognized.

John Adams correctly identified the problem. Without God's Spirit and faithful submission to His every word it would be impossible to truly change what would be in the inevitable actions of a world apart from God. Even in a country under God's, providential care to fulfill His promises and bring about His purpose, we need faithful submission.

As we continue to consider these things regarding our own calling and a bit more background on the thoughtful men of good intentions like John Adams, it may help us to contemplate what John Adams thought, as then President John Adams, wrote a little less than nineteen years later, on October 11, 1798, in the second year of his presidency. He wrote as the second president of the United States, the following almost prophetic letter to the first brigade of the third division of the Massachusetts militia regarding the providential beginning and future of the republic that he saw had set us apart from all the nations on the earth.

Many of you may be familiar with the often quoted last sentence of the letter. I think you may find a hint in the rest of the letter as to what may have motivated him to change his pre-revolutionary views and join the ranks of those who had come up with a carnally inspired way to deal with tyrants. That is, with a mind struggling to understand truth, but only seeing it without submission to the real revealed Word of God.

Please understand, as I read this, that this letter was composed by Adams toward the end of the French Revolution that overthrew the monarchy. It actually gave rise to a more tyrannical rule within that country. It had caused many, like Adams, Jefferson, and others involved the American Revolution to scratch their heads in amazement. The uprising of the people in France just led to another tyranny. The same kind of revolution in the Americas has been a temporary success. He wrote to the militia:

While our country remains untainted with the principles and manners, which are now producing desolation in so many parts of the world: while it continues sincere and incapable of insidious and impious policy: We shall have the strongest reason to rejoice in the local destination assigned us by Providence. But should the people of America, once become capable of that deep simulation towards one another and towards foreign nations, which assumes the language of justice and moderation while it is practicing iniquity and extravagance; and displays in the most captivating manner the charming pictures of candor, frankness & sincerity while it is rioting in rapine and insolence: this country will be the most miserable habitation in the world. Because we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

Those last two sentences seemed to be the modern day battle cry for many. But the earlier section of John Adams letter is, for the most part, ignored, possibly because of the difficulty in archaic language, also because it recognizes the very issue of the carnal unbridled passions that exist throughout society, apart from God, whether conservative or liberal, modern or progressive. The passions of carnal nature are motivated by avarice. The insatiable desire for material things, ambition, and revenge will break the strongest of bonds. Is what we are seeing all around us today, the result of doing something that was not truly a godly solution in the first place, even when done with the best of intentions?

Before going on with the sermon, I would liked to take a moment to make one thing perfectly clear, so you do not think I am ungrateful to those who stood in the gap and did what they thought to be for the greater good under the providential care of God. God has blessed this whole world through the abundance of blessings He has poured out on this nation in spite of us, to accomplish His purposes and fulfilling His promises. I have considered it a blessing that God has allowed my family and me to live under those blessings.

However, even though John Adams clearly saw that the Constitution was formulated for a moral and religious people and was wholly inadequate to a government of any other, it was still built on the minds of men, and contained things that would eventually ferment the consequences of carnal nature. Just forty years or so later as the philosophy of popular sovereignty, which is the doctrine rooted in the belief that each citizen has sovereignty over themselves, became a focal point that actually fractured the United States between north and south.

Sixty years after John Adams wrote that letter to the Massachusetts brigade, the maturing nation faced one of the gravest moral crises that led then senatorial candidate Abraham Lincoln to deliver his famous 1858 “A house divided against itself cannot stand” speech, a speech that was based on Jesus Christ’s own words. This was actually the cause of Lincoln’s loss of the Senate race because of the popular sovereignty issue that was seen as a political solution to the question of slavery and bondage of another man. A little over two and a half years later, the nation went to war over the very issue of popular sovereignty, as opposed to come completely undivided states.

Lincoln said in his rebuttal to the popular sovereignty solution of letting each territory decide for itself whether to be slave or free, he said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved. I do not. Expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further development of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become waffle in all states, old as well as new, north as well as south.”

The solutions of men, apart from the Word of God, gave rise to so many unanticipated problems because of carnal nature that it brought men of good intentions on both sides to fight the most costly war in the history of the United States.

Brethren, I have spent quite a bit of time showing you a picture of some of the results of the solutions of men, because we cannot get caught up in this trap today as we assemble here to celebrate God’s Feast of Tabernacles. We are looking forward to the next step in God’s wonderful plan for all men, as we are living through John Adams prophetic words of an increasingly miserable habitation as the crushing weight of solutions of men and carnal nature. That is fermenting divisions and cries on all sides “What is in it for me?”

There is also the insane view of the politicians, which is that our country was built on diversity. Brethren, there were many people of diverse backgrounds that came here, but it was not the foundation of the United States today’s politicians would have you believe. The rule of law and the providential care of God united even a carnal people to suit His purpose.

We have seen morality, ethical conduct, and gratitude to a providential divine Creator get shoved aside by the passions of carnal nature, motivated by an insatiable desire for material things, ambition, and revenge. God is pulling back his hand to expose the sins of this nation. Civil war is raging again except this time there are no Lincoln’s on the horizons and our only horse in this race, so to speak, is to mourn the passing of God’s wonderful blessing and pray for God’s, mercy on all.

As we look forward to the return of Jesus Christ, there is no doubt this is a very difficult time, not only for the world, but especially for the unique body of believers that have been called out of this world—a very diverse group, chosen by God to be His from all walks of life, but then miraculously

changed to be of one mind, while using a diversity of God-given gifts and service to one single minded body of Christ.

As we look at the real unity and godly diversity in one body, I think it is necessary to go to a set of scriptures I had not initially included in this message, but upon reflection, decided they were a necessary warning in a world where Satan is continually worming his way in so he can divide and conquer. Please turn with me to Matthew, the Parable of the Tares.

Matthew 13:24-30 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'

And then Jesus Christ goes on to explain this to the apostles

Matthew 13:36-43 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

We read these scriptures, because before going any farther, we need to understand there will be tares that God will allow Satan to sow both in and out of the church, who will continue to try to strangle life out of the meticulously planted crop of God. God will allow this part of Satan's all out assault to ensure that his crop of wheat was absolutely His and growing stronger by the truth of His Word, and not by the deceptive doctrines and solutions of carnally minded men.

Brethren, there is there is a diversity that produces unity but only the diversity of God-given gifts, to serve a body in unity under the tender care of a ministry set apart to help the wheat grow straight and tall according to truth. We will now be taking a bit of a look at the unity that God has determined and the godly diversity in the one body by starting with what Herbert Armstrong had said was one of his favorite scriptures in the Bible.

Psalms 133:1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of

Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forevermore.

In the Amplified version:

Psalm 133:1-3 (AMP) Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment poured on the head, and ran down on the beard, even the beard of Aaron, the first high priest that came down upon the collar in the skirts of his garment, consecrating the whole body. It is like the dew of lofty Mount Hermon and the dew that comes on the hills of Zion; for there the Lord has commanded the blessings: even life forevermore.

Upon the high and the lofty, our High Priest Jesus Christ is consecrated, setting apart His whole body in unified service to Him and one another for the glory of His Father. We must be one unified body set apart from this world and all that is moving towards the disastrous time precipitating Jesus Christ's return. We cannot get involved in its politics or thinking, because it will take us off track. Just as sure as it is those tares that have been planned within God's field that cause division. Please turn with me now to Acts 2 as they are gathered on Pentecost, we are picking it up at the end of the apostle Peter's sermon.

Acts 2:40-47 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Brethren, remember this. It says here they were concentrated and focused on their own job, and what that brought was favor with all people. Those people no longer had time for the perverse world from which they had been saved, as they continued steadfastly, in the doctrines of Jesus Christ that He had given to the apostles. These doctrines are passed down in this Book, under the tutelage of those anointed, to continue to teach and pass along the truth of His Word to His very unique people, also noticed by living God's way of life. Also notice, by living God's way of life apart from the divisive sides of this world, they ended up finding favor on all sides!

Now, turn to another scripture to keep us in mind of what God's people need to be doing in such a chaotic and godless time filled with carnal solutions of men.

Romans 15:5-7 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

This makes it very clear what we are supposed to be doing. We need to be seeking God's patience and comfort as the world crumbles around us. We need to be like-minded toward one another with one mind and one mouth to the glory of God. How can we do this if we remain within the diversities of the carnal minds from which we have carefully been called? We cannot. It is impossible, but there is a godly diversity that is pleasing to God as we find in I Corinthians 12.

I Corinthians 12:4-6 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

I Corinthians 12:27-31 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

All these gifts lead to something better, which is completely out of sync with this world. The very love of God is I Corinthians 13 (that you are all very familiar with) which describes the body that is correctly using God's gifts according to the Word of God, to serve the body and produce the love of God within all. How can we do this, brethren? And if we turn from the primary gift of the revealed Word of God to draw down sides in a war that is not our war to fight, we can mourn over it. We can get upset by it. We cannot get involved in it. God tells us what we should be doing. Please turn with me to Ephesians 4 and let us look at God's gifts of diversity.

Ephesians 4:4-16 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

This is the real diversity that produces unity in one body. That will fight the good fight together in love under the revealed Word of God. But it takes diligence, sacrifice, especially to keep ourselves turned away from this miserable world that John Adams saw. Finally, brother and police turn with me to Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 3:17-21 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

John Adams saw the future of this nation in the midst of the destruction of carnal nature, motivated by average ambition and revenge, a nation turned by Satan away from God's providence and protection. The only thing we can do is stand apart from this world, using our diverse gifts God has given to serve the body—in love of God, love for the brethren, and, in the end, love for all those who are now struggling in darkness. We must realize this is the only way, understanding thoroughly Abraham Lincoln's quote from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that a house—a church, a body—divided itself, cannot stand.

God's church will always stand. We just need to make sure we are standing within it in unity, apart from a vicious, fighting mad world being driven by the carnal minded influence of Satan. The Feast of Tabernacles, the type of our holy separation in truth, apart from the world where we no longer have roots, and we must maintain that consecrated separation in unity and godly diversity for the sacrificial service to the body of Christ.