

We have 4 weeks until the Feast of Tabernacles begins so it would be good for us to have a pre-feast sermon so that we're fully prepared for this year's Feast. This sermon is simply entitled, *Prepare for the Feast - Part 1*. There are a few things we need to focus upon so that we can have a better Feast and be better prepared for the Feast. We have so many new people that have never attended a Feast of Tabernacles and so we're going to be addressing some things here that we need to all consider and think about as we go forward.

First, let's consider one of the most important things we should be doing in order to be better prepared for the observance of this year's Feast... there is no other time in the year when we have such opportunity for growth and being made stronger than the Feast of Tabernacles season. It's an incredible time of year, it truly is. We have Sabbath Services once a week but there is no other time like the Feast of Tabernacles where God gives us so much, where we have such opportunity to focus and zero in on and be strengthened on a spiritual plane and where God pours out more of His spirit. We're thrust into the Feast season in only 2 Sabbaths from today which will be the Feast of Trumpets. And the part of salvation that's pictured in the latter fall harvest season begins with the Feast of Trumpets – that's the beginning of the focus for this phase of God's plan and God's purpose and continues on into Atonement, then the Feast of Tabernacles and then Last Great Day. None of these begin without first the observance of the Feast of Trumpets which is being fulfilled in a very large part here before we enter into what's pictured in the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Trumpets will launch the world into the millennial period pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

Let's turn back to **Psalm 81:3** – where it discusses the very high day of the Feast of Trumpets; the first in the fall season to be observed. **Verse 3 - Blow the trumpet in the new moon; in the time appointed;** that appointed time. When you go back and read about appointed times and that which God did from the very beginning of creation – He established appointments for His people – to be taught, to be trained, to be able to learn about Him. The first is the weekly Sabbath and when you read Leviticus 23 it talks about those appointed times and so this is referring to that specific process and that which God gave and then of course the annual Holy Days are appointed times that God established from the very beginning that He gave to us. And so this is what it's talking about when it says, **Blow the trumpet in the new moon;** because this is when the Feast of Trumpets arrives, it's in the new moon, it's the only high day that you can count on that all the other Holy Days are counted from. It has to do with the Feast of Trumpets here if we understand the process of counting; **in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.** ...which happens to be in this case the Feast of Trumpets.

Verse 8: Hear O my people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if; IF; you will listen to me; There's a lot of meaning in the Feast of Trumpets about listening and hearing God, about hearing the sound of the trumpet blast. That is what is so exciting when you go back and study certain things about the various signals that were given by hearing a trumpet blast – to know what it meant – to understand the various meanings that are contained in the Feast of Trumpets and the things we're to learn from that. But so much of what is pictured in the Feast of Trumpets has to do with our ability of what God wants us to hear.

The message with the Feast of Trumpets is **Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel,** and for us, we understand it's not a physical nation. It was in the Old Testament but for us today it is the

Church of God, the spiritual Israel of God; all that God calls, whom God calls. So again, that big IF: **if you will listen unto me**; God will teach and God will testify – He'll give us what we need: His word - **There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god.** God says He's to be first and everything else, when God begins to draw us, that is not of Him we have to get rid of. We have to get rid of those false concepts that are out here as quickly as possible. Sometimes they're small things that just kind of come at you. We were talking about it on the way up here today about how some things are hard to shake: little things sometimes that we don't think about. I think about certain commandments like not taking God's name in vain, about idolatry and so forth and sometimes we don't think about various aspects of those commandments. I think of when I see a car with a bumper sticker on it that has something to do with God... I saw a vehicle the other day and they had all these scriptures on it, John 3 and 13, and all these different religious sayings of whatever they're pushing and preaching. They think that this is witnessing to the world, the ideas that people have in a protestant world. I think of how that *cheapens* God's word and how that cheapens the name of God. It's taking God's name in vain. They put it on some rusted out car, running down the freeway, with stuff scrawled all over it. It doesn't represent what's true and right and comes from God. It's cheap. All of these different bumper stickers that people put on their cars and they think it is showing that they follow God. The cross that people wear is the same kind of thing. It's all idolatry. It draws attention to self – "I'm religious." "I'm special." "I'm close to God." It's about idolatry, it's about what they're doing. They're lifting themselves up. It's not about God, but they think it is about God and they cheapen it. We have to be careful we don't do that. That is why we talk about such things, to make sure we don't cheapen the name of God. I hope you understand what I'm talking about if you see something like that, that you realize it cheapens things, especially because you know what they're pushing. You know what Protestantism is all about in this world and how those things look. God doesn't want those kinds of things. That doesn't represent God. God is not well pleased with anything like that whatsoever.

Sometimes we see various email addresses that people have who use religious sounding words or names such as a particular name of God or Jesus Christ or something to do with the end-time or whatever it might be. You have to be careful – don't do that. Use your name, or some numbers with your name, whatever but don't use anything about God because that's the same thing as a bumper sticker, it draws attention in a wrong way and it promotes a thinking about Protestantism that we don't want to do in God's Church. We have to think about those things. How do we represent God and God's Church and what do people see when they come in contact with us? We always have to maintain a high standard. We represent God on earth. People see us, they see your actions at work, they see the way you react to people, they see how you treat people and when you do something wrong that you're one that goes back to make it right and you acknowledge your error. People in the world as a whole don't do those kinds of things. You acknowledge your error. You say I made a mistake, I shouldn't have said that, I shouldn't have talked to you in that way, I shouldn't have responded in that manner and you strive to make things right and better. To have better relationships, whatever it might be, in community or whenever it happens. People need to see something different in us that's good and right that they don't see in the world around them.

There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the Eternal your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt: We want to be careful that we read this in a spiritual way – that it's intended for the Church. Israel never got it. They were to remember certain things so their conduct would be better, so they'd be able to be worked with in a better way, so that they would strive to keep certain laws and certain ways of life so that the community would be better. Because the more laws that man will obey that are from God, the better the community is, the better the society is. If everyone wouldn't steal, if everyone wouldn't use God's name in vain, curse and swear the way

people do, if people wouldn't commit adultery. All the laws that are out there. The more that people obey God, the better the community is, the better society is, the better a nation can be. But we don't have that in the world. People don't strive to do those things and if you say that this is the way that it should be, then people get upset. Because they don't want to change from their adultery and their lying and cheating and all the things that they do. They don't want God. They want Him just a little bit in their own way where they can appease their own conscience and feel better about themselves.

I am the Eternal your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt: every one of us has been called out of Egypt. That's what God has called us out of. We understand the Days of Unleavened Bread and coming out of Egypt and what that means. It means being brought out of sin and slavery because mankind is enslaved to sin. We're not in control of our lives as human beings in this world around us. We learn to start taking control when God calls us, but the world is not in control of their life. They're in slavery. They're enslaved to false religious ideas even though they might call it 'christian' or whatever. They're enslaved to those ideas and those thoughts. The Catholic church is enslaved to the trinity and most of Protestantism as well and they don't understand or know God because of that! They don't know how God works because of that! They don't understand the power of God Almighty and the power He works with through the power of His spirit on this earth; how He communicates to mankind. On and on it goes... God is bringing us out of spiritual Egypt.

...open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. This couldn't be in a more beautiful place in scripture, if you understand God's plan and the Feast of Trumpets that leads into the millennium. The Feast of Trumpets, which is the beginning of the fall season, the great fall harvest of salvation for all of mankind because there wasn't much to come out of the spring harvest as a part of an example that God gave as a type. But out of the fall harvest... Powerful, incredible things that are being taught. And so God is telling us – in this season of the year, in *this* appointed time, if you will hear my voice, if you will listen to me – *IF* – and I'll feed you. **...open wide your mouth and I'll feed you.** There is no other time like this Feast season where God gives us as much. You can't experience this at any other time of the year: not even during the Days of Unleavened Bread because it's divided up more and then you have a longer period of time before Pentecost and we don't observe it in the same manner. Those Holy Days will be observed in a different manner in the future, when we'll be able to again, as they did in the beginning, when they used to come together during the Days of Unleavened Bread and observed it much like the Feast of Tabernacles finally began to be observed, where people came together wherever they were – when no one works during that period of time. It's going to be a beautiful society and a beautiful time when we're able to come together and rejoice before God even during the Days of Unleavened Bread. When we have that kind of a world where we can do that again.

God says, **open wide your mouth and I will fill it.** This is your opportunity to open wide your mouth – to drink in – to eat – to feast! That's what God wants us to do, but you have to plan and prepare ahead for all of that feasting on a spiritual plane. God's desire is for His people to listen to Him; to hear Him: and the Feast season pictures the means, the way in which God is going to make this possible for all of mankind. It's a beautiful thing. But He's already made that available to us and made it possible for us to do now.

I am the Eternal your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open wide your mouth and I will fill it. We are to seek God's inspiration. It is something you have to seek. Every year we talk about this in one way or another the need to be praying about it, to be planning ahead about it, to be asking God for help to feed you, to nourish you, to strengthen you during that time on a spiritual plane because you have to ask for it. You have to seek. You have to think about these things ahead of time – you desire to

be nourished, you want what God is preparing for you, you respond to God that you know He's preparing it and so you respond in kind by saying, "I desire that, I want that, I am *thankful* that you've made this possible for us! And at this season of the year I can grow more, I can be strengthened more than any other time." And so you cry out to God for those things and God says He will give that to you. It's His desire and His will. When you know it's His will you can pray in confidence and boldness in a way you can't at any other time, because a lot of our prayers sometimes are things we desire to have or would like to be changed in our life so we can have all this stress and pressure taken away and that's not what it's all about when you pray according to God's will and He will hear and He will answer. When it's according to God's will then you have boldness because it's a part of His plan – take it to the bank – and that's what God wants us to do.

So we're to seek God's inspiration and His spirit to fill our lives. We're to seek His will in our life. We're to seek to hear Him and that means we're to pour ourselves into praying now more than ever and seeking for God to fill us to the full in this Feast season – especially in the sermons we hear. 6 sermons are already prepared, and so we pray about how they are going to be delivered, how they're going to be given; that great inspiration be given so that we can be stirred up and excited by what's being given, but also to help us so that we can have the right mind, the right attitude, the right thinking and the right relationship with God – to make sure we're working to get sin out of our life, that we're more focused now than ever before – to obey God, to honour God, to get rid of the sin in our life, to make sure we're coming out of Egypt and getting our attitudes and our thinking right toward one another, towards the body and towards the plan God has given to us: and fighting against those things because there's a spirit world out here right now that's so stirred up against the Church – truly is – and it comes at you in different ways. This is your way to fight back. This is your way to be strong and God is offering it to us. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." And so we want to yield ourselves more to that so He can give us greater strength because of what's ahead.

We're at a very unique time in all earth's history. We've gone through a series to help us to become a little bit stronger, to help us focus a little bit more so that we can be a little bolder in our confidence and our boldness toward God and realizing we're about there. We thought we've been about there for a while and that has been a test and a trial for many of us to go through, it truly has been, but you're knocking on the door right now in a very powerful way. One day you're going to wake up and your whole world is going to be changing rapidly – it truly is – and you need to be spiritually prepared for that more than ever.

I don't even know that you're going to be able to observe the Feast of Tabernacles this year here in the United States! That's where we are in time! *I don't know* that you're all going to be able to travel to different areas. I'm not really so confident of that right now. You need to be that sobered about time! You may not be able to travel anywhere! I don't know. I don't know that I'm going to be able to make it to New Zealand. I feel that I'm going to, because I believe there's a purpose in that to be able to give the sermons from there but I don't know. We don't know exactly the specific moment in time that certain things are going to happen to prevent people from doing certain things – as we've talked about in the past. Maybe some regions will be able to travel and maybe some regions won't. I don't know and neither do you, but I feel very, very strong the pressure that's coming down – that there are things coming which at some point is going to totally change our world and change our lives and we've got to be prepared for those things – we truly do.

So ask God for greater inspiration to be granted in the delivery of the sermons so that you might be deeply inspired by even that. Right now I know that I'm being given more help. I know when I'm being

given more help by God – stirred up more – strengthened more in God’s spirit – and this is the Feast season and so He’s giving me more right now and I know that when I give those sermons I’m going to have much more than I have right now. I’ve experienced it year after year after year after year and I know where it comes from. It comes from God because He has a plan and a purpose for what’s being given to the people. It’s not me! It’s God! It’s what God gives to us because He wants us to be stirred up, He wants us to be strengthened and so we pray about those things, that in the messages we hear, they’re stirred and moved and motivated when they’re given to us; very powerfully so. And that is God’s will anyway, but you see, what we receive and what we hear really depends upon us and where we are in our relationship with God and what we’ve been praying about. You will be stirred, you will be inspired, you will be motivated, you will hear things you haven’t heard before, you will be able to build upon things you have not known and seen. But your ability to do that more and more depends on your relationship and what you’re praying about to God so that you’re able to be inspired mightily by what you hear. It’s a matter of our hearing and where we are and what we can receive from God and the Feast of Trumpets is very much about that.

Matthew 5:6 - Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness: after God and His way of life – thirsting and hungering – and so we know that one of the great ways we receive that is through the inspiration and the motivation God gives to us in sermons – whether it be on the weekly Sabbath and especially as we enter into this fall Feast season, of the Feast of Trumpets, of the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. So we need to seek to have a spiritual Feast. And God says, **blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.** That’s what Christ said very early on in his ministry. He wants us to understand that. We will be filled and in this season of the year more than any other if we understand it – truly – very powerfully so.

So the next great area of preparation, if we understand the need to hear, the need to cry out to God, the need to be praying about these things for ourselves and for the sermons as they are delivered – when they’re actually delivered, but for ourselves to really hear and be moved, for the inspiration to hear on a spiritual plane what God has given: the next great area of preparation for the Feast has to do with fellowship and you need to prepare for that mentally, spiritually well in advance, you truly do. You have to ask God about these things and pray about these things before you ever get to that occasion – now more than ever. So we need to consider the opportunities for fellowship and plan ahead to make the most of the time we’ll be spending together.

Be determined to go to the Feast and not be a recluse. Don’t pull back. Be determined – ask God for help to get to know each other. We don’t all have those personalities that are automatically able to do that. You have to work at those things. They’re not just going to happen; they’re not just going to fall into you and change, you’re not just going to become different. You have to work at that, you have to think about what you’re going to do to make some of those changes. To make sure you strive to get around to see each other and visit with each other and get to know each other. Come a little early, stay a little later, be at different activities together. This is the time, at the Feast of Tabernacles to do those things, to draw closer together as a family, because this is all about family and God wants us to experience that. That’s a part of the first part of the sermon I just gave about hearing and receiving. God’ll give you much through fellowship that adds to the strength of the Feast. So not only a recluse individually whether that take on the meaning of being along individually or alone with only our family, or alone with only our closest friends because that’s what we tend to do as human beings – those who we’re closest to, those who we tend to spend the most time with – branch out from that. Be a family! Don’t let any of the family *not be a part of the family!* Do you understand what I’m saying? You’ve got to bring the whole family in. That’s your responsibility – every one of you – to bring your family into this

– to not let a part of the family not be a part of the family. That’s a horrible thing. And if we let part of the family not be part of the family because of our neglect then we’re not loving in the way God says we need to love. So we need to think about these things in advance and pray about these things in advance so we can think about it and be determined to change it and ask God for inspiration to know how to do that and what we need to work on individually to do something different. To plan! Have a plan, because if you don’t have a plan, it’s not going to happen. If you’re not praying to God about it, about where you might be able to accomplish it, it’s never going to happen. You’ll just be the same person you’ve always been. You go there and you come back, do the same things you’ve always done. Do something different – add more to it – add more to the family – give more to the family. Don’t let any of the family not be part of the family. Hope you understand that – all of us. There are plenty of opportunities for that, but you have to work to broaden and enrich your fellowship with others and we don’t have the same kind of time we had in times past where you could do that for 8 days – almost 9 really. Now it’s narrower and so we have to make the most of what we can do in the time we have and God’ll bless you in that to accomplish that – truly.

So God has also given us another holy day before we enter the Feast of Tabernacles. That too helps to prepare us for the Feast, helps us to be prepared for the Feast and of course that follows the Feast of Trumpets by a week and a couple of days and that’s the Day of Atonement.

This is a time of humbling ourselves before God – it’s about humility –in large part so that we can enter the Feast of Tabernacles in humility. It’s not just for that one day, it’s how we’re to live our lives and so that mind and that attitude and that thinking we should carry with us on to the Feast of Tabernacles in humility. The opportunity to practice humility and if we understand this it’s a matter of focusing on the needs of others more than ourselves – the needs of others, esteeming others in a way that God says we should do it – more than ourselves. A willingness to turn the focus from self; because that’s the way we are as human beings – from selfishness – to giving, even sacrificing in order to give. You have to sacrifice to give. You have to sacrifice to make sure that all the family is a part of the family, you truly do. When you see a part of the family that’s having a struggle, by themselves, whatever it might be, try to bring them in. How do you pull them in? How do you do that? Sometimes you don’t even know what to say but you go up to them at least and you start, you visit, you make an effort. Sometimes that can mean a lot to somebody if they’re going through something – for whatever reason, for whatever thing it might be.

Giving requires sacrifice – that’s God’s kind of love anyway. It’s required for human beings – we have to sacrifice in order to give God’s way. So, we have to sacrifice in order to give a better Feast to one another. It’s not just about what we get out of the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s what we give that makes the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s what you give that truly makes the Feast of Tabernacles and that’s not focused then on what I can get out of the Feast. It’s a different kind of thinking – it reminds me of a little expression that’s been used at different times in times past that John Kennedy used about, ‘ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.’ It’s the kind of mindset it is. This world today, it’s like what people can do for me and what my country can do for me, what my community can do for me, what my mate can do for me, we’re selfish in this world. That’s not how life really works if we understand it.

Romans 5:8 –I love these verses, there’s so much revealed in different areas of scripture – it’s so powerful what God shows. **Verse 8: But God commends His love**, in other words, it’s saying His kind of love which is so different from man’s love – it’s hard for mankind to understand God’s love because of this stark difference here, but he gives an example on a physical plane so that we can hopefully begin to

understand it physically and then grow in that understanding spiritually. **But God commends His love,** in other words, helps us to understand, reveals, gives that to us, **toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** The whole point being in all this, again, that is so different from the way man is, so different! **Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.** And wrath has to do with punishment, has to do with death because of unrepentant human beings and when that's the answer it's death for unrepentant human beings because of sin and so what saves man from that is what comes through Jesus Christ – the beginning of the forgiveness of sin, and we understand the process – so that God can dwell in us – we're forgiven of sin so that God will be with us, otherwise He won't dwell with us or in us obviously. We've talked about that here recently.

Verse 10: For if, when we were enemies, and everyone who has sin in this world – they're an enemy to God. The carnal mind, it says, is enmity to God: but people don't believe that out here because, well, they believe they love Jesus, or whatever in religion and they don't understand they don't love God. You start telling them about the Sabbath – Oooh... whoa... you start telling them about the Holy Days. Any of you share some of the things you believe and you find out what kind of mindset the world has – real quick like. They don't understand that they're fully wrong and that you're fully right – yet. And that's why the world resists then, because the carnal mind, human beings unless they're drawn by God, unless God gives them help through His holy spirit, they cannot see what you see, they cannot begin to address what you are addressing and so God makes it very clear here...**For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His son,** because we worked against God in everything we did as human... we do in this world – this whole world does – works against God. We don't take control of our lives until God begins to help us, to give us strength and reveal our minds to us, what we're like and that's why He makes it very clear that no one can know their own mind. Only God knows what's in the mind and in the heart. Only God can reveal those things to human beings. 'the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things, who can know it', and God says I know... I try the reins, I know your mind. I'll reveal it to you. I'll show you what you're like and boy is that a rude awakening when you start seeing what you're like. That's why I'm so happy to know I don't have a whole lot of time left in this body – not that I'm anxious to leave it right now, but I know when I leave it; it won't be long that I'll be out of it. Well, I'll be out of this one for good. Whew! In a different one. I look forward to that, I truly do, big time.

For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Beautiful scripture if we understand what it means. The way we're saved by his life is because he's able to live in us. His life. He's alive. He's dwelling in us as we yield ourselves to him and that's a part of the process: we're saved by his life. We're not saved by his death, that's a false teaching in the protestant world. They stop at that. That's as far as they go. It's like these sweet little platitudes and you don't do anything with your life: you don't change, you don't repent... oh, you might here and there you know – it's not a concentrated thing by any measure you know – not where we look into deep into our lives and the things that God has us do through the power of His spirit because we can see things in us. And we're saved by his life because we're able to be forgiven of sin through Jesus Christ because of what he did, because of his suffering and the things he went through – he died as our Passover. By his blood we're able to be brought into a relationship with God, reconciled – we begin the atoning process which is what this word reconciled means. We begin the atoning process of being atoned to God because God lives in us and Christ lives in us. We're saved by his life, not because he's dead now. He was resurrected to be alive to do a work and he's been doing work for 2000 years – dwelling in the Church, preparing a people.

Verse 11: and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom or through whom we have now received the atonement. The reconciliation, that's what this word means. It's how we're made at one with God and being able to be reconciled, fully reconciled to God through this process, by him living and dwelling in and through us.

Let's add with that **II Corinthians 5**, atonement, what we learn through that, how that helps us understand this whole process of how we're able to be thrust into and how the world's being able to enter into a millennial period – the Feast of Tabernacles. For us it's a literal Feast and what we learn through this process and in an intensified way that we don't learn throughout the rest of the year in the same manner. Just like how we don't focus on coming out of sin in the same manner and with the same intensity we do during the Days of Unleavened Bread and Passover season. **II Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new**, it says creature here in the King James, Old King James, but it is a word that means a new **creation**: it's a beautiful word if you understand how it's used in scripture and what God has given to us. That new creation that begins, that creation that God has been working on far beyond the physical creation of everything that exists out there. It's a spiritual one – a creation that continues on and we're blessed to be a part of that creation, the greater part of creation, the *whole purpose OF the physical creation!* God's family, and it's ongoing. We're an ongoing creation until it's complete, until we're in the family and this is exactly what this is talking about.

So, **Therefore if any man be in Christ**, if any person be in Christ, **he is a new creation**. We're not just our old carnal physical selves out here walking around as the whole world basically is right now, without God. They are what they are. They came into existence by the process that God gave strictly through a physical manner, population of the earth! But God's not there! Yet! Until we're called, until we're able to come to a point of conversion, until we're able to be baptized and come up out of that water and then a new creation has started, a new mind begins to grow in us... a new person, a new being – one that God desires all to become in time.

...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. Wow, does your life change when God calls you. Everything changes. Your focus in life changes. Your friendships change drastically. Your relationships change drastically as you come into the Church, as you start to make changes in your life, your whole world changes. It's amazing the process you go through – those of you who are new and been around for a short time, your heads are still swirling because of that! You're still going through those changes. **And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by/through Jesus Christ**, that's how the process begins, of atonement, of reconciliation, of being able to become at one with God – this relationship...**and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation**; now this is not talking to ministers. Sometimes we read things and we think this is talking about the ministry. No! It's much more than that if you understand what the word means. It's a word that means service. The ministry is one of service and it's just the word here means the same thing. It's about service. If God places you in a certain service and that's something that God does but we all have a service we're to do – truly. **...he has given to us the ministry/the service of reconciliation**; this is not something we just get and receive from God, on the getting end. It's something we give as well if we understand service. It's how we grow. God works in us, taking out the selfishness, helping us to combat the selfishness, helping us to fight about the selfishness, you know, where self is comfortable, where self is whatever... we don't have that *comfort* – we must change! See the comfort of the world is they can go to 'church' on Sunday and come back out and feel better about themselves and just continue to live their own sweet lives. So many of them, I'll tell you right now, population wise, all the married couples – about half of them that will end up committing adultery if they're not already living in adultery. That's just the way of the world. The world thinks nothing of it. They go to work, they meet somebody at work, they spend time with

somebody at work and after a while they're committing adultery, sharing things in their life first of all – they're sharing intimacies of their life and "oh, I can talk to you and I can't talk.... he doesn't listen to me,' or 'she doesn't listen to me at home and I'm so glad I have someone to talk to." And after a while they're in the backroom somewhere. You think that doesn't happen? It happens all the time in this sick filthy pornographic world we live in. You think this isn't a pornographic world we live in? Then you're on the wrong planet. You're living the wrong kind of life. Everywhere you turn Satan likes to bombard that toward you. You drive down the freeway, you see the signs, what in the world are they advertizing? Sometimes in commercials... what are they advertizing? A half nude person hanging over a car... what are they advertizing I wonder? Sick world! Sick, sick, sick world and you're bombarded with these things day after day after day. The internet – sick world! Satan has a lot of tools he tries to use to destroy people and people's minds and the world succumbs to that. We are not to. We are to fight and resist those things of the world, to live right before God. Amazing! Don't live the way of the world. Don't give into the way of the world. Fight it! Resist it! Ask God for the help and the power. That's our life, that's the way we're to be.

So again, it's learning to give and not to take, not to have a mindset of the world where we just go out and appease our own conscience and feel better about ourselves for a little while; while we continue to live the same way. No, God tells us to change and that requires the service of reconciliation! That means there's work you've got to do to be reconciled to God! It's not just something we get on the receiving platter! It's like grace... Maybe I'll give another series on grace sometime soon. If you understand grace, it's a beautiful thing. The world is so protestantized and cheapened the meaning of it. The world doesn't understand what grace is. But if you understand what it is – it's like the love of God! You receive the love of God - you're not just to be on the receiving end of that. Like a young child who receives the love of a parent and if they don't get it they start screaming and squalling and crying... "I want more attention!" It's like our dog we had. He's out here and if you don't give attention to him on a constant basis, he'd come up... and that's fine... an animal is an animal. He comes up there and he wants to be petted. Okay, I'm through petting. No you're not through petting. He puts his head up there and he wants more petting... okay, I'm through I've done this long enough... no....puts his head up there. That's the way a dog can be. And if he doesn't get the attention, you know what happens a lot of times with dogs, if they don't get the attention they want? They'll turn on you. You're gone from home and they'll tear things up in the house. That happens! That's the way of the world... it's the way it is... And so if you're talking about family and children and children on the receiving end – a baby, you know, whatever, and not getting the love and attention it wants and it'll let you know I need more attention, I need more love and all they want is the love. They don't think anything about giving it back. It's a beautiful thing when they do as children grow up and they give the love back, but it doesn't always start out that way. It's a thing we grow in, and in God's Church we learn. It takes time to learn to be the one who gives the love and let God's love work through them to serve, to help others. It's a flowing thing.

So we're not just on the receiving end and getting it, and being selfish about it, we want to share it with others. That's the way God's Church is, that He is to live through us and others are to benefit from that – within the body – within society – within the world – and they receive something from God through us. But they don't understand and they don't know. It's just like at the Feast of Tabernacles, I remember years ago when large numbers of people would come into an area and in the beginning, in the first day or so, the local people are bombarded – they just see this large crowd in the restaurants and so forth – they just have more people to serve and there's attitudes because they've been doing this all year long, all summer long and they thought they had a little bit of a break: because we go into some of these resort areas. And they thought they'd have a little bit of a break and "here we are again... we had to put up with all these people all summer long", the masses you know, and people have some

attitudes and within a couple days they start changing, and they start liking the people. They don't know fully why... some people do, but you see this attitude change, because they like the way you live. They like the way you treat them. They like the way you talk. They like what they see. You're pleasant to be around. It's not like the world whose always demanding, get, get, get, gimme, gimme, gimme, you know? More service! Get over here, I'm over here! Anyway... it's serving. God has given us a service of reconciliation, a ministry of reconciliation, how to be atoned to Him and that has to do with giving, letting His love live through us so others can benefit from it. Not just to be on the receiving end ... and just give me more, give me more, give me more. No, it has to live through us and that requires sacrifice then on our part, because to give you have to sacrifice self, self's comfort, selfishness and then you learn in time – the beautiful thing – is in the sharing and the giving and you've prove God's way after a time and you learn that's the way of life to live. This is what makes you full and complete. In the beginning it might seem hard, it might seem difficult, but after a while, it becomes more natural and you begin to learn the joy is in the giving, the joy is in the sharing and seeing others receive that. And in time then others receive that and they live that then to others and it multiplies. It's what it's all about. It's how grace works. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing when we understand it.

To wit, verse 19, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. It's the logos of reconciliation. It's God's word, God's way of life, God's mind. He's committed to us His word, His way of life – it can live in us now. They're not just words, it's a way of life to be lived. And we have to think about those things and it's a process of being atoned to God – not just for ourselves but for others also. Our desire is for others to be able to be atoned to God.

Verse 20: Now then we are ambassadors; see if you understand that, we are **ambassadors**, because this way is to live in and through us. This isn't just to the ministry – this is to everyone! Every one of us... we are **ambassadors for Christ**, when people see us in the world they should see something different than they see in other people. Not logo's, not things that are said that are nice spiritual sweet sounding platitudes that sound religious. No, we're normal, ordinary people that live this way of life. You don't have to talk it and talk scriptures and talk verses and talk it to sound spiritual. You live it! That's what makes us different from the protestant world. They want to preach it and tell others what to do or how they're living or whatever... these platitudes, which mean nothing at all, but we live it and others receive it then. The waitress and waiter and how they are treated. Different people that you see in the world around you, that you come in contact with, how you treat them, how you answer them, how you talk to them – that makes us a little different from others. It's just down to earth people that live right toward others. That practice right things toward others around them. It's what God desires of us – a right community – a right relationship, and especially within the Church, within the body, that we exercise that even more so and work to be different than what we are now in order to accomplish that more, in order to give more. We have to change in order to give more.

Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. In other words, with God and with those in the Church first of all. That's where it begins. That's how you do it. We're to be reconciled with God, at one with one another and reconciled with each other in fellowship, that we be a close knit family. That's why it's so foreign to Gods' Church if we really get it – that there be no wrong spirit, *NO wrong attitude*, from one brother toward any other. We might see differences with one another, but to truly love each other, to have a desire of love and good will toward each other – to want to see each other succeed, to want to see each other blessed. And sometimes people don't really grasp that. If I have to correct something, do something, sometimes people don't realize and understand my desire toward you in anything that's said

and done is that you be blessed! That's why God did what He did over and over again with Israel – and He wanted to bless them. He knew what He was working with, but with the Church especially now because we have God's spirit – God's desire is for our happiness and for our fullness of life and that requires that we respond and change. That's the only way it comes about, but that's by our free choice.

And so everything that God gives to us is for our good so that we can be blessed more. Just as much as any of you as adults who have children... you want your children to be blessed, to be happy, to be filled with good life. God wants that for us more than we do for each other, for our own physical families. God desires that more, far more, than we can grasp and comprehend and He begins to do that and accomplish those things within the environment of the Church. That's how He teaches us. It goes on to say then, **For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.** In other words, he paid the penalty for all sin and this is the process then of how we can receive the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ who suffered for us and died for us as he carried all that.

Let's notice **II Corinthians 6:1 - We then, as workers together with him,** that's why I love the expression Mr. Armstrong gave – co-workers; because not everyone was on the same page. Not everyone was in the Church in the sense of being baptized yet. We've had people come into this body now who heard things back in the '80's and even before, who were co-workers, but are now baptized members of the body of Christ. Awesome. Awesome! All those years and now they're a part, in God's time. Whatever the purpose is that God performs and does. And so, again, incredible... co-workers – we're working together to the same purpose, to the same goals because we're responding to God's spirit and we're working in the way together that God desires us to work as a body. **We then, as workers together with him beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain.** The love of God, the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, the patience of God, the same things we're to exercise toward others. If we understand in time, we're not just to receive the love of God, the mercy of God, the patience of God, the longsuffering of God... all those qualities that God pours out upon us in order to save us... see those things have to start in time working through us to others. Longsuffering, patience, loving, caring, giving, gentle, patient... patient with one another, loving toward one another, desiring to see each other succeed with all of our being – wanting to see each other succeed. We're not just to be on the receiving end then, it has to work through us toward others. That's the whole point.

So God says **that you don't receive the grace of God in vain,** in other words, something has to change. We can't just receive it – it must work... go through us toward the benefit of others and that takes sacrifice on our part.

(For he said I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation/a day of salvation I have helped you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is a day of salvation.) For us, whenever that comes, whenever we're called – this is our time. It isn't for the world yet. This is our time. God is getting ready to make it a day of salvation for millions before long as we go forward and then all the billions in time; will be their day, their time... whenever it comes.

Going on, **giving no offence in anything, that the service be not blamed:** it's not talking about the ministers...**that the service,** is to work through us, **be not blamed;** of what we're living. That none of us give any offence in anything we do – that we strive to live. We're ambassadors for Christ. Remember the context of what is to be living in and through us – what others are to see and witness in our life? They're not to see what other people see in the world – adulterers, idolaters, people who don't care about what comes out of their mouth – what they say... No, we care! We don't want to hurt someone!

Now, or in the future when they're called. We don't want to, by our wrong conduct, hurt someone else that God is going to call – because everyone you know is going to be called by God – at some point. They know you! And they're going to know you whether they're resurrected a thousand years from now or live on into the millennium. They know you, so what do they see? What helps them? Or what might hurt them in the millennium? Because they remember back... so and so lived such a way and... doesn't really matter, God's... okay. Is it? Hmm...

Giving no offence in anything, that the service be not blamed: which is to live through us, the ministry, what lives through each one of us, **but in all things approving ourselves as** what? The ministers? No! Not talking about ordained ministers here - **as the servants of God**, that's what we are. We're servants of God and that mind, and that service is to work through us to the benefit of others; and that requires work, that requires effort, that requires prayer, that requires planning, that requires change, **but in all things**, all things we do, all things we say, how we behave ourselves on the job and wherever we are. That's a tall order. Ever how long you're awake. That's how long you have. We should be working on it. And we get tired and we let down, I let down, you let down, we all let down and we have to be stirred up again, we have to repent and ask God for help to keep pushing forward – to keep driving forward. It never ends. It doesn't end. As long as you're in this physical body – that part – because it's a struggle – because what are you doing? You're fighting against self and selfishness. It'd be easier to relax. It'd be easier to pull back, to take time off. To go up in the mountains and try a little trout fishing or whatever pleases you – go to the beach, get a little sun, get a lot of sun, but get away from everything. Don't take your cell phone – beat them to a pulp, because people will find you if you take it with you. Destroy your computer... You can't escape in this world, in this modern age of technology. But see, that'd be the easy way, wouldn't it? You don't want that. You've got to fight! You've got to work at it! Every one of us, and we're all that way.

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers/the servants of God, in much patience, so God's showing that it's not something that's just exercised toward us, it's something we exercise toward one another because we know it takes time. It takes time to change, it takes time to grow, it takes time to fight certain battles. God doesn't force us to change. He doesn't force change upon us. He teaches us, He leads us, He guides us, He directs us, and He corrects us and then we have to make choices along the way about that change. Sometimes He corrects us and we have to make a choice at that time to receive it, and to change, but it's all a matter of love. It's all a matter of growing and changing...

...in much patience, in afflictions. Because it's not going to be easy, there are going to be afflictions, there's going to be hardships, there are going to be trials – hard things that we have to experience as God doesn't take us away from the experiences of this world – He doesn't take us away from the hardships of this world, otherwise we wouldn't learn. Sometimes we pray especially, as we're younger in spirit and in growth, and that can last for many years, to have the afflictions removed. A lot of times as human beings we just actually want the afflictions to be removed, we don't like to suffer, but with God we learn through suffering, we learn through affliction, we learn through trials, we learn through hardship. If God answered every one of our prayers and removed the hardship of whatever we're going through; whatever it is you're going through in your physical life – if God just intervenes and removes those things from us... you know sometime God will ease that, sometimes He will remove it, depending on a situation. Sometimes He lets us have it full blown so that we can learn from it, so we can grow through it because it is the way to grow.

I'm so thankful God has allowed me to suffer. I wouldn't be here today; I couldn't teach what I teach. I couldn't know what I know, I would be fast asleep. So He lets us go through affliction and hardship and

sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's so hard... I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. I've had a hard week. The week before that was... I thought – oh we're going to have a reprieve – two weeks before that it was a nightmare, you know, nightmare came back, in things that happen out here and the pressure that's out here and the stress that's out here in the world and the way this world is turned upside down and it weighs on us. It's just the way it is, but we grow through it. We grow stronger. It's an amazing thing. Some things Satan doesn't understand. He doesn't get it.

But in all things approving ourselves as the servants of God, in patience/much patience, much afflictions in necessities, in distresses, and it goes on to say, **in stripes, in imprisonments;** how many of those things have you had to go through? Ah, so thankful I didn't live back at that point in time. That's pretty tough. They had some pretty tough lives. It's why I'm not kidding when I think about when Paul is resurrected. I do not want to complain about anything. I'm serious. I want to stay so far away from complaining. To say one thing about how tough it was to have to wait in the airports, or be delayed, or how tough it was at the end-time and you tell them about what you had and how good it was. They went through some tough things. The hardest trials and the hardest hardships are in the mind. It's not the physical things you go through, it's what you suffer through upstairs that counts. It's the battles you fight up here, and you might have stripes, but you can live through that – but I'm thankful I didn't have to live through it; that's pretty tough some of the things they've had to go through. **...in imprisonments,** there are different ones in the Old Testament – different times. Some of them they had it pretty tough: Jeremiah... whew... I can't understand how he went through some of the things he did and how he lived through it. Well, God sustained him – that's how he lived through it. Doesn't say I'm going to have a cake walk either before this is over with – okay? Whatever happens happens; I'm in God's hands. You're in God's hands – whatever happens to you – you don't know what's going to happen to you as we go through the remaining time of a little less than 3 years now. You don't know what's going to come your way, but whatever comes your way God will be there.

... in tumults, in labours, in watching's, always watchful... always, always, always; always striving to be on guard and that takes so much, truly does – seeking God to stir us up; **in fasting's;** and this one here means because you don't have food. Are things going to get a little tight here and there for people? There's going to be times you're going to go without for a while? You can count on it. Count on it. **By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the holy spirit, by love unfeigned,** incredible how these things work together – that we're moulded and fashioned and draw closer to God and have this ministry, this service that God has given us to live because this is about that service that lives in and through us. **By the word of truth,** that's what we focused on here recently, the word of truth. Where do you have it? You don't have it any place else. This is the only place you have it. It is the only source, the only way that God is working right now on the earth. Amazing to be able to say that with boldness, confidence and strength. It's true – it's the way it is. **...the word of truth, by the power of God,** because that's where it comes from – God has to do it. **...by the armour of righteousness,** and what is that armour, we're talked about that too: judgement, mercy, faith, some of those things. When we understand where righteousness comes from as well, that part of it, how righteousness is accounted to us, because of our confidence in what we believe; faith: **...by the armour,** that strength you have because of that and what you're able to believe and that boldness of that belief, **on the right hand and on the left,** it is your strength, what you believe, the truth you have.

By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: what does that mean, **by honour and dishonour?** Well, that's by what people say and do towards you, by how they think towards you, **by good report and by bad report,** look on the internet, not too much good report there; about the only place you can get that is on our website and a couple of others, otherwise there is not too much good

report out there so you get evil report and you live through it, you grow through it. It's a part of it. ...**as deceivers**; that's how the world looks at you, **and yet true**; that's what its saying. It's an awesome process of what we live through, of what God has given to us, see? People say you're deceivers, false prophet, whatever... yeah, I understand that, I understand where they're coming from. If I were in their shoes, I'd be saying the same thing. I probably wouldn't even care frankly, because before I was ever called I didn't care about the religious world. They can do their thing, it didn't bother my life – stay away from me, you know... crazies. So different people react in different ways. I knew how I would have reacted. It's the world and they can't help it, they're in Egypt until they can come out of Egypt and I look forward to that time. So, **as deceivers**, that's the way the world looks at us, **and yet we're true. As unknown, and yet well known**; for that which counts – God knows, Jesus Christ knows, the angelic realm knows, we know, and we know each other... and the world doesn't even understand that – they can't understand that relationship we have that's unique – the communication we have. It's an awesome thing. ...**as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing**; we go through things and yet we see the big picture and we understand what God is doing and we understand it's not easy and there are hard times we go through and yet we come through it and we rejoice in what God is doing. Even through our suffering and our sorrows... **As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things**. Beautiful verses here. It's not about what you have physically, it's what you have spiritually that counts, truly is. God has the power to give you everything in this universe and that's what His desire is – to give you everything in the universe, everything belongs to God – everything.

Philippians 2 – and so again, preparing for the Feast, our minds, our attitudes, our desire toward one another and how we especially then desire to be ambassadors in the sense of toward one another – ministers, and ministering, serving God toward one another; letting God live through us in our relationship with one another. In other words, striving to love each other and give to each other – giving a better Feast to each other through that process, not allowing anything to let us get captured into anything of selfishness. Are there times you can go do something by yourself? ...or with others? Absolutely, but think about the body and think about what you can include within a body and with others in the body above and beyond normal times. This is the opportunity to do that.

Philippians 2:1 - If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit. A fellowship of the spirit isn't when we get together and we have to talk about scripture or the Bible. Sometimes if something comes out about the sermon we've heard and we're excited about that or we see something and we mention it and we talk about it, that's fine. But so much of it is just time spent together and when we're living God's way of life and that lifestyle toward each other those kinds of things are the things that help bind us closer together. But that time has to be spent in order to develop those relationships that are beyond physical relationships and physical families. This is a spiritual one that God is binding and making stronger through such practice – a fellowship of the spirit. **If any bowels of mercy**, and mercies as it says here, it goes on to say... **Fulfil you my joy, that you be likeminded**, so again here, you know, Paul is writing and talking to Phillip, but it's to the Church, it's to all of us to learn from these things. It says, **fulfil you my joy, that you be likeminded having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind**. This was a beautiful thing to him. I think of Mr. Armstrong and his attitude and mind toward the Church and what he loved to see, what God desires to see in all of us. And receiving this from Paul is Phillip, **fulfil you my joy, that you be likeminded**. I could say the same thing to you. "Fulfil you my joy that you be likeminded, with what God has given to me that I'm able to share with you that you're able to share with one another. Be likeminded, of the same belief, of the same truth;" and the more we're of the same mind – what an awesome thing. ...**having the same love**,

what love? The love of God – a desire toward each other, a desire that Paul had toward Phillip that he desired that Philip learn from to have that same desire toward others, that it live through him – see?

...**having the same love, being of one accord.** One spirit, one mind: unity with God. Of that one mind, **let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory,** nothing be done through strife because of, in other words, things that are wrong, things that are handled in a wrong way as a result of strife, that sometimes if people aren't careful in life in relationships, and something can be said, something can be done and so their response and reaction is because of the strife. And so sometimes we react in a wrong way don't we? Toward the other person, how we treat them, how we back away from them, how we won't have anything to do with them, how we won't *forgive them* because you know they did this or they did that and so we're not going to show ourselves friendly to them. I have people treat me that way in God's Church. They don't think they're in my favour – it's not my favour you have to be worried about – it's God's and sometimes if people aren't in God's favour, they see me and respond to me accordingly. And so they're not as excited to see me. I go to some places and I learn from the children how people think toward me. I do. I can tell... I know how parents think towards me when I see, so often, their children. There are some who can't wait to talk to me, they're excited to see me – I see it in their parents and I know they're talking about it at home. Others, not so... won't darken the door – there is not the same respect, not the same things taught by respect in the family in their homes; and a matter of fact sometimes they're talking about the things they shouldn't be talking about and judging and saying things out loud in front of their children they should never be saying and their children pick up on that and they respond in like manner – amazing. We should learn from these things.

Let nothing be done through strife, because strife will always produce the wrong fruit. It'll always produce suspicion, doubt, justification, everything that's bad. Never... it's lose-lose all the way. ...**or vainglory;** so if it's about ourselves and about what we're going to receive from other people – God says don't do that, don't try to be lifted up around others and try to present yourself as being important and/or “religious” because of how you talk and speak and so forth: no, we all have to learn to be ourselves if you understand what I'm talking about. It's a matter of yielding ourselves to God and desiring that God live through us in our relationships and how we think toward each other and so forth, but again, no haughtiness, no pride ... **but in lowliness of mind,** it gets very specific in how we think about ourselves. If there is strife I'll guarantee you there's no lowliness of mind with strife. Oh, we are justified in our attitude – even if it be toward me as God's Prophet and if it's me toward God's prophet I'll guarantee you it's a whole lot easier to do that toward other members of the body. Do we see that one? Do we understand that? If we're able to do it that easily more toward God, because of where God's working do we not see God in one another? ...and does it make it a little easier sometimes to do these things to other people? So because of strife we will always justify ourselves because I'll tell you what – pride is so high up here I can't reach it. Lifting up my hand. Pride is up here just filling itself full because it's so justified in what it does, can't receive correction, wouldn't even think about correction in a sermon or whatever it might be, or even directly personally, because their justified. Strife; and then the vainglory, if it's about self anyway, it's pride up there again. That thing of pride is a sicko – it's a sick way and we've got to fight against that kind of thinking, we truly do.

...**but in lowliness of mind...** you can't fake that, you can't make it up, you have to ask God for help to have that true thinking toward each other....**lowliness of mind,** that means having a sound and balanced way of how we think about ourselves. We don't think ourselves as being great or above other people and looking down on anyone – not in the Church, and not in the world. There are a lot of people out here who are snubbed and looked down upon by others. There are others out here who have their nose so twitched out of shape you'd think it's on a skyhook lifting them off the ground, it's the way the world

is, and they cannot be humbled. They're so filled with pride and haughtiness and their fall is going to be great as we go forward. Truly. They're the ones that can't come through these things because they cannot change – they have such a high estimation of themselves. We can't be that way in God's Church. Beautiful verse...**but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.** How on earth do you do that and what does this mean? How do you esteem someone better than yourself? It's not a fake thing. It's not something protestants would read as they read this and somehow they go around some fake way esteeming others. I have seen that even around God's Church in times past. Thankfully I don't see it anymore but esteeming others better than themselves in the world it's this pious type of thing and this false humility and they start talking about how bad they are and you do things so much better than me and it's a fake thing. I don't know if you know what I'm talking about here – that you see in the world, but I have, to where I want to regurgitate. It has to be genuine and true. Do you in your mind, in your thinking, desire to put others ahead of you? Are you willing to sacrifice for the benefit of others – ahead of you, ahead of your own selfishness and your own desires of what you might want. I've used something as simple as you have your car filled with 3 other people and you pull up to an intersection and where are we going to eat? McDonalds is on one corner, Wendy's is on one corners, Taco Bell is on one corner, and Pizza Hut is on the other... and where are we all going to eat and everyone wants to eat at a different location. And finally 2 of them agree to eat at one, and then there are the other two that still are divided... are you willing to give in to them and give up your choice in order for them to be happy because you want to see them fulfilled, you want to see them enjoy that particular meal? It might sound oversimplified to you but that's the way it is. Are you willing to give up self and what you want in order to give to someone else? That's esteeming others better than your own desires, your own interests, what you want – that's what it's talking about. **...be in lowliness,** that's how you're in **lowliness of mind,** you're willing to humble yourself to give to somebody else. It's that simple! If you could do it in the little things, you can do it in the big things: a willingness to give to someone else.

Look not every man on his own things, because that's what we do. I want Burger King. I want the char-grilled burger and I don't want that flat juicy square thing that just doesn't look like a hamburger. No thank you. I want some of that charred taste in my mouth when I bite down. So we look upon our own things and we're not thinking about others. What do they want? ...if they want the juicy square thing, give in. Make them happier. Can you receive happiness, can you receive joy from giving to others? That's what it's all about – giving. Can you receive joy by just giving to others? Sometimes we can't as human beings because we want our own way, we're so insistent on having our own way, whether it be on the job, or whatever it is, with another employer, employee, where we are. Give.

Look not every many on his own things but every man also on the things of others. On the desires of others, that's what it's talking about, what their desires are, what they would like to have and so you yield to them. You humble yourself to give to them... **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:** he was not focused on his own interests when he was on this earth. He was fully focused on God's and that meant he had to sacrifice himself and his desires over and over again; not just in the end, but constantly in his thinking. He did it perfectly as a human being. Incredible: for the benefit of others that there could never be a judgement against him and what he lived. On the contrary, never could be a judgement of anything that anyone could ever see and accuse him of that would be true and would be wrong, because he couldn't have that and be our Passover, and be the lamb that died for God, for us. So he was not focused upon his own interests but always on that of others – the ultimate in humility, the ultimate of what this is talking about...**but in lowliness of mind.** The greatest example of humility the earth has ever seen – truly.

Verse 6: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: a very awkward translation, **But made himself of no reputation, but took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:** in other words, he knew who he was. He was the son of God. Did any human being whose ever walked this earth – did he have something to be prideful about, to be lifted up about? ...about maybe how he should be treated by others? How he should be talked to by others? No, wasn't in his mind, that wasn't his personality, that wasn't how he thought – constantly sacrificing, giving because he understood. He understood what he said at the very end, "Father forgive them because they don't know what they're doing." What an attitude of mind to have when you're being attacked and to be able to pray genuinely so for those who are attacking you. That takes a different kind of mindset and to mean it with all of your heart, with all of your being before God – then it's in God's hands how anything is dealt with and handled in life. But your attitude and your response, the way we must think is specific before God if we're truly going to humble ourselves and be in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than ourselves, our own desires and wants, what we think our needs are: a willingness to sacrifice.

...and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself, this is how he did it, that's where he placed himself. He didn't place himself as being the son of God and flaunt that and be lifted up with that, "Don't you know who I am?! Don't you know who you're talking..." He didn't have that kind of attitude, you know. Totally contrary to that...**and he became obedient unto death, even the death of the stake. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:** that's how God works – amazing. **That at the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess,** in other words by their life; we understand what that means, **that Jesus Christ is Lord,** that which talks about back in John that we're read recently, I John 4: to confess, not by words but by how you live – to acknowledge in deed Jesus Christ is Lord. You do that by yielding yourself to God living in and through you, to Jesus Christ living in and through you – that he is Lord. That you're yielding yourself to that power and to that life and this is what it's talking about. It's not just in words, by things you say, things are going to come out of your mouth – anything that comes out of your mouth is going to reflect what's in here, in the mind, and in all your actions: so it's much bigger than that. The world doesn't get past the platitudes though, **that every tongue should confess,** in other words by their life, **that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Verse 12: Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. So, again, Paul's desire for the Church and for those he worked with was that attitude of spirit and especially toward them, that which he told them was their strength from time to time, different ones, and I think of the Corinthians that he really had to struggle with, but again, he talked about not being able to be with them. I think of the marvel we have today regarding travelling. When he travelled it took a long time to travel from one destination to another and much was sent out by letter and long time periods of absence and so forth and I think of today, the blessing that God has given to be able to go from area to area because of modern travel, the ability we have and communication that we can hear every Sabbath. What a marvel! They didn't have that then and that ability to convey a more direct, stronger message to God's people on a continual basis has never been like it is today. It's never been like it is today, around the world, to be able to do this on a worldwide basis like we're doing it today, like God has blessed us to do it today. It's a marvel and you think back in those times and what they had to do and how they had to do it and so forth – a slower process for development and growth. It was. In the Church. **...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**

There's a work that God is doing as we yield ourselves to that – a work He's doing in the body, in the Church. And, **Do all things without murmurings and disputing:** and so we're talking about a fellowship, a body, a Church, and so God says, "Don't do anything with murmuring, complaining, that doesn't help anyone." Murmuring about things that are done or changes that are made and sometimes we have to acknowledge ourselves when we've murmured in this body. I think back about the simplest little things... a name change, United Church of God, because that's how we were organized in the beginning and we then changed the name to the Church of God and then the Church of God – PKG, Preparing for the Kingdom of God, and so I think of some of the attitudes that came out – disputing and some of the people's mouths, complaining to each other about the name change. Or an address change from Temperance, Michigan to Toledo, Ohio for the gathering of mail so there wasn't the confusion when I talked about being in Toledo. Made a small change – let's move the post office to Toledo and so we talked about where people send in their tithes when new people come along that are not in this region, which started to happen, so that there's not this confusion when they hear and see an address... "what's this Temperance, Michigan stuff and you talk about being in Toledo and preaching in Toledo, I don't understand" – because we got some of that – so we simplified it. People griping and complaining because... well, I don't want to tell you why. Anyway... little things – amazing how people will murmur and complain.

4 days for the Feast of Tabernacles instead of 8. We've lived through those things and we can laugh about it a little bit. Anyway, those things that happen to us – little things that happen... and we have to fight those things. **Do all things without murmurings and disputing:** especially within the body. Dispute with one another? Get into battle with each other? It's not God's way. **Do all things without murmurings and disputings; That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation/world.** Not just in the body but outside the body – but especially within the body, **among whom you are to shine as lights in the world;** that's how God wants us to be so that they see what we are, what we live.

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Paul's desire was toward the Church and toward those whom he wrote to in this particular case that we all **hold forth the word of life,** the way of life God has given to us by what we live, by our example. So Paul said, **that I can rejoice** in what God has blessed me to give to you. Because that's a greater joy to him when he sees the body then respond and it's especially here...**in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.** His desire was that the sacrifice was not in vain, that the giving was not in vain and I think of Mr. Armstrong. I think of when he will be resurrected – the bit of a shock that's going to be there – because if he didn't have the mind that's going to be given to him instantly at that moment in time, He's going to understand and know; but if he was physical and came back physically at some point, it would be a different story. It would be so heart-rending, so horrifying to realize all he laboured for and to see what is left. Truly. I'm glad he was spared that.

Yes, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. And that's the way we should be toward each other in our thinking, that it's all for a purpose, it's all for a greater joy that God is accomplishing. **For the same cause also do you joy, and rejoice with me.** And this word here in the Greek means "in the same manner," in other words by doing the same thing you may rejoice. That's what he's saying here. He said, and this is my joy, and by you doing the same thing – that's what it means here when it says, **and rejoice with me,** this word is far more intense, this word with me – what it's discussing here, but it means "in the same manner," in other words, doing the same

thing so that you can rejoice. You're doing the same things and you will rejoice and thereby, as it says here **and rejoice with me**, that's what it's talking about. That you may, in other words, for the same cause, and by doing the same thing and thereby rejoice with him – to be together. It's a fellowship. It's all to be done together.

So again, seek to give a better Feast. That takes work; that takes effort. We have to think about our own conduct, how we treat each other, how we think about each other – that there's certain behaviours that we can't have within the body, not to be lifted up in the body and not to have disputings in the body but that we seek to have a close relationship with each other, that we really love each other. You can go and examine your own mind and how you think about every other person in the body. Only you can do that...and if your thinking isn't right, fully forgiving of everything that's ever happened in the past, fully loving and desiring to see the best for that individual then something's wrong with your mind. Something's wrong with your spirit – see? We should be totally cleansed and free in the body toward every member of the body and if we're not then we're fighting against God, we're not responding to God properly. It's easy to say, "I love God." ...but if you don't love everyone that is God's, you don't love God as you should. We can't play games. God doesn't let us play games. We must be genuine and true and real in our life – how we think toward each other – to the point we're willing to sacrifice our desires, our wants, for the sake of someone else, for anyone else, for everyone else. And if we're not willing to do that, then something's wrong.

Seek to give a better Feast to all who are part of the body of Christ as well as to the world around you. Because how you go to the Feast, it could be the person behind the counter, it could be the person that you're car breaks down at the Feast and you get upset at whatever rental agency it is that gave you that piece of junk and sent it out there on the road when they should have known better, you know, whatever the attitudes we sometimes have. Whatever happens to you at the Feast, be careful how we treat each other and how we think about others in the world and their jobs and try to make their life a little bit easier because sometimes when things aren't going well, it's easy to take it out on other people. I've been there, I've done that. I've learned that when things don't go right on certain flights – don't ever be demanding, don't ever expect to get certain things from them: kind of empathize with them because they have to deal with a whole bunch of upset customers as well and so joke with them about those things and try to ease their pain, ease their suffering, ease what they're going through and acknowledge that they have a tough job and I'll tell you what – it helps them a lot. It's giving see? And in the long run you're going to get a lot more from them. That's the way it works with God. You give and you receive. Amazing.

Seek to give a better Feast to everyone around you. I'm reminded of Mr. Armstrong... I put that in my notes here even...**Psalm 133**. It's hard for us to grasp and comprehend this, the meaning of it and the depth of it but one of Mr. Armstrong's favorite scriptures that he used over and over again at the Feast of Tabernacles because when he saw the large groups of people that were there and his desire for the Church, his desire for the Body – especially because of what so much of the Church didn't know – thank God – of what was happening around him, around headquarters, the battles that went on that people thankfully were ignorant of... of human nature that came out. But Mr. Armstrong knew and that's why this meant so much more to him within the body. He saw God do something incredible and powerful within the Church to have unity with large numbers of people even when in the midst of troubles and strife that was still taking place: and yet God was still performing awesome things within the Church.

Psalm 133:1 - Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It's a beautiful thing when we're able to dwell together in unity – oneness of spirit; no bad thoughts toward

each other, no bad thinking, no bad behaviour toward each other, no holding any grudges, no holding anything against anyone else, no not speaking to anyone else, no not spending time with anyone else, no not whatever it is that keeps family apart, but on the contrary, a willingness to humble ourselves under whatever conditions because whenever we don't humble ourselves we are filled with stinking, rotten pride and we see ourselves in a light that is not healthy and good. We lift ourselves up and that's the exact opposite of what God wants us to do. He wants us to humble ourselves and yield ourselves to what He gives to us that is right, that produces right relationships.

We can't even begin to comprehend... some of you who are older, you understand this better now than ever before when you understand some of the things Mr. Armstrong had to live and go through. That's why I marvel when I think back of some of the things where he had to bring in a man, a pastor from another Church area that happened to be at that time in Houston, Texas, to be the treasurer of the Church. Mr. Leroy Neff, because he didn't play politics, he was more down to earth and genuine in how he did things and more of a right heart and a willingness to do whatever job was given to him. But not so at headquarters. I marvel at that. Now the Church didn't understand what was going on, I didn't know what was going on at the time; we were protected from those things by God. Why didn't he put one of the evangelists at headquarters in charge of the treasury, to be the treasurer of the Church? Because now, knowing and looking back, not a one of them could be trusted with that job. Not a one of them! Not one department head at headquarters because they were so filled with politics. Incredible what took place and so I can understand more when I see in my mind's eye and hear still – seeing him stand on the stage up there as he would give those, give that scripture...**Psalm 133 - Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!** It's with me to this day and will always be with me because I know now more of what that meant to him within the Church and the body at that time, when he saw that in the Church, when he saw that within the body, it was a very pleasing thing to him. He fought battles that I don't even comprehend, with large groups of people that I don't comprehend because God's given us a unity of spirit that wasn't in the same degree as what was in the Church then, because of what was happening in the ministry at that time and so forth. I can't comprehend some of those battles, I really can't. I do, by certain understanding, but I've never lived anything like that. None of us have. Incredible!

It's like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: ordained high priest, **and went down to the skirts of his garments;** the oil. It's not like we do today with an anointing of someone when a little bit of oil is put on your finger, and a little bit put on the forehead when people ask for anointing. This was a type of ceremony, and those of you that got ordained, be thankful we don't do that today, with your clothes, because we don't forewarn you when it's going to happen. And they had this thing filled with oil and they poured it on the head and it went down over the beard, dripping oil... and you think, that doesn't sound real exciting to me, and it drops down on your garment and you know what oil does to cloth, kind of looks like a real oily mess. But it wasn't to God, that's the whole point. It was a beautiful thing to God.

Here He's putting someone into a position, a responsibility, someone that has been given a job within the Church in the wilderness and it was a beautiful moment of what it meant, what it entailed, and what it pictured more for the future. **...the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down the skirts of his garment as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:** if we understand what Zion is, that which makes it grow... **the dew that descends down upon... Zion:** the Church; that which God is moulding and fashioning, the Zion that God is building. It's not about a physical place, it's about a spiritual one, the temple of God, the Church of God, that which we're to see on a spiritual plane that feeds the entire

Church, that brings us into unity and oneness that's beautiful to God in God's eyes and it becomes to us more and more as we grow. ...**the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Eternal commanded the blessing, even life evermore.**

It's talking about that what it leads up to: that beauty in God's plan that eventually leads up to being in His family – finally changed, truly *in Zion* and that which feeds us for all eternity. Incredible to understand the meaning of some of these things, what God has given to us.

I think that'd be a good place to stop today. We'll continue on there next Sabbath from that point because I'm getting into another area of scripture that'd be good for us to wait for until next Sabbath.

But again, think back over these things. Begin preparing more for the Feast right now in an intense way, asking God to bless you, to help you in your thinking toward the body, toward the Church – how to give a better Feast to one another – what that means in your life. What you can do to change... if you've been to a Feast before, what you can do to do it better than you did the year before, or years before and making everyone a part of the family of God.

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