

Thankfulness – Pt. 2

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It's good to see everything coming together like it is this Feast. I feel that people are really excited and prepared for what we're going to be given. Also excited to be able to get away from all the stress and pressure that's out there; because during this time of year I've heard it from so many areas, people being bombarded; there's a pressure. Sort of like a pressure and a stress that's hard to describe sometimes, but there's so much of it out there and things that come at us in so many different directions to try to get at us, to try to get at God's people, to try to wear you out, to try to wear you down, to try to get you sidetracked, to try to get you discouraged, or whatever it might be; whether it be on your job or whether it be in family or whatever. There are so many things out there and sometimes it's just there. The best way I can express it is like a stress type of pressure, anxiety (that's not even the word I'm looking for here), it's not a fun time. But once we're on our way to the Feast, once we get to the Feast, God begins to give us more of His blessings, more of His protection for that purpose and we're allowed to experience these things for a reason, to be made aware that there is a war going on out here, that we do have a battle and a war to fight and we need to keep on our toes spiritually, if you will, to keep close to God.

And so these things remind us of that; how easy it is to be sidetracked by different pressures, by different stresses that come at us in whatever way they come at us and to understand where they're coming from, to grasp and comprehend that we're almost through this. It's been that way for 6,000 years; different times even more so obviously, but we're *almost* there. What an incredible thing!

Today we're going to continue with the new sermon series entitled; *Thankfulness*, with this being *Part 2* and with this also being the conclusion of this particular series; just a two part series. Examples of thankfulness and deep gratitude with deep understanding toward God; they are numerous throughout the Bible, things that are said about thankfulness. The word so often used in the Old Testament is 'praise'. They're very closely related in Hebrew and sometimes translated the same. So it's that attitude and that spirit that you see in so many of the examples, especially of people who walked righteously before God, you see something unique in them, a unique heart and a desire toward God; and it was always one that as they walked in faith there was the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness for what God had given them. They were able to see those things. And we do too. We're able to focus on that more at times than others. Sometimes the stresses of life, the troubles of life, the hardships of life – sometimes we get a little side-tracked. But to get back in that focus, to be on guard, to recognize what God is leading us to, to keep that focus that's so important.

We're going to begin here in Psalms 86. Psalms are filled with matters of thankfulness and gratitude. The songs we're going to be singing at the Feast this year are from the Psalms. David was inspired by God to write numerous Psalms; so many of them are very prophetic. David was a prophet in that regard. God inspired Him to write various things, many things even about the coming Messiah, about the birth of Christ, about various things that were going to happen in Christ's life and the things He would go through. Incredible inspiring songs and Psalms that God gave and inspired through David; those that we'll be singing at the Feast and Psalms like this one here: Psalm 86. And it's good to be able to get into the mode, if you will, of this particular sermon on thankfulness, gratitude to God, by going through a Psalm like this, to get back on course after last week.

Psalm 86:1 - A Prayer of David. Bow down Your ear, O Eternal, hear me: that desire that we all have when we go before God. We all have that desire to be heard by God and sometimes we're reminded of some very basic things when we do go before God. We want to be heard by Him, we want to pour our heart out to God in whatever we have to say, to share things with God. He desires to share His life with us and for us to be moulded and fashioned then by that process. And there's something unique about that in prayer as well; God's spirit. The blessing of being able to have God's spirit, the holy spirit, to be blessed to have that holy spirit working in our life – there's a powerful thing that takes place in the mind and God can work with our mind in a fashion that can happen in no other way, it's through His power. And so there is that uniqueness of prayer that has extra power in it because of God's spirit.

So again, this cry here, **Bow down Your ear, O Eternal, hear me: for I am poor**, it's a word that means 'low' or 'brought low'. It's times like that when we're brought low, when we go through various things in life, whatever it is, that we cry out to God even more and sometimes in a deeper fashion, with more emphasis, more importance in our life at that point in time; a greater need, if you will; just like it follows up, **I am poor and needy**; meaning 'in want, in need of help'. And so that's a healthy thing for us spiritually when we see that.

Sometimes we have a hardship or a trial and it gets us back on course, it helps us to focus on that reality. It's when you become filled in your mind spiritually with other things, when you don't see the need for God – that's the great danger. That's what happened to Philadelphia; that's what happened to us as we went into Laodicea – we were 'rich and increased with goods', that's what that means about the Laodicean Church. That attitude of mind! 'Rich and increased with goods,' didn't *grasp the need* for God on a daily basis, it wasn't *real*. See, something was lacking, something was missing; and we can't afford that in our lives. You have to be spiritually alert. And so it's this *attitude* that David is praying here, that David is writing about here that is so important for us in our prayers.

...**I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy**: it basically means, 'I am one who follows You, one who is devoted to You.' That's really what it means here. 'I am devoted to You. I am following You. I desire You in my life.' That's what the expression means in Hebrew.

It says, **O my God, save your servant who trusts in You**. And we all place our trust in God. From the very beginning it's a process of understanding God's plan for us and of giving our life to God, not trying to live our life our own way any longer, but striving to live it God's way. God knows these things, but it's good for us to know them, that's the point. So we pray such prayers because they're felt from inside, not just because it's a matter of repetition or where we're just going through the motions. Sometimes we do and God has mercy on us. But when they're heartfelt because of things we're experiencing, even obviously more so.

It says, **O my God, save your servant who trusts in You**. A desire we have, a spirit we should have of recognizing we are servants, we are blessed to serve in God's work, in God's way of life, to share in it even in a better way as expressing it, in that regard, **who trusts in You**. Our lives are God's! We've given our life to God, truly.

Be merciful unto me, so you have to recognize a need for mercy to cry out like that to God; **Be merciful to me**, and God *is* merciful to us, and then we can thank Him for that; but we have to see that first, to be thankful, to be grateful to God. So, **Be merciful to me, O Lord: for I cry unto you daily**. Crying out to God. What an awesome thing to understand the need to cry out to God daily, to pray to God in this fashion.

Rejoice the soul of Your servant: Help me to rejoice, help me to be glad in Your ways. We can't always rejoice in this world; there is not a whole lot to rejoice in as far as the world is concerned. We see the horrible things that are taking place; it's all around us, and we recognize the need that this world has of God and God's way of life. And so, just like it talks about Lot; 'he vexed his righteous soul day by day'¹, he was hurt inside, he hated to see what was happening to people around him and hated to see what was happening to youth in the world they had to grow up back then, let alone today. It's far worse today than it was back in his day – truly. It's a sick, perverted world.

Rejoice the soul of Your servant for unto You, O Lord, do I lift my soul/my life. I lift it up before You, it's Yours. **For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive;** what an awesome thing when we recognize the desire God has to forgive us of sin; with such love that He gave His only Son (that's what it's all about); so we could be forgiven of sin. That's where it starts, it starts with Passover and our recognition then of what God has gone through for us in order to give to us the blessing of forgiveness because God *wants* to forgive us of our sin. But along with that goes an attitude and a mind. To be forgiven comes the desire to change, the *desire* to become something different, the *desire* to see what God is offering us to become; at unity, at oneness with Him, of the same mind with Him, of the same way of life. And not with what we go through in this physical life with all the different pulls and the battles we have.

For You Lord are good, and ready to forgive; plenteous in mercy, it means, 'full of mercy'. ...**ready to forgive;** it's just up to us to repent. That's why it's so important to repent quickly of our sins, daily of our sins. ...**Ready to forgive and plenteous/full of mercy unto all them who call upon You.** So we have to call upon God. If we don't call upon God we don't have that relationship; if we're not trying to build that relationship, or if we're not crying out about these things then why should we receive the mercy, or how are we going to be forgiven?

Give ear, O Eternal, unto my prayer; Isn't that our desire? We want God to hear us. That's why whenever I read something like this, or I'm reminded of something like this, the first thing that comes into my mind is the importance of repenting of sin quickly because that's what cuts us off from His not hearing us. That's what He says. It's a beautiful verse back in Isaiah that discusses this. I'll go to it quickly here. It isn't a matter that God *can't* hear or as it expresses it here...

Isaiah 59:1 - Behold, the Eternal's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; I've seen this so often since I was baptized in 1969 with different things that happen in people's lives; sometimes people praying about things and not receiving answers, or not receiving help in their life from God. And sometimes the answer is just no because it's better that we go through a particular trial – because that's what's healthy for us. Ever since the apostasy took place back in 1994, if I hadn't have gone through any of the trials that followed after that, I wouldn't be where I am today, I'd be asleep out there, totally asleep in a spiritual coma – truly. But because of the trials, because of the hardships, because of the things we went through, it helped me; I was able to grow by that.

So sometimes it's better to go through some of the things that are out there; but *with God*. We're so blessed because we can go through the trials *with God, with hope, knowing* what's on the other side of this, *knowing* that in the battle that we can win, that we can conquer, that we can be victorious as we talked about on Trumpets.

¹II Peter 2:8

So again, **the Eternal's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear:** It's not a problem with God that He can't save or that He can't hear. He says, **But your iniquities have separated between you and your God,** It's our sins that causes separation between us and God because we cut off the flow of God's spirit with sin. *He can't dwell in sin!* And that's so important to understand the scriptures that talk about God dwelling in us. *That's why Jesus Christ died!* ...so that God could dwell in us! That's the reason for being forgiven of sin; and so we can change. It's so that God can dwell in us to help bring about that change.

It's not an ending to just be forgiven of sin, it's what it produces in our life; that God can dwell in us to change us. **But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.**

So, when we read scriptures like what we just read in **Psalm 86:6 – Give ear, O Eternal, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.** If you have that kind of petition before God, then the first thing you should think of is sin. What is it I need to repent of? I don't want there to be a separation between God and myself. I want to be right with God. I want to be able to be forgiven so that God will continue dwelling in me, coming into my life as Jesus Christ spoke of; that continual present progressive in the English language. It just starts coming into our life, God's spirit, and continues to come; but that's not true in our life. His spirit is cut off often. The flow of God's spirit is cut off often because we sin often. We sin way too much in life. But that's that battle. And so it boils down to a desire to *repent*. Are we *repenting* when we sin and seeking to conquer; and are we growing and are we overcoming various things in our life?

Verse 7 - In the day of my trouble I will call upon You: do we have much trouble? Yes, so we should be calling on God quite often just in that area alone because we have troubles all around us at times; **for You will answer me.** What great confidence and knowledge. God's desire is to answer us. If we'll call upon Him, He's there; His *desire is to share His life with us* indeed.

Among the gods there is none like unto You, that word 'Elohim' again, 'to have no other god's before Me'. And so it's showing here that with God Almighty there's none like unto Him; it's just an expression, a statement. Because in the world, in different religions, so many of them have to do with the 'god's' that are there, the families, because it means, basically, God Family. We understand that. Elohim means 'Family of God' or 'God Family'. And so that's the word that's used when God says, 'Don't have any other god's (Elohim) before Me'; because so many of the god's in paganism have to do with family structure. Why? Because there's a being that deceived them into that same thing because that's what he hates: he *loathes* it with all of his being. Incredible!

O Lord; neither are there any works like unto Your works. That's what's so inspiring and exciting. The more you grow in God's Church, through time it doesn't matter when it's going to be in your life...and on into the Millennium, there'll be times in your life where you're going to be feel inspired and closer to God. Just like the Feast of Tabernacles, even during the Millennium; there'll be no time like the Feast of Tabernacles because that's the time you can actually draw closer to God. There's this closeness with God you experience at that time of year that you *can't experience at any other time of the year!* It's *impossible!* Why? Because of the way God has structured it, the training and the pouring out of His holy spirit; because there's not a time where you go to services every day for eight days in a row, and then on the High Days twice, and be fed spiritually by God and to have fellowship every day. There is just no other experience like that.

And what an incredible blessing you're able to leave your job behind during the Feast. You're commanded to. He has to tell us to do that. We leave everything else behind, we leave the world behind; and we're able to then be immersed in fellowship with God and fellowship with one another, to draw closer together as a Family. There's no other time like it! And during the Millennium, there's no other time like the Feast of Tabernacles because of the way it is. Other times of the year we work six days of the week, or we have activities six days of the week and on the seventh day we rest, we come before God, we have a holy convocation and God teaches us and works with us and moulds and fashions us. It's going to be that way in the Millennium as well and we grow. We go through a process of growth. And there are going to be those times that you're going to be more deeply inspired; like this, **neither are there any works like unto Your works.**

The more you see God through growing in understanding His plan... that's why I am so excited about this Feast of Tabernacles more than any other – truly. Because of an ability to see things in a greater way on a level that is greater than we've had before. And that will be received in different ways, depending on where we are as to what we see. But it's an ability to see, to grasp God's Family. It's an ability to see and grasp what God's doing in our life and how He's doing it and why He's doing it and the way He's doing it. And the more you really see that, the more exciting *God* becomes! ...the more exciting the God Family becomes! ...the more exciting the way He's *doing* it becomes! *There's just nothing like it!* What can you compare it to? And that's some of the things David's saying, 'what is like unto You, Great God, your works and what you do?' and the more we see that the more inspiring it is to you, the more exciting it is to you, the more awesome it becomes.

Verse 9 - All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, see, that's in the future. This was written a long time ago and here it's forward looking into a time when 'all the nations are going to come and worship before You'. Now we understand that plan in a way that David didn't even understand it. But he knew that that would happen in time. He was *inspired* by God to write this; that it would happen in time. But how? We understand how, we understand a 7,000 year plan; we understand what happens in the thousand years to follow and the hundred years beyond that in a great resurrection. We know that all nations are going to be brought before God; those who will, the peoples who will. There will be some people that won't choose that; which is a hard thing to grasp sometimes; but it's not either because we're free moral agents, we have free choice in life. And not everyone makes the choice of God; it's just a reality.

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord; and shall glorify Your name. They're either going to do that or it's over for them; that's the choice.

Verse 10 - For You are great, and do wondrous things: You alone are Elohim. Beautiful what its saying! **Teach me Your way,** it's the only way. That's so hard for people to grasp and get in their minds. There are scattered groups out here today – it's a frustrating thing sometimes when you talk to different ones, maybe even family or whatever it is of people in some of the different groups out here and some of you that have that and you share those experiences sometimes with others. And if you ever come across someone out there, you hear some of the things that they're doing and what they think your heart goes out to them in one regard because they're asleep and you know that.

But one thing that's so hard for them to grasp... there are many in some of the larger groups, especially the two larger groups out there, they kind of feel and believe where it's kind of this universal type of mentality, but it's so wrong if they could just grasp that. That we're all kind of basically going in the same direction in the way God's working with us.

Now they really don't believe that deep down inside because they wouldn't dare go to one of the other groups. They really believe they're right; but they can't take it all away to say there could only be *one* with whom God is working; there can only be *one* where God's spirit is leading and guiding and directing; because there's only *one way of life*. One is inspired by God, led by God and none of the rest can be. And that's such a basic concept, but it's a very difficult thing sometimes for people to understand, especially in some of the scattered groups; that we *don't* believe the same thing, we are *not* the same. And the farther we've gone in time, the more of a chasm there is between us.

Teach me Your way, it is one way of life, one truth, one God, one faith, one thing to believe, in other words. **Teach me Your way, O Eternal, and I will walk in Your truth:** that's why sometimes it blows my mind when people have received truth in this Body and then choose to leave and go to some other group and you think, "How can they reconcile some of the basic things that they know are not true there? ...about what happened to us; that we *were* scattered, that we *had* an apostasy." How can you reconcile that with other groups who don't believe those things happened? And it boils down to this thing of being truthful with whatever you've been given, to be honest with whatever you've been given, to live by conviction. If you go against your convictions, if you go against something you know is true and you do something that's false or you latch on to something else that isn't right...what is that? Where is the integrity of life? Integrity is something that's so lost in the world today, it truly is. Very few are able to grasp a hold of it in life; but what a beautiful thing it is to live by integrity, to be *honest* with yourself, to be *honest* with others, to be *truthful*. To live any other way... that's why I think in Proverbs where God talks about hating a lie. It's horrible, it's evil, distorts the mind.

Teach me Your way, O Eternal and I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. 'Unite my heart!' Make me at one with You that I fear Your name. And this means, 'to fear not to obey God, to fear to do something different than that one way' *your* way as He just said, to show reverence. It's a word that means 'to show reverence, respect and honour' to God. That attitude of mind; and in order to do that we have to have that thankfulness, again, to see God, to grasp what we have.

Verse 12 - I will praise, again, that same word that means 'to give thanks'; because to praise God, if it truly comes out of the heart, if it truly comes from your inner being, then there is that attitude of thankfulness to God, of giving thanks. That's where the praise comes from. Otherwise it's fake, otherwise it's not real. Just like we got into a habit in the Church at one time of singing songs and we know the songs by memory. And after a while it was kind of a repetition of songs, but what came from inside because that's what we deeply felt? ...because we poured ourselves into what we were singing and thanking God?! And through time so much of that was watered down, it became lukewarm... *lukewarm*, that's a good... it's exactly what it was; there was no fire in it because of the feeling. You've got to feel it to sing it. That's why it's such a beautiful thing this year that we're going to have that opportunity to sing praise to God. And those of us who've been around for a long time and know those songs inside and out... you don't even have to look at the words. After all this time, I'll guarantee you, you could stand there and sing the songs; you know the words as a whole to song after song after song after song; once you hear the melody *you know the words*, it's in your heart, it's in your mind. But when you sing it then with your heart, with all of your being because of what you believe, because of what you see...what an awesome thing to give that to God. That's what it is. We're giving ourselves to God; we're lifting ourselves up before God in praise, in what we're praising God in.

So, **I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart:** It's where it comes from; deep down inside. That's what it's showing. It's something we feel with all of our being. It's not put on, it's not repetitious, **Thankfulness – Pt. 2**

it's something that we're moved by because of what we believe ...**with all my heart; and I will glorify Your name forever; For great is Your mercy toward me.** Isn't that amazing what he goes back to? Do we all see that? I'll tell you, there's been times in my life I just marvel and I think, "How on earth can you work with this? Why would you, God in heaven, work with this?!" When you see your nature, when you see the mind of what we're like; and that just helps you to draw closer to God, to love Him more. It truly does! When you see God's mercy like that and you know it and you believe it with all your being and you recognize that's what God grants you... you just repent of your sins and you're able to continue in a relationship with Him. What an awesome thing! And those are the things that endear you more and more to God, to marvel at such a thing, that God has that power and that might, and to see what works in the mind that we're going to talk a little more about at the Feast. It's exciting! It's inspiring! Because it's His working in the mind that is such a marvel, through the power of His *holy spirit*, that it's such an incredible thing.

For great is Your mercy toward me: and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell/lowest grave. Which has to do with those things that we recognize in life that have punishment in time. He's not just talking about because of death that comes upon all human beings.

Let's turn over to **Psalm 100**. This is listed as; **A Psalm of praise**. A Psalm of thanksgiving, that's the word. 'A Psalm of thanksgiving', 'a Psalm of praise'. So many of those through scripture... you know sometimes when you have a tough week... Have you ever had times when you don't even know what to say to God? I do. I've had those times. There are times when I don't even feel worthy to go before God; and we're not, and that's good, that's healthy too; but on the other hand, to have the right mind to realize that's not what we're supposed to do – to shirk away from God, on the contrary, we're to *fight* that head on, repent of sin and keep going forward. But sometimes there are times when you don't even know what to say. I have that from time to time. There are times I just don't know what to say. So, a good thing to do at times like that – open up your Bible and go to a Psalm, start praying about the words that are there; and after a while it's something you see fitting your life; you see yourself in what you're saying; it expresses something that you feel inside that becomes more... it's a part of you.

That's one unique thing about so many of these. When it ends, so many times, you'll see different things written by God and it'll say, 'amen', 'so be it', 'I agree with it'. When you say 'amen' in a prayer, you're saying 'I agree with what's been said to you God – so be it. I agree with it. I agree with what was said.' If you don't agree with it you better not say 'amen'; because what you're saying is you make it your prayer too. "That's my prayer..." You're in agreement with what's being said. And the same thing sometimes with Psalms. You read through it and there are times when you come to 'amen'. It's yours. It's just like sermons... from area to area sometimes people say, "Well, that's exactly what I went through this week." And some people have even wondered... I had a situation where people said, "Did somebody tell you? Has somebody told you something here about me?"

"No."

"Was this about me?"

...Because it fits us. And that's the way the Psalms are. They'll fit us; they do. If we pray about them they can be ours as well. That's the power of God in the human mind and the blessing we have.

Psalm 100:1 - Make a joyful noise unto the Eternal, all you lands. So to have a joyful noise, a rejoicing before God means there's something in your heart and being to rejoice about, there's that gratitude and thankfulness that's there. That's why it comes out that way.

Serve the Eternal with gladness: serve God in whatever we do and whatever we have to do in yielding ourselves to being moulded and fashioned in whatever opportunities in life that come along, especially in the Millennium as time goes on. There's going to be so many opportunities, I'll tell you... you're going to be astonished. Those of you who have opportunity to have a head start in the last three years; you're going to be astonished and dumbfounded with your calling, with what God has given you opportunity for, you truly will be. Because everything's by design and by purpose, and if you yield yourself to it with a *humble* spirit, not allowing yourself to have a big head about any of it, but to be of a humble mind and a humble spirit before God; and thankful and grateful, you'll have great opportunities – truly, in ways you can't even begin to comprehend. Its exciting serving God, it truly is. And the more we're able to do that, the more exciting it becomes.

Verse 2 – Serve the Eternal with gladness; to do that we have to see what He's doing in the sense of agreeing with it, we see it, we agree with it, we are *thankful* to participate, to be a part of it. ...**come before His presence with singing.** And we have that opportunity at the Feast in a very unique way. I look forward to the time that we're going to have that ability in a larger way in the future, when that will be reinstated everywhere; where again we'll be large enough to have a place that has a piano and someone talented enough to play it, and then people who can lead the songs and all the other things that go with it. Right now, because of a scattering and things that have taken place, we had to get away from some of those things for a time; and for a purpose, to bring us back to here - to have a greater appreciation and thankfulness and gratitude for it all.

Going on, **verse 3 - Know that the Eternal/Yahweh, He is Elohim/He is God:** there is no Elohim without Yahweh, without the Eternal; ***it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.*** Everything that is here, everything that we're able to be a part of, it's all God's. **Enter into His gates with thankfulness,** into the way that God makes available to us, we're to walk through with thankfulness. With whatever door... it's like saying, "Whatever door that's opened up to you in life that God gives to you, every truth that comes along, every doorway that God gives to you and working in your mind, working with your life – walk through it. That means you want to live it, you want to do it – **with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him,** always, always, always. We live in a world that's not so thankful, that doesn't think about thanks so much; that almost sometimes it comes across as being owed. That's the kind of society and world we live in; as though things are owed. *Nothing is owed* to us, on the contrary. So...**be thankful unto Him and bless His name.** Meaning that we, as we referred to last Sabbath, its like saying 'acknowledge Him and honour' – with honour and great respect of God and worship of God and so forth. So it has to do with going before God to worship Him and having great honour and respect toward Him. That's what it means to 'bless His name'.

For the Eternal is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endures to all generations. Thank God! The truth is the truth. God's truth doesn't change. Sometimes we don't understand it and we have to grow in it and He has to reveal things to us to build upon it; just like at this Feast... He's building upon more of what has been given to us in times past even, making the picture clearer, with greater understanding and greater appreciation. The more you see, the more you understand, the greater appreciation you can have because it becomes more exciting with what God is doing.

Let's turn over to Psalm 43 and look at one more Psalm before we move on to some other examples here. But again, Psalms always help set the stage; that's why they're so good to use oftentimes in prayer. When you have a difficult time, or you're going through a trial of some sort and you just start going through one of these and it helps you get... *it helps to get you focused!* That's what they do. They

help to get your mind focused spiritually like they need to be toward God in a right way. And after a while you begin to deal with things in a better way; and God can give you more of His strength then, more of His spirit.

Psalm 43:1 - Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. It's in the world all around us, deceit, lying, injustice. It's everywhere you look. And our hearts should go out to this world because... when it hits us it hurts; but think of all the others. Think of all the others in the Church and all the others in the world who have to suffer through this at this time. That's what this is all about – getting rid of this kind of thing, the deceitfulness in life, the lying that goes on in life. That's why I hate politics. I hate anything political. That's why I hate what happened to the Church at the end because it became political and then organizations that sprung up – they became political again; and that's a disease. It's a cancer, because whenever there's politics there's compromise and there are pacts that are made that require compromise on principle, on integrity, as I mentioned earlier. You can't have those things without compromise, without *lying*; it's just the way it is.

For You are the God of my strength: why do You cast me off? In other words, seemingly as been cast aside sometimes, sometimes we can feel that way. Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Sometimes we get weighted down a lot and we can begin to lose a little bit of our focus. And so sometimes those are the feelings we're dealing with. And so the expression here to follow up - **O send out Your light and Your truth:** to help us to see clearly, to hold onto the truth. That's why I mention so many times: the truth that we have – that is powerful, that is great strength to you of boldness and confidence. That's why I've reminded people from time to time to go back to those and go through them. They are moving; they're exciting because you come to a greater conviction that *this is of God! There is no other answer!*

O send out Your light and Your truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Your holy hill, so it's the truth, and it's the desire to follow it, the desire to see the light and to follow what God enlightens before us.

Verse 4 - Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yes, with harp will I praise You, and the word again here, 'give thanks', to be thankful... **O God my God.** What a blessing that we know God. I marvel at that. You look at the world and they've not known God. How blessed are we? Of all the people on this earth... That's why people think you're just stark raving mad, nuts. "You know God?! You know the truth?! How big are you?! How many are meeting together? Oh, you listen over the internet you're so large?!" They don't understand what God is doing; but we know. There's a boldness and a confidence we have *because of the truth that we see*. And we only see it because of God's spirit that He's enabled us to see it. But to marvel that we know God? That we know what God is doing? What an incredible thing. I so look forward to that being poured out in the world now. That's where we are in time; to realize we're at that juncture in time, after so long a time, 6,000 years, we're almost at a point where God's spirit is going to be poured out on this earth, all over this earth, upon mankind, so that everyone has the ability to see what is true.

Verse 5 - Why are You cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted/troubled within me? What reason do we really have to be that way? That's what he's saying. Sometimes you can feel like God's left you or God's not there and you become discouraged, you become worn out. Sometimes you're *just worn out*, you become weary of the battle. God says, "Don't be weary in doing right, in well-doing, in doing good."

And so, so many of these Psalms bring you back on course... **Why ...O my soul?** Why am I disquieted? Why do I feel troubled? **Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him**, it's like going through a process. You start out in a bad spot and you ask questions; and then you start going through this and all of a sudden you come back to and you have the answer to what you started with; and getting your mind focused on what it needs to be focused upon and what we *do* have, not what we *don't* have; what God is offering us and not the trouble we feel like we're in. And sometimes be reminded that it's because of the trouble we're in that we're able to be of a poor and needy spirit. And there are positive things in that then, not negative, not bad things. We go through trials and hardships because this helps us to *drop to our knees so often and humble our self* and do what God wants us to do anyway – to be able to see the need; *"I need your help God! I can't do this on my own!"*

"Yeah, it's about time you saw that. I'm glad you get the point! That's exactly right; now I can help you." Now He can help us, see, *then* He can give us more help, more ability to see and more ability to fight with the battle that's before us; but you've got to rely on God.

And so, so many of the Psalms will help you to get re-focused properly on a spiritual plane. ...**For I shall yet praise Him**, again that word, 'give thanks to Him', **who is the help of my countenance, and my God**. What an awesome thing to *know* God and to be able to say, "He is my God." ...and to have that thankfulness that's associated with that.

Let's turn over to 11 Chronicles, look at some other examples now about a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness that should always be shown toward God. We're going to look at an example of when the nation of Judah had gone back and forth with their relationship with God. It was a continual thing – back and forth as one king would seek to make things right before God and then another would come along and do the wrong things and other nations would come along and begin to tear down. God would allow certain things to happen to Judah, as an example, because of their disobedience; have invaders come in and so forth. But one king would seek to do right, another king would tear it all down and go to pagan gods, start worshipping the god's of other nations and trying to make pacts with other nations that they shouldn't have done; because *it's politics!* You make pacts with other nations, you know what? They started compromising with what God said they should do and they began to make deals, compromise with ways of God. And God told them not to do that in order to get along, in order to do whatever needed to be done. And God told them, "No." And so they'd turn toward idolatry and worship pagan gods and then they'd suffer from invaders and Gentile nations would take advantage of them.

That's why sometimes I marvel when a so called world or a nation of Traditional Christianity tries to deal with other nations like *we think* everyone should be treated. People don't think the same around the world like we do here, or like people think we do here. And sometimes leaders have made that great mistake. You see a few every once in a while and they come along and they say certain things and you realize... you start talking about Putin... "I looked into his eyes..." What was it? "...I saw a friend..." or someone he could trust in. Yikes! Give me a break here! It's not like talking to some Senator or somebody else here who maybe has the same beliefs and same kind of background you do, who believes in a "democracy" like what we have here. They don't have that and they don't *think* like this country. They don't think the same! Be careful! You wouldn't even think that a person would have to think about that one too much to understand how *he* thinks. If you know their history, if you know what they've gone through, if you know some of their phobias in life, their distrust of things in life... that different peoples have different backgrounds and characteristics.

Just like Germany; Germans have different backgrounds and characteristics. My wife can pick them out readily. She talks to someone and she says, "You're of a German background aren't you?" They say, "Yeah, how'd you know that?" Well, she's been living with one for 35 years... so.... she knows how different things function in the thinking. And people *do* think differently. We operate in different ways. But even in different cultures people think differently because of how they grew up, because of whatever some of their beliefs in society are in that particular nation. That makes us who we are. It has a lot to do with our thinking.

So again, what an awesome thing that God is freeing us from all those things and bringing us into a unity and a oneness with Him into a great Family worldwide. Finally there's going to be a Family. Something God has always wanted! Think about the time of Noah; they were reduced to a really small family and they didn't get along. That blows my mind sometimes when I think about it! After the flood they didn't get along! And the sons, even after they saw what they saw, didn't worship God. You'd think they would have been scared to death not to worship God. You'd think, surely, just physical fear would have motivated them to not be dumb again, to not sin again. It didn't work!

II Chronicles – We're going to go into a story here when king Hezekiah is seeking to put things back on track by cleansing the temple; so we're kind of breaking into a story here. Other kings before allowed events to take place where things were torn and broken down, the temple was torn down and things taken into other countries and so forth.

11 Chronicles 29:1 - Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty five years old, can't imagine... some of these kings; of course they had different ones around them and some of the priests and different ones who worked with them and so forth – but this is the way life was from one generation to another, things would happen to a certain king, he'd die at a certain time and then one of the children would be brought up to reign. ...**and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Eternal, according to all that David his father**, in other words, his forefather going way back, **had done**. Because now we're almost at the end. We're almost at the very end of the kingdom of Judah here.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Eternal, and repaired them. Now, he didn't do it himself, he had others go in there and do this work, he gave the charge. **And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, you Levites, now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Eternal God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Eternal our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Eternal, and turned their backs.** So they polluted the temple, they let it go into disarray and they got rid of so many of the things that were used in the worship of the temple and so forth, and there were different times even that different things were brought in that were even false and so forth.

Verse 7 - They have also shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. There was no worship of God any longer; all those things had been put aside, the Levitical system had been put aside by the previous king. Hezekiah was wanting to set things right again, to have Judah draw closer to God once again. **Therefore the wrath of the Eternal was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them into trouble, to astonishment, and hissing, as you see with your eyes.** In other words, how other

nations looked upon them and their disarray and what they'd come to. Because of disobedience God let other nations go in and plunder from time to time.

Verse 9 – So look at how our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. You know what we have today to look upon? Especially those who've been around for some time? We don't have to look very far back to see what sin does. We look back to the time of the apostasy and what led up to the apostasy and those things are cemented in our minds, if you will, and the more cemented they are the better off you are to understand what led to those things, to understand, like they say, what our forefathers did; that there are things you just don't do in life that aren't right. I think of a lot of my training as a minister – it has been to see things that are done wrong, to come to a conviction, "That isn't right because it hurts people! That's not the way of God! You can't treat people like that! You can't work with people like that!" ... even with doctrine and so forth.

Verse 10 - Now it is in my heart...see, again, always goes back to your heart, to what you feel, to what you're motivated by, to that which is genuine and true in a relationship and a right spirit before God. **Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Eternal God of Israel that this fierce wrath may turn away from us.** *The wrath* that comes for disobedience! Because when God's working with you, you're going to have one of two things in your life – blessings or cursings. And for a physical nation, it wasn't a matter that they would start disobeying God and maybe nothing would happen to them for a time or whatever, or they'd kind of get by with it like other nations might at times when they've done things in their life and for how they govern and what they do – because God wasn't working with them. But *He was with Judah!* And they didn't get by with it; and it is that way with us in God's Church. If we disobey God *we don't get by with it!* *God sees to it because we've been called to be worked with* and He wants us to be delivered, He wants us to come through it. And so we learn that.

So he says; **Now it's in my heart to make a covenant with the Eternal God of Israel that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons do not be negligent now: for the Eternal has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister unto Him, and burn incense.** So he got the Levites, the priests together and he said, "God chose you! He chose you a long time ago. He set you apart to do a job – *now do it!*" That's what he was telling them. "This is a job that needs to be done to set things right so the nation can be blessed again...so *sanctify yourselves and get out there and do it!*" So he gave them a good pep talk as king; carried a lot of weight with it.

Dropping down to **verse 15 - And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, they wanted to do this, they were motivated to do it; by the words of the Eternal, to cleanse the house of the Eternal. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Eternal to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Eternal into the court of the house of the Eternal. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, do you know when that was? First day of the first month? Abib, Nisan, the first month? What happens in the first month of God's calendar? 14th day...Passover; 15th day – 1st Day of Unleavened Bread, a High Day. So this is the period they're in, first month, first day; **and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the Eternal: so they sanctified the house of the Eternal in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.** So it took them until the sixteenth day to complete everything that they had set their hand to cleanse.**

Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Eternal, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the showbread table, with all the vessels
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thereof. And so they were thrust into the beginning of the Day's of Unleavened Bread when they were finally totally completed here; and that had an affect upon them as well.

Let's read this part of the story here. **Verse 19 - Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the Eternal. Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Eternal. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, seven lambs, seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom,** that's where it started; for a sin offering. Finally! In the temple, to offer up something before God, to acknowledge *sin*. Isn't that what we have to do when we sin before God? That's where it starts. You have to go before God and repent; acknowledge the sin. And this is what they were doing in a physical plane by a system that had been given to Judah, had been given to the nation, to Israel at one time there. And so this is the process they're following through and doing it in the right order – to offer up a sin offering before God.

...and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the Eternal. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. I'm looking forward to the time in the Millennium when we can begin to focus on other things like this, like the sacrificial system. There's so much to learn in what they went through and *why* they did the things they did – because it all pictures something. The temple itself and the way it was divided and all the things that went on. Everything pictured something into the future on a spiritual plane and they're very inspiring and very moving. But we haven't been able, as a whole, to focus on those kinds of things because of where we are in time. We're focusing very much upon what has to be done now and what God wants our focus to be right now. And so I'm looking forward to a time when some of these things can be gone into in a deeper way.

Verse 23 - And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them: And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. That means the nation in the north as well. It's kind of like the heart was right with the desire to see all Israel blessed, to see an end of suffering of different things that have taken place through time, but there's more to the story here that's exciting and inspiring to see what took place and we'll come back to it later, not today. But again here, he was asking that there should be certain things that take place here in a unique way because the nation had been split up long before. There was a nation in the south, Judah, and there was a nation in the north, Israel, and captivities happened at different times and that's another story in itself.

Verse 25 - And he set the Levites in the house of the Eternal with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, according to the commandment of David, and Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Eternal by His prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

Verse 27 - And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offerings upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Eternal began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David, king of Israel. See, there was this which was ordained before the temple was ever built, of a system, of an establishment of a process, of the way things were to be done in the temple, with the temple in the worship and so forth – even the songs and the things that were done here. So

they were going back and doing it the way David had established it in the very beginning. This is what they were striving to make right.

And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, they had different courses and how the Levites were structured to serve in the temple year round. They were striving to institute these things. And so it says, **all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.** And so, you know, when you haven't done anything for a long time and you have a history of a relationship with God and someone comes along and takes that away from you; and all of a sudden someone comes along and says, "No, we need to re-establish this. We're cursed! We haven't been blessed because of what our forefathers have done and we need to cleanse the temple, you need to cleanse yourselves, and we need to have Judah blessed again and have it being right with God." And so when people began to throw themselves into this there was a spirit of excitement, of being able to do this.

When you have something stripped away from you and all of a sudden you recognize what it is and you want it back... we can't help but think what we've gone through, when the Sabbath and the Holy Days and everything else we ever believed... they tried to strip everything away in one fell swoop. And that made a huge change in so many of us and what we were going through and what we felt. And so when you're able to hold onto something and keep something and strengthen something it means more to you and there's a greater gratitude and response toward God. But it all goes back to what you feel and why you feel it.

Verse 29 - And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. They were very moved by what was taking place. **Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Eternal with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer.** So I read part of this... **And they sang praises with gladness,** they were excited by what they were able to do again, **and they bowed their heads and worshipped.** **And Hezekiah answered and said, Now you have consecrated yourselves unto the Eternal, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings,** it's amazing how this was all established. You can't offer yourself as a sacrifice before God, you can't give thanks before God until you've dealt first with something else – and that's the sin and the relationship with God. So we repent, we seek to be forgiven of God – and then to know that we've been forgiven, to grasp what that means for us, we can then go before God and to be able to offer up our lives once again. Because we understand that God will not use us, He will not work in us; we can't offer our lives as a sacrifice to Him in whatever we sacrifice in our life to serve Him unless things are right with Him, unless He dwells in us.

So again, the spiritual analogies of things we go through when we read something like this are profound.

So it says then, **to bring sacrifices and thank offerings,** has to do with the same word about 'giving thanks' and 'praising God'. That's that type of offering. ...**into the house of the Eternal. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings and were of a free heart,** burnt offerings, a willing heart, whatever that heart was. They brought in additional things to offer up before God. **And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was seventy bullocks, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the Eternal.**

Verse 33 - And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen, three thousand sheep. Amazing! That's a lot! That's a lot of preparation, that's a lot of work; the Levites were very busy to have that many

animals. There are some stories of things of far more than this even, but to have that many to take care of; this is during the Holy Day season as well. Incredible what was taking place here!

Verse 34 - But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: and this is a time of the Feast, this is a time where they're going to be able to participate as well in a lot of these offerings. It was a time of rejoicing before God, a time of feasting before God, and a lot of the Feast...this is what it had to do with – offering up certain sacrifices to God that were fully dedicated to God. There were other things that they were able to participate in, that they were able to be a part of and to eat of; and it was a time of feasting for them, a time of rejoicing. And so it says, **therefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.** Another story...

Verse 35 - And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, amazing how many types of offerings are here; peace offerings? A desire to be at peace, the things that go along with that, a mind and an attitude toward God, to live peace, to want peace with God, to want peace with one another; **and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the Eternal was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly/quickly.**

A very inspiring story. A lot of stories like this in the Old Testament, but especially when you understand some of their history and what they went through and their separation from God. And on a spiritual plane we've gone through things like that in our lives. Thankfully the separation isn't that long; for some it's going to be a long time before they're able to come back into a relationship with God, before they're awakened spiritually again. But again, very moving when you read these stories and you understand how it applies to the Church and to our lives present day.

When Judah strayed from God and sinned as a nation; they obviously went through much when those things happened and then when they desired to get back on track again, they worked to repent and turn back to God. It takes work! And this is a good example of that. It takes a lot of work! There's a lot of cleaning up! You know, when you're life is messed up, depending on how long the length of time is, if you've done things that are wrong, there are just those things that take time to cleanse, to get rid of in your life and for us it's a lifelong job, isn't it? It really is. It's a lifelong battle; but especially in the beginning when you're coming out of the world – even a greater amount of work you have to put into it, the battles that have to be there.

I remember when first called, I mention this at times, I knew that when I first came into the Church I couldn't stay in the same college town I was in because of the friends I had and I knew I had to get away from that group of people or it'd be too easy to go back into sin again. And so I had to go to another area for a time, had to go away for about six months, and then I came back and I was different. I was a different person by that time. And sometimes we have to do that, we have to go through things in our life to get away from whatever it is that's pulling us down, that's pulling us away from God. And sometimes that even happens in the Church in time. There are some environments that sometimes can take place that *you've got to get out of the environment to get right with God*. If you're too weak, if you're in a situation where you're so torn down by it and all you can do is just fight that battle and you can't get past it, there's times when you've got to flee. That's why God says, flee idolatry. If there's something you're going to lift up or be tempted to lift up instead of God's way of life – *get away from it!* What is the cost? God's way or our same old way. You can live in your same old environment and just

get drug down and live in the world without God if that's what you choose to do; but if you choose God, you've got to fight for it. That's what we talked about on Trumpets here. You've got to fight for this way of life if you want it. You've got to fight with it, with all your being, and so much of the battle is right here in the mind – to put God *first* in life! To be set to do that no matter what anybody else chooses to do in life – you put God first.

Let's go on to another story here in Hebrews. In the age of the Church, as we go through these stories we're reminded of things we go through and the way the Church is established and the importance of repenting of sin and being sanctified, and the same process here that we do on a spiritual plane they went through on a physical plane, but they were never able to get rid of sin; as far as the conscience was concerned, as far as the mind was concerned. And that's why it'd be good to go back here to Hebrews and look at that.

They were a physical nation; but God wasn't working with them for salvation. That's an amazing thing to understand. Judah was never being worked with for spiritual salvation. They weren't offered the holy spirit. A few were, like King David, different ones through time that God worked... those whom God worked with that on an individual basis; but not the nation. They had the laws, they had the ways of God in the sense of what was true; but *they didn't have God's holy spirit dwelling in them*. They weren't even offered that! It was never offered to them, to have the holy spirit, it wasn't God's purpose. If He'd been working with hundreds of thousands there'd be a whole lot more than 144,000 coming with Jesus Christ when He returns. Instead, over 6,000 years that's all the number that God worked with. And so many of those in the first 4,000 years, up to the time of Christ, is very few because God worked with them individually, specifically. Abraham, Isaac, Sarah – you go through and you read about different ones with whom God worked. It wasn't until the founding of the Church that God began to work with hundreds and then thousands of people – through the Church, as far as salvation, as far as the plan, as far as the firstfruits is concerned.

This'll be good for people who are new to go through because so often in the world there's that attitude of mind, "Well, the law has been done away with." And they try to go to scriptures like this and talk about how the law's done away with; or they look at the law in a bad way; and they don't understand what they're talking about. Protestant world...they don't get it, they don't have the slightest inkling of what they're reading about when they read things like this. They just have an agenda because of their beliefs and it's so messed up.

Hebrews 10:1 - For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and not the very image of the things*, it's talking about the sacrificial law. It's not talking about the 10 Commandments; it's not even in the context. Hebrews, over and over again, is about the Levitical system and the priesthood and Melchizedek and a new priesthood through Jesus Christ, and it's about the sacrificial system and it's about the old temple and the new temple; and all the other things involved in there. It wasn't about a matter of whether or not you keep the 10 Commandments or not as a whole – that's a given throughout the New Testament. The law of God is a given.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and not the very image of the things*, can never... in times past we used to do this more when we had the time and some of the correspondence courses and some of the Bible studies we were able to have in Churches on top of sermons that were able to be given from Sabbath to Sabbath; you're able to delve into and understand things about a Levitical system that are inspiring. It's exciting when you begin to realize everything had a purpose in it. Everything the

Levites did picture something on a spiritual plane. And that's inspiring when you're able to put it all together.

So that's why it says it, **has a shadow of good things to come**, just like the Holy Days. They picture things through time like we talk about – Passover, Jesus Christ and how it was kept in the beginning; a lamb and later it grew in meaning and purpose, and then Unleavened Bread and what it means to come out of spiritual Egypt... Pentecost – the giving of the law and then the giving of the holy spirit. And so the Holy Days foreshadow – it's a part of God's plan, it reveals God's plan. And so does the sacrificial system and the priesthood and how it worked. And that's what it's saying here. **...but not the very image of the thing**; it wasn't the very thing itself, it was just... foreshadowed something.

...can never with those sacrifices which they offered continually year by year, because this is what they had to do. Every High Day, every Feast day, every Atonement, there were certain things that had to be offered up before God in a certain way. **...that they offered up continually year by year, perfect**, or otherwise means 'to purify', this is about purification; **those who offered them**. They were never purified before God. **For then would they not have ceased to be offered?** Wouldn't they have ceased to be offered then if they had been able to receive that through the sacrifices? **...because that the worshippers once purged**, meaning 'to be cleansed or purified', **should have had any more conscience of sin. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made for sins every year**. They're reminded of sins constantly, year by year. Sin's always there. Now we're reminded of sin as well, but we can be forgiven of it, they couldn't.

Verse 4 - For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats can take away sins. Therefore when He came into the world, He said, now speaking of Christ, **Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a Body have You prepared Me**: I have read through this so many times. I think of the scriptures we're going to go through at the Feast... You know, I've read through some so many times and when you get to a certain place spiritually in life that God bring us to as far as what He's teaching us and He gives us more...and you're amazed... "Why didn't I see that before?" But you know why you didn't see it before. Until it's God's time you can't see it. There are things in the scriptures here that you continue to read through time, that we're going to read in the Millennium... God's going to reveal things in here toward the end of the Millennium that are just as clear as can be, but you can't see them right now. And one day you're going to be able to see them because it's spiritual. Same thing about the hundred years. There's a lot in here about the hundred years that we don't even know about yet; it's all here, but we can't see it yet because we're not there. It's not God's purpose to reveal it yet, to make it clear to us. And when you do see it and you're able to put it together on top of everything else we have, it becomes *so inspiring!* *...So exciting!*

That's why this Feast to me is so inspiring and so exciting above and beyond some others; because God is giving us that much more to build upon what we have so we can have a clearer picture. Things that we've read before but now with more understanding. I was talking to Terry Wrozek last night and he was talking about a particular scripture I will be mentioning at the Feast this year; he was reading through this one verse and he said, "you know..." and he repeated it because (I don't think I talked to him about that portion of it...) but you know there are certain things that as we listen, as we grow – there's certain things that God makes clear to us that this is where we're going. And so he read through a particular verse and he said, "You know, it just jumped out! It's just so clear!" And I'll tell you what he was referring to at the Feast. I thought this is incredibly inspiring because here God leads us to be ready for what's being given to us, and then when it's there it seems so obvious but we didn't see it before.

On the contrary, we actually interpreted it in a different way in the Church, we always have in times past in Worldwide and so forth in times past... because that's all God let us see.

There are certain things that just jump out and smack you sometimes in the face. It's like we couldn't see it before but all of a sudden it's God's time and He shows you more. And that's the way it is with this one here... **but a Body have You prepared Me.** And if we understand Passover and we understand things it talks about the Body and so forth, and especially when you go through and read some of the things in Corinthians when it goes through Corinthians 11 and through that area there and chapter 10 and all the things that lead up through the Passover there when Paul instituted the Passover, that mean a whole lot more to us when we grasp it. I'll just read it to you so you'll understand what I'm talking about... or you'll know what I'm referring back to.

But in Corinthians, we read this every year as a whole, parts of it anyway, especially on Passover night because chapter 10 leads up to the Passover. It starts talking about various things here that lead into the subject of Passover. And then the same thing with chapter 11; it continues on, and there are certain things here that have to do with what Paul's getting ready to talk about. And then of course when he begins to say then in **I Corinthians 11:23 - For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks He broke it and said take eat.** What he's showing in this is what was given to him from the Lord, from Christ, and this is the way we're going to continue with Passover. This is what has been given to the Church to do of how Passover is now to be observed: not with the cutting of the throat of the lamb and the roasting and eating of it, like they still do in Judaism; but to understand that Jesus Christ fulfilled those things and what it means then to partake of the bread and the wine, the unleavened bread, and to wash one another's feet. And this is basically what Paul is showing them, that this is what we're going to do because this is what Christ did, this is how He showed us when He instituted the Passover; that we should observe it as well.

And then it goes on to say a little bit later; **verse 29 - For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner,** because it's the manner in which it's done, not unworthy because we're all unworthy; it has to do with the manner, in an unworthy manner; **eats and drinks judgement,** which is what the word is about, **to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.** Now the first thought that comes into our mind is Passover; Jesus Christ died, it's about His physical body. That's a part of it, obviously, the bread and the wine; but it's also about *His Body*, of what came into existence because of what He did, **the Body of Christ, the Church of God.** And sometimes then it's talking about a relationship as well, within the Church, of how we should be with one another and that our minds should be right. We are Family; and so many of these things here that have to do with judging ourselves and examining ourselves – that we're *right* with the Body – because this is where we're tried and tested...within the Body, as to whether we're living God's way of life.

That's why I've gone through and given sermons about peace, and that's why I also mention that even in the midst of all that I still hear of, nearly every day, places where there is not peace within the Church. And I slap myself up against the head! And I understand it, and I don't, if you understand what I'm saying. We are human, we have human nature and we always have that battle, but you'd think at certain times we'd focus on that more and *flee more* wrong attitudes and wrong relationships and making comments that you don't get along with somebody or there's some friction, or something that's wrong and you think... "Well, then go fix it! Go see what it is! Go make things right! **HAVE PEACE IN THE CHURCH OF God,** with one another! *You can't have wrong thoughts about each other, you can't...*" Anyway... *Passover!* The New Testament Passover can use a phrase; and I don't like the word here

because of how the Protestant world has used it; but 'communion'. It's the word for fellowship. It's about *fellowship* with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, and with one another.

So as you read the context of chapter 10-11, it's about fellowship, and about the Body of Christ. It goes beyond the physical part of His dying. That's the beginning. It leads to a Body, **a Body You have prepared Me**. Amazing! That's what God did, because *that's* when the Church began; 31 AD. That's when it all began; after Jesus Christ died, became our Passover, then enabled the means, a way by, that God was going to work with a Body now, an organized Body, a spiritual Body, the Church of God, the Kingdom of God (as Mr. Armstrong said) in embryo, and now through the holy spirit could work with *many* at the same time and make a unique fellowship of many and work in the lives of many at the same time in and through Christ – as God the Father works through the Church, in the Church.

And so this is a part of what it's talking about here back in **Hebrews 10:5** where it says – **Therefore when He came into the world He said, sacrifice and offering You would not...** It's not about physical offerings and sacrifices. That foreshadows something later on to learn from; but that isn't what God wanted. He doesn't want people to go through the routine and just have a physical kind of relationship with Him as a nation, as a people. It was intended to be far greater than that; His plan is the Church, to save us in and through the Church, through Jesus Christ as our Passover. And so it says, **but a Body have You prepared Me**.

Let's back up to chapter 9 and then we'll come back to these verses again and continue on because there's a flow and we need to get some of the context here. Backing up to Hebrews 9 so we have a better focus, a better vision of what God is giving us here and telling us. **Hebrews 9:7 - But into the second went the high priest alone once a year**, it's talking about the temple, and I've mentioned this so often; but it's awesomely inspiring. When you look at the temple, it was divided into two main sections, the first 2/3 was called the Holiest, the Holy Place, but the second place was called the Holiest of Holies; it was 1/3 and it had a curtain there before you went in where the ark was. The High Priest could only go in that back section once a year during the Day of Atonement, which we're coming up to next Sabbath. Every year on the Day of Atonement is when the High Priest had duties in that particular area of the sanctuary of the temple. All the rest of the time the priests went in daily ministering in the first 2/3 of the temple, but they *could never* go back in the other section, except once a year by the High Priest only.

So it's talking about this second area that was called the Holiest of Holies. **But into the second went the high priest alone once every year; not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: in this the holy spirit was signifying**, this is beautiful. I love these verses. It says, **in this**, because the high priest went in alone once a year. It says, **in this the holy spirit was signifying that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing**: It's a beautiful picture. It's saying the holy spirit was showing through this form of worship, through this part of the Levitical system and the high priest that this was symbolic of something to happen later on; but this wasn't the fulfillment of it. This was just picturing something; that the way into the Holiest of all hadn't been made manifest. Later on it was. God's presence; that's what it's talking about – *the way into God's presence* had not yet been made manifest, wasn't yet given in the world except to a very few, again, on an individual basis; but not in an organized fashion like the Church, especially not in the Old Testament there through the priesthood. It couldn't be done that way.

Verse 9 – Which was a figure for the time then present; in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did this service perfect. In other words, it didn't purify or cleanse, it didn't take away sin. **...as pertaining to the conscience.** The mind. **Which did only in (meats and drinks**
Thankfulness – Pt. 2

and different washings) in carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. It's talking about the sacrificial law and the sacrificial system.

Verse 11 - But Christ has become a High Priest of good things to come, so what the high priest pictured once a year on the Day of Atonement is something that Jesus Christ does now. He fulfilled what was pictured back then.

But Christ has become a High Priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, starting with Himself. But what is that more perfect Tabernacle? It's what God is building, it's the Temple, it's the spiritual Temple not the old Temple. That's why it says back up there, 'therefore', when He came into the world He said, 'Therefore sacrifice and offering you would not, but You have prepared a Body that You have prepared for Me.' This is a part of what it's talking about, it's about the Body of Christ, it's about the Temple of God, it's about what God's going... what Jesus Christ is dwelling in and what God the Father dwells in. And so again here **...But Christ has become a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands**, in other words, not made, built, fashioned by human hands. It's done by God. **...that is to say, not of this building**; not of that tabernacle, not of the first tabernacle, in other words, but a new one – beginning in the life and the Body of Jesus Christ in the Body of Christ, the Tabernacle of God.

Verse 12 - Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: in other words, just a physical relationship on a physical plane, **How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge**, this is what purges, cleanses, purifies, **your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** And so there is that which God has revealed to the Church that we're able to have in and through Jesus Christ, of a *change* that takes place in our minds, of a power of God's holy spirit working within us that does give us a blessing of being able to be forgiven of sin so we can have a relationship with God, so that we can grow and become a part of this structure, this Temple, the Body of Christ.

So let's go back here to **Hebrews 10** and read **verse 5** again - **Therefore when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a Body have You prepared Me:** in other words, prepared for Me. **In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.** It wasn't about those things, because it was forward looking to another time; that wasn't it then.

Then I said, See, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) in the Psalms, to do Your will, O God. Beautiful verses here when you understand what's being said; **Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings for sin You would not, neither had pleasure in them; which are offered by the law; Then He said, See, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first**, what? The sacrificial system; it's taken away, the sacrificial law, there's no purpose of it any longer; **that He may establish the second.** And what does He say the second is? *The doing of God's will*; the *ability*. That's what it's all about. That's what Jesus Christ came and did. He did the will of His Father and by living that He was our Passover, He made possible then that Body that was prepared, the Church of God, the Body of Christ that we're able to be a part of, that we're able to become a part of something that God is building in a greater way, a Tabernacle, if you will, that leads into what that's all about; of doing of God's will that leads into the building of the second Temple, if you will, a second Tabernacle, to establish it. And that's what it goes on to say here even. **Then He said, See, I come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the**

first that He may establish the second. In other words by doing God's will through a new Tabernacle, through a new Temple. That's what enables us to do that; we become a part of it through doing that.

Verse 10 - By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. So it's a part of God's will, of how we can be able to repent and be forgiven of sin and become a part of this Body. **And every priest stands daily ministering an offering, oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever,** in other words, His body, His flesh, spilled His blood to the earth, **sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting,** in other words, looking toward, or waiting until – that's what He's been doing, He's been working but looking toward that time, **until His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected, purified and cleansed forever them who are sanctified.** So once we're set apart by God and we start this process we're able to enter into a process of sanctification, of being made right with God, of becoming a part of the Temple that God is concerned with, with the kinds of sacrifices that God is well pleased with, those that come from us, not animals, not goats and so forth. And we're able to be forgiven through the one Passover.

Going on, **verse 15 - Wherefore the holy spirit is also witness of us: for after that He said before, This is the covenant;** so again here, when it said the way into the Holiest of Holies had not yet been made manifest...what an awesome thing to understand we can go before God, the Holiest of Holies...because that's what it pictured – through Christ, through the forgiveness of sin, by being able to have God's spirit dwell in us, by having access to God's holy spirit we can have access at *any time* to God the Father. We have that access. How blessed are we? Judah never had it, Israel never had it, the high priest could only go in once a year. It said, 'the holy spirit signifying that the way into the throne room of God, to God's presence, to God Almighty, wasn't yet made manifest.' It's manifest now. We're living it; we're blessed to be a part of it within the Church of God.

Sometimes we go through these things, and if we're not careful we can begin to take them for granted and not realize how blessed we are... and the thankfulness and the gratitude that should *pour* out of us toward God for the opportunity we have of being a part of something so incredible, of God working in our life, that God should work in our life.

Verse 16 - This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Eternal, I will put My laws into their hearts, a change of heart, a change of mind, a change of life that is unique to God's people, God's law, His way of life, the way of peace, a right heart. That's what we can grow in and fight against what we are, fight against the carnal nature within us and yield ourselves to God's. ...and in their minds will I write them;** so it's a lifelong process, if you will, of God's laws, God's way, God's mind being written in our minds. And I believe after the Feast this year you're going to appreciate that even more so, it becomes more profound the more you can put the story together.**

Verse 17 - And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Verse 19 – having therefore, brethren, boldness, and that word means 'a liberty'; you have a *freedom*, and we should...and this word adds to it as well, but the literal word has to do with a 'liberty' we have, a 'freedom' we have to go before the Holiest of Holies, to go before God's throne. But it also should carry with it a boldness, a *confidence*. We should be bold and confident to understand the price that's been paid, the blessing we have of being able to go before God's presence and have a relationship with the Great God of the universe. How blessed are we? Incredible!

Therefore brethren, having liberty/boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and a living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil. That veil that was ripped from top to bottom when He was put to death, **that is to say, His flesh;** see, He fulfilled it by what He gave...**and having a High Priest over the House of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience:** what a blessing that our minds can change, that we can be purified and cleansed of sin every time we ask God for forgiveness, every time we *acknowledge* our sin, when we accept our own personal responsibility. That is such an awesome thing!

We receive this at different levels and a different appreciation within the Body, to grasp what this is saying, because every time you repent you're growing in character. It's when you cease fighting the fight, when you give up fighting that fight and you don't fight against the sin any longer that it becomes a problem. And I've seen so many who've gone by the wayside because they *just quite fighting the fight*, they became *weary* of it and went off track in some other direction and wouldn't repent of the sin that led them off track. You keep repenting and you actually grow in character because you're acknowledging. There's something that takes place in the mind, of an agreement with God; you're becoming more convicted that God is right and you're wrong, that God's one true way is the only true way of life to live and you're acknowledging that everything that's led by *your* carnal nature, by that selfishness, is wrong. And every time you do that you're growing closer to God, every time you repent. How incredible is it to understand that? And yet how many people struggle with not repenting before God, they just won't do it, they won't fight that fight. Because there's a fight involved as well, of your involvement in it.

So again, **and having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart,** a true heart, that's what God wants to see, that which is genuine, honest, true; not something false, or put on. He wants that which is genuine and honest to Him...**in full assurance of faith.** When you have that kind of a mind, when you think that way, you don't look down upon other people, you don't judge other people; you realize we're in this Family together! We will have to fight the same kinds of battles; self – pride – 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life.' And the more you see that, the less you will judge anyone else, the less you will condemn others, you'll be more at peace and desire to have greater peace with one another. **Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and our bodies washed with pure water.** They had a system of cleansing themselves before service before God and all it did was remove some physical dirt. We are able to remove the real dirt that's deep inside of us, to be cleansed.

So how thankful are we for what God has given to us? The blessing of getting rid of the dirt; not on the outside, but on the inside; and we have a lot of dirt - and sometimes we like to shovel it around on others. We do! That's the way we are. Sometimes we like to hear dirt about other people. It's like our ears are, "Joy, joy..." What a perversion of the human mind that when something is being said about someone else, their sins, or their problems, like... we're lifted up a little bit like, "See, I'm not so bad after all because they're *really bad*." No, we actually make ourselves bad every time we ever do something like that in life. How blessed are we to see what we see, what we've been given?

Let's turn over to Ezra 3. During the time frames of Ezra and Nehemiah, these were periods where they'd been taken into captivity and their desire was going back at different phases and at different times to help rebuild some of the walls around Jerusalem, around the temple area and to build up the temple. That's what the desire in their heart was; to go back and rebuild Jerusalem. And so they went back in different waves at different times to do some of that work. And here's a part of that story in

Ezra 3:1 - And when the seventh month was come, you know what the seventh month is? We're in it. We entered it Thursday – Trumpets, first day of the seventh month.

And when the seventh month had come and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. They had that desire, be at one – one. Beautiful picture. **Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak, stood up and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren,** someday we'll probably be using more of those names, or at least we'll know them better and we'll be able to pronounce them correctly, "you're mispronouncing that, this is how you say..." anyway... **and his brethren built the altar of God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries:** there were certain things they went through here, always in jeopardy because of others around them that didn't want things to be done and some of the raids and things that took place that they had to live through. And so they were motivated in how they did things in a specific way.

And it says, **and they offered burnt offerings thereupon unto the Eternal, even burnt offerings morning and evening. They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;** So again, on High Days, on Holy Days there was a specific regiment, there was a specific way things were to be done as far as offerings, the sacrifices and the types of sacrifices in a very specific manner, and they had to follow that. And they did, otherwise it wouldn't mean anything. Same as us. There's a way that God says to come out of sin, there's a way of life to be lived, there's the process of repentance and a process of mind, our relationships with others; and if we don't do it that way then we get cut off from God's spirit. And so our desire should be the same, to follow meticulously the way God says to live His way of life, to do things His way in service to Him. That's what service to Him is, it's *yielding* to the process and doing it the way God says to do it. Not justifying our way.

Verse 5 - And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and all the set Feasts of the Eternal that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Eternal. From the first day of the seventh month, this is when it all started, the Feast season, just like we're excited about the Feast season. We've made our plans, we're looking forward to it, we're able to observe one day Thursday, and next Sabbath we're going to observe another day. It's a little bit different from others because we don't get to eat or drink; and so we learn through that process as well, of humbling ourselves before God. So we don't eat anything, we don't drink anything..

...and I might mention here. If there are some of you that have really strong health issues, we've always taught in the Church of God if you're in a certain regiment of diet, maybe medication, or whatever it might be, you're not to jeopardize your health by not eating. Okay? It's like nursing mothers; we've always taught that if you're a nursing mother you don't stop eating, because you don't want to jeopardize the health of your child by doing something foolish like that...that God doesn't intend it to be used in that way. So those that are able, those that are healthy that can do the entire day – you're to do the entire day, obviously. There's a spirit of it that God has given to us. So I wanted to say that before we go into next week because there are times we've had to talk to people not to do foolish things. If you're able to do a part of a day, then so be it, as far as your age and health is concerned. Most of us, the vast majority of us are able to fast the entire day – 24 hours, or whatever that time is from sundown to sundown – that's what it should be if we can, a full day, 24 hours.

Verse 6 – From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings unto the Eternal. But the foundation of the temple of the Eternal was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them in Zidon, and to them in Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia. They had a certain amount of funds to be used and so they were trying to build, that's where their heart was.

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Eternal. It's always a desire to have this relationship with God, a desire to set things right, a desire to be able to worship Him in the form and the manner that He'd given to them. And they did this is very physical plane. Even in difficult times like this their heart and their desire was to do what they could do with what understanding they had. And how much more for us? God's given us His holy spirit to see what we see; because they couldn't see much. We see so much – we truly do! And again, it goes back to our heart, our attitude toward God, our thankfulness, our gratitude for what we have. And that determines in large part how we're going to grow then.

Then it says; **Then Jeshua stood with his sons and the brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons of their brethren the Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Eternal, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Eternal,** this rejoicing, this thankfulness to God. You have to put yourself back here in their history in part to appreciate some of the things that are being said here. When everything was stripped away, when all the ruins were there... we can relate to that with all the ruins of what's taken place in our time, spiritually, to the Church of God. And that was far worse, far more devastating than something that happened physical back here – truly was. And so our response to God for what He's given us, the blessing of being able to have a Church again, the blessing of being able to receive truth, the blessing of continuing to grow and not be stagnant. My heart goes out to those who are stagnant. I hope yours do too, because they can't help it until they're awakened. We're not better. We're not better than any of them. On the contrary, so often it's because of what God is working with that He's going to set an example. That's why we used to sing, 'not many mighty, not many wise men now are called,' in Corinthians² where it goes through and Paul talks about that – it's true. And God, it says, chooses us to confound the wise, to those who are lifted up in their stature about themselves. And so God gives us the opportunity to become something different. We don't stay that way, we are changed, we grow as we yield ourselves to God.

So again here, they were praising the Eternal, **after the ordinance of David, king of Israel.** So it was established by David; they wanted to do it the way it was given to David and that's where their heart was.

And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Eternal; I really hope that when we sing songs this year that you truly think about the words you're singing, *focus* on that. Don't just make it a matter of trying to sing what's there; sing it with what's stated there, think about the words, think about what it means to your life; because that's where the praise comes from, it comes

² | Corinthians 1:26-27

from inside, not from something we just sing, not just from the words, but with the spirit and the *heart* that's associated with it. And I know we will do that. **And they sang together...** that's going to be awesomely well pleasing to God, it already is. He designed it. He led us to it. He wants us to share in it. He wants to share with us more this year, He truly does. It's a very special Feast of Tabernacles.

And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Eternal because He was good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Eternal, because the foundation of the house of the Eternal was laid. That was a physical one, and what do we have? Incredible! Do we grasp what we have to be excited about? ...what we have that God has given to us to be a part of?

But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of the house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: there was that mixed emotion. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping for the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. It was moving for them. There was that mixed emotion because of what they knew was there before and what was there now that wasn't the same as before and yet they had something back and so a very emotional thing to go through as it has been with many of us in what we've gone through since 1994.

With that: Go to the Feast with the spirit of giving thanks to God throughout the Feast. Make that your focus and you're going to receive *more from the Feast*, obviously, from God because of that.

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