

From Curses to Blessings – Pt. 1

Ron Weiland

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Last Sabbath we completed the first series concerning the relationship of men and women in a series entitled 'Reviewing the Curse'. Today we're going to begin a new sub-series in the same subject matter. This is entitled *From Curses to Blessings*, this being *Part 1*.

We need to be reminded that God is opening a door to us, a door to deeper understanding which begins with each of us individually and although we are covering scriptures together and to most they may seem simple to understand, the truth is the knowledge seems easy enough but the understanding is not fully there; and that's what God is blessing us to receive – more understanding, not just knowledge. And so again, He's opening a door for us to be able to glean and understand more.

The Church has understood much, but not as much as what God is giving us now because of where we are in time. We have much to learn and build upon concerning a curse that has hurt families for the past 6,000 years; and even within the Church this has not been very deeply understood; partially, but not to the depth that God is giving to us now in a greater way. And even though the tools have been in front of us for that, the time to fully begin dealing with this had not yet arrived.

Last Sabbath I quoted from Mr. Armstrong in a statement that he'd made and I want to read that again. He stated:

The curse of sin will be removed after Jesus Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom on this earth.

Now, this is true as far as the statement is concerned, but the understanding was not yet fully there, it had not yet been fully given by God of what this entailed, of what was involved in all of this. When Jesus Christ establishes His Kingdom on earth, the curse that has existed from the time of Adam and Eve *will begin in earnest to be removed*; but as long as there are human beings it will always partially be there – if we understand.

As long as there's human nature it will always partially be there. The part we need to really grasp and understand is that God is just giving us more so that it can be removed in a far greater way than it ever has been. And so the reality is as long as there is human nature it will not be completely 100% removed until we have entered, until everyone has entered, the Kingdom of God. So, as Mr. Armstrong stated; again...

The curse of sin will be removed after Jesus Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom on this earth.

And it begins to be removed in a far greater way *immediately*; and actually it's starting even now within the Church as we begin to focus on these things. After Jesus Christ returns this is going to be focused on in a far greater way. Far greater power is going to be given in the world as the basic building blocks of family – because that's what it's about. To have a world under one government, to have a world being a part of *one* Church – this is where it begins. It begins in the family; education, training and understanding – society is based upon the family and that which is in the family that is strengthened and made more powerful within the family is what will become society as everyone begins to live by, more

fully, what God has given us to live by as far as His way of life, as far as truth is concerned, as far as right balance and understanding in relationship between men and women and *especially* as that enters into the family between husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. It is the building block of this world and so that's why we are where we are in time, that's why God is giving us more now although much of this knowledge has been around, we have understood much of this as far as the Church is concerned... not to the depth though of what God is giving us to see now – of just how much of a curse this has truly been and how much of that *prejudice* has still existed even within the Church. It hasn't been fully rooted out in the way that God *wants* it to be in the beginning of the Millennium. And so we get a head start. We get a head start, an opportunity to begin understanding these things in a greater way because this is the foundation upon which everything is going to be established in a far greater way very soon now. It's an awesome thing that's truly happening, that's taking place in this world; because over all the primary focus of that curse is being removed! And the more people obey God, the more it will be removed; but again, we always have to deal with human nature and that's the problem – human nature.

A great door is being opened up to us to go through in order to more powerfully, more effectively live in a balanced and a sound way that God gives us. But that's a lifetime experience. Once you receive the truth through the power of God's spirit living and dwelling within you there's a lifetime of conquering and overcoming your human nature; and the more we yield to that the happier families will be, the happier society will be, the better this world is going to be. And God desires that in a great and a powerful way.

So again, it will never be 100%... not 100% until everyone is in the Kingdom of God; and then there won't be a matter of male and female at all – then it's a matter of God's Family. And so there's work to be done for 1,100 years.

If you want to go through the door that God is opening for all of us, then there is one place that you have to begin; and we've talked about this but we're going to go back and review this and a couple of other things because this is where you have to start to truly understand what you're doing and how to go about this. There's one place you have to begin, for the blindness of this curse is deeply imbedded in human nature far more than what most have understood, even within the Church. I think back before the apostasy occurred, back into the eighties, back into the early nineties – it was there, it was *still there* because we hadn't addressed these things in a deeper way.

So, you cannot fully see it, and in many cases you cannot even begin to *partially see it* until you begin to understand and seek out God's help as covered in Jeremiah 17. Let's go back there - this is where you have to start. It isn't going to come by knowledge. The knowledge has been around for a long, long time; it's been around in a very powerful way ever since the New Testament had been written. The knowledge is there, but how to live it, to see it on a spiritual plane has not been fully given yet...and now we're at that door.

In **Jeremiah 17:5** it says – **Thus says the Eternal; cursed is the man who trusts in man.** In other words, if we trust in the way *we* see it, the way *we* think it is, the way *we think*... we rely upon our own knowledge – everyone has opinions and everyone relies upon, as a whole, even within the Church oftentimes, our own knowledge, the way we read it in the Bible; and you have to be careful because to understand what God has given us is always a spiritual matter.

I had someone recently talk about you have to be able to read the Bible from the beginning to end, which is always good for people to read the Bible, to study the Bible, to indeed read the Bible – but to grasp and understand it... it isn't going to be there just because you've read it from beginning to end a thousand times! You can read it a thousand times if you have the time in your lifetime! Doesn't mean you're going to understand it at all! We ought to understand that in the Church of God. How do you understand it? By God's spirit because God's spirit opens it up to you, otherwise you don't get it, just like the Protestant world or the rest of the world of Traditional Christianity doesn't get it. They don't understand the truth. You have to have God's spirit lead you and you have to understand how God's spirit *teaches* each one of us within the Church.

So again, **cursed is the man...** You know why it says that? Because it's a matter of *disobedience*! Curses; being cursed is a matter of disobeying God! Blessings are the result of obeying God. But we have to understand what it is we're to obey in order to be blessed. To do it right we have to see it spiritually.

So again, **cursed is the individual/the man/the person who trusts in man/in self**, it's what it's talking about, or in others. Because sometimes we listen to others and we think, "Oh that makes sense – that makes good sense." But if it isn't what God has given it doesn't mean anything. **...and makes flesh his arm/his strength**, in other words, relies on self or relies on others and what others tell them. **...and his heart departs from the Lord/from the Eternal**; and so it's a matter of what we believe, it's a matter of what we want and desire to hold onto. And if we begin to do something opposite of what God says and how He gives it to us then we're doing things in a wrong way, we're disobeying God and we're cursed as a result of it, we're not blessed.

So either our heart is seeking after God's help and correction in these matters or we're simply departing from listening to God. Everything we're being given right now... either we're tuned in spiritually and we're listening or we're going to hold onto something that we think a little bit differently or we're going to listen to someone else and think, "Yeah, that's kind of the way I see it..." and that'll hold you back.

Verse 6 – For he shall be like the heath, in other words a barren shrub or bush in the desert, in the wastelands. I think of different areas where I've seen some of this, especially in the context of what's covered here. I think of some of those areas over in southern Israel when you get down around the Negev Desert and especially when you get over around the Dead Sea area – barren, barren, barren! You can see why the children of Israel after a little while, it wasn't too hard for human nature to begin murmuring. Dry, desolate; but every once in a while a little shrub out there and some of them that are – there's nothing there – they maybe have a little bit on them when a massive rain has come through and they grow up a little bit and then there's nothing there – no leaves, nothing, just a bare shrub. That's kind of what it's talking about here in essence; it's what it's giving as an example.

...and shall not see when good comes; in other words, will not be able to experience or have that which is better. That's what it's talking about; in other words, prosperity, abundance, in other words it can't even be helped when rain comes. It's been there for so long, it's so parched the roots have died out. They're not alive and so it might be out there and it lived for a little while but it's still sticking out there somewhere but it can't be helped.

...and shall inhabit, or in other words, continue to dwell in, **the parched places in the wilderness/desert, in a salt land that is not inhabited**. So again here, talking about a desert, a wilderness; and so I think of some of those areas down around the Dead Sea, the salt that's there and

nothing grows in those areas. And the same sort of thing here – that’s what God is saying we’re like. If we’re not plugged into Him spiritually, if we’re trusting on what *we think* about men and women and the relationship between men and women and we think that we don’t have anything to learn or we don’t have anything to conquer or overcome, or that we don’t have anything we need to see in ourselves we’re going to miss the boat. And God says well be just like something that has grown up out here... it maybe grew up quickly and then everything in life disappeared from it and then when that which was good came along, it couldn’t receive it. And so when God comes along and He gives us more truth... if we reject it or we rely upon ourselves or rely upon some other understanding we can’t grow. And that’s what it’s giving the example here all the way through.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Eternal, and whose hope is the Eternal. So again, it is a matter of looking to God. The point being here is God knows what’s inside of us. It’s a matter of looking to God to help us to see and understand what He’s giving to us because you’re not going to receive it just by listening today, or listening to the last couple of sermons, or the sermons that are ahead of us – it isn’t going to come in that fashion, it’s going to come because you understand that there’s something deeper here involved in your life that only God can give to you and you’ve got to cry out to God for help to be able to see it, to be able to see what’s in the *deep* recesses of your being that has made you what you are and who you are and how you think.

We covered these verses in a couple of series; the one about ‘Obedient to God’s Rest’ and as with the title today ‘From Curses to Blessings’. How does that happen? ...from curses to blessings? Turning from disobedience to obedience – it’s really a simple thing. It’s about learning to and desiring to with all of our being, to draw closer to God and obey Him.

Jeremiah 17:7 – Blessed is the man who trusts in the Eternal and whose hope is the Eternal. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters and that spreads out her roots by the river and shall not see when the heat comes, in other words, like an oasis even, or in a bad area – it doesn’t matter where it is. If your roots are deeply planted and it’s down in the water and the waterline, it hasn’t just popped up quickly and then starts to die and wither. That’s what God gives the example of. And so when the heat comes along the same parallel is given here – will not even notice it when the heat comes along. It’ll thrive, it’ll continue to thrive. ...**but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful/afraid/worried,** is what the word means here, in a time of drought – not going to be bothered by it. ...**and shall not cease from yielding fruit.** That’s what God’s called us to by the power of His spirit, to be able to produce fruit and continue to yield fruit.

The heart, your heart, my heart as far as a human being is concerned, **is deceitful above all things.** That’s a toughie for people to believe. That’s a tough one in the Church for people to come to grips with in a deeper way; but that’s the way your human nature is, your carnal human heart – it’s deceitful, it wants to deceive itself and it’s a powerful, powerful thing, it truly is. It’s your battle throughout your spiritual life because of reasoning, of self-justification, of all the things we go through. And so **the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it.** The reality is, the point is in all this as we’ve talked about in times past, you can’t know your heart. We think we do sometimes. We think we understand our human nature, but we don’t. We only understand it to the degree that God opens up our mind on a spiritual plane to see it more and more and more – to where God, through the power of His spirit helps you to see in the recesses of your being your motives for why you do the things you do, why you think the way you do, why you speak the way you speak at times, why you react to certain things the way you react. And God will help us through time as we grow spiritually, to be able to

see those things in ourselves. And it's never pretty. It's tough because it's who we are. And then what do we do? We have a choice; it's always one of repentance because those things are always a matter of disobedience to God. There are things in our lives where we have hurt and suffering – that's what the whole Bible is about when it talks about healing.

I love the verses that are all throughout the Bible that talks about healing – it has to do with the mind and this process we go through of being able to see our true human nature and then repent of it; because God will help us to *change*. We don't have to stay the way we are! So the longer you're in God's Church, the more you can change! It doesn't mean we always do though! A person can be in for twenty, thirty years and not change too much – depends on how much we yield our self to God and have a desire to change and not be the same as what we are. How much do we really want to grow? How much do we seek after God? How much do we pour ourselves into that and pour ourselves into conquering and overcoming our human nature, our selfishness when God shows it to us? Or do we still justify at times why we do the things we do and why it's okay and why a certain scripture pops up and that justifies why I think then that I can do what I think is okay. It's amazing the power of the human mind to deceive itself.

And so it says again here, **it's desperately wicked**; that's what it tends to be like. ...**who can know it? I the Eternal search the heart.** God knows what's inside of us. He knows us inside and out and He'll help us to come to see ourselves, who we are. **I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.** And so, so much of this has to do with judgement, but it also has to do with the ability to see what's inside – and only God knows. No human being knows their own mind, knows their true nature. In the Church we begin to see it when we're called, and our whole lifetime becomes one of being able to see that nature and to fight it. And it'll always be there – selfishness is always going to be there; but how strong, how much we're able to conquer and overcome depends upon how much we understand something like this and cry out to God to help us to see ourselves and help to change what we are and how we think – and especially in the subject matter like we're covering today and like we've covered the past couple of Sabbaths and futures ones as well... because these things are deeply, deeply rooted in us because they're deeply rooted in society, they truly are.

Let's turn over to Colossians because we're going to spend some time there. As we were covering this subject matter in Genesis 3 last Sabbath we focused on what God told Eve when He said to her, 'your desire shall be to your husband and he shall *rule over* you.' We talked about how this was not a positive thing and how some, and many in Traditional Christianity have used this to say, "See! It's been given to me to *rule over the wife!*" This is not a compliment here in Genesis, this is a curse. Yes, there is an order that God has given in the family; and that's a matter that we're going to go in more deeply as we go into this series; but there are some things here we need to grasp first about our own human nature and how we think – that this is not a positive thing, as we discussed last Sabbath. 'Ruling over' is disgusting! Ruling over like this in what it's talking about here is perverted! It's a curse! It hurts the family! It's the wrong way of doing it! And the quicker we understand and see that then the quicker we can get on with things and the changes that God is offering to us.

So again, we covered this showing that it is *how* one rules that's important. And when we come into the Church we begin to learn some of those things and now God is giving us more to grasp in a far deeper way, truly, so we can *conquer* this in a greater way so that we can be blessed more fully, we can get on with what has to be gotten on with as soon as Jesus Christ returns. Because a lot of things are going to

change. They're starting to change already in the Church. It started with the ordination of women and that's going to change a lot more as we continue on into a new age. And a lot of these concepts, basically that people have been imprisoned to, held captive to – because that's what curses are – sin is a matter of being held captive; and we haven't come out of all that yet, we really haven't. But God is offering us an opportunity now to come out of it even more, out of captivity even in a greater way! Coming out of Egypt in a greater way! Something that's had a hold on us for a long, long time.

And the freedom, and the blessings and the soundness of mind and the balance... I'm excited about it! Because I see something ahead in a greater way that's exciting and inspiring of how men can be – what true masculinity is. People don't understand what it is today; they truly don't, in marriage, in family, in society. It just isn't in the world as a whole! And when people begin to understand that in a greater way... the confidence and the boldness and the beauty and the freedom and the happiness of life is going to be far richer than what it is right now; it truly is. We're at the doorstep of things that are exciting and inspiring in a new age, in a new world that God is blessing us to go into – that's far beyond what we've ever grasped in times past. It's not a utopia, but it's something that comes about as a process of being healed through the power of God's spirit in the human mind.

And what an incredible thing when the whole world has that opportunity of God's spirit being poured out upon the whole world – Satan and the demons no longer being around. That one alone by itself is incredible! When they can no longer broadcast as they do – because they work to keep the world captive, they truly do...and they know what buttons to push and how to broadcast in a very distorted, perverted way. And a part of that is to 'rule over' in marriage, to rule over even outside of marriage.

I was thinking about that this morning. I was thinking that even within the Church in times past of how men sometimes think so much so that it's as though they're 'over' all women – not just in the marriage – but all women. They're actually 'better than' other women in the Church and don't hesitate sometimes in letting it be known in correction or things that are said because, "We're over you." Duh! I've seen a lot of things in God's Church over time and I'm so thankful a lot of these things are being addressed.

So again, this matter of exercising lordship, in the Greek as we talked about it, it means 'to exercise dominion over'. That's the way the world is. You just look at the world – men and women – to exercise dominion over. It goes way beyond that as mankind, and men in general, try to exercise dominion even over others in other places of the world... but women have always been that way – held in subjection – exercised dominion over, to be subdued. It's just a way of thinking that's natural and normal in human beings that has to be gotten rid of, thinking that's wrong, that hurts family.

The last area of scripture that we covered last week was in Colossians 3:10-15. Today we're going to go back in Colossians and see some of the flow that leads up to those verses we covered last Sabbath – because there's more to build on. We just read a small area of scripture but we're going to go back and get some of the context of what we're discussing here concerning men and women and how people think because much of this is indeed what Paul is discussing here as he goes through these verses here. Let's back up to chapter 1 and pick up some of the flow of Paul's instruction to the Colossians as Paul addresses many things that are pertinent to them; but all which leads to instruction in right relationships – because that's where Paul is heading here, right relationships; and he's talking about an order of things and how things are to work – and especially within the Church and where our focus needs to be first and foremost. And so it's done in a very methodical, orderly, sound, balanced way and there's much here to be received as far as a context and a flow is concerned.

We're going to focus on the relationship of men and women, husbands and wives as we go through this. **Colossians 1:10 - That you might walk in a worthy manner of the LORD, unto all pleasing**, – it says 'worthy' there, 'that we might walk worthy before God' in some translations here, but it's the manner in which you walk because none of us are worthy – we understand that. Other scriptures that are translated that way – we understand God has blessed us to be able to receive the truth and so we're to strive to walk in this manner, in a certain manner, to be worthy, to desire to be worthy of that even though we understand we're not; but our energy and our desire before God is to strive to obey, to live a right way of life, to walk worthy of what God has given to us; as it says here, **of the Eternal, unto all pleasing before God**, which means obedience. To be pleasing to God is a matter of obedience, of loving what He gives to us, of embracing and because we do it for the right reasons – not because it's something that we feel constrained to do, that we *have* to do it; it's because we *want* to do it, we're in agreement with it, we see it! We love God's law, God's way of life; we love the Sabbath.

That's something that bowled me over when we finally came to that point in the apostasy dealing with the Sabbath; when we finally came to a point where it was like the Sabbath was done away with and some believed that keeping it was *hard*, that the Sabbath was difficult. No! I was dumbfounded that it was that *deeply* entrenched in some people's lives that they felt that way – they didn't love the Sabbath! And yet there were people who felt that way. We loved the Sabbath, we didn't want it taken away and ripped from us, the Holy Days as well – the annual Sabbaths. But there were a lot of people who felt like... "Yeah, it was a burden, it was a hardship." And they *never* really loved it!

Do you love what God gives to you? Do you love the truth? I mean, I know we do as a whole within the Body here. We love what God is giving to us; if we don't, then we have major things to repent of.

...**that you might walk in a worth manner of the LORD, all pleasing, being fruitful**, that means producing fruit; because where does fruit come from? It comes from God – it comes from yielding our self to God and it's the product of His holy spirit in our life – something that works in your life. So you do it, you believe what God gives to you, you live by it, you want to live by it, you choose to live by it – which is faith; and as you do that, because God has given you the ability and the power to do so, fruit is automatically produced. You can't help it. Where God's spirit goes – He makes it very clear – where I send My spirit, it doesn't come back void, empty – it produces. And if it doesn't produce you know what happens? Just what it says in John 15.

John 15:1 – I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: we're called to produce fruit and the holy spirit is sent out to us, given to us, offered to us; and we have to make the choices then. Do we repent of sin when sin is there? Do we yield to the things that God gives to us? And if we do we're going to produce fruit; but if we don't, if we want to hold onto something the way, *I see it*, of the way *I think it should be*, or whatever.... and you might think, "I would never do that." Oh, the history of the Church has been that! The history of everything that led up to the apostasy screams that – that that's human nature. Even when we have God's spirit you have to continue to fight self, you have to fight your nature.

Laodicea was there for a great reason and a great purpose before we enter the Millennium...so that no one could ever come to a point in time where they could say, "I would never do something like that." Because if you do – you're going to do something like that. You will fall asleep. People in the Millennium – there are going to be some who fall asleep spiritually because they're going to think, "I would

never have done that.” Why? “Because I’m better than that – I’m rich and increased with goods.” That’s what the Laodicean’s did – rich and increased... we were better than that; we didn’t think we would do certain things.

Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He purges it.

So we have things happen in our lives sometimes that aren’t pleasant; they’re difficult. There are things that happen in our life sometimes where a portion of our life – because we want to hold onto everything... that’s the way of selfishness – that’s why it’s difficult when we have to address something in our life – it’s a matter of humility because pride wants to hold onto everything. Human nature is naturally selfish and we don’t want to give up selfishness; that’s a result of pride living and dwelling within us.

There are things we want to hold onto; that’s why I give the example sometimes of something so simple and so basic as a little weed (and I’m not talking about the one that gives you a high – but even that’s difficult for people), I’m talking about the one that just fills your lungs and you get into a habit and you get some nicotine in you and after a while that gets a strong hold on you and it’s difficult to conquer and overcome! And people don’t realize it’s because you love it! It’s the way life is! But it’s a battle, isn’t it! How much more other things in our life? Sometimes we don’t think they are – yes they are. There are things deeply rooted in our lives! There are things deeply rooted in your life that has made you who you are in your relationship – *men and women!* Just as much as nicotine! ...but on a far more important plane!

In time, everyone can conquer and overcome that one, in time. It’s a physical thing. Doesn’t mean it’s easy. Do you think this is easier? Do you think it’s easier for someone to understand and grasp something on a spiritual plane? Because a lot of people think that it is; “Oh, but we can change this, we can become something different, this change is going to take place quickly in us!” It’s not. God is just giving us a head start, an opportunity to begin seeing things in a greater way, to start making the changes *now within the environment of the Church*; and we have a little prod on us to be able to do that, to exercise, to be able to see ourselves in a way we’ve never been able to – women are being ordained! And that puts a prod on people to try to understand God’s government and how does God work and what is the balance and the soundness in life? What is it? How *does* God deal with us and work with us? It’s a powerful thing and there’s much we’re going to learn through this process. We’re just scratching the surface.

And so either we bear fruit or we don’t. It’s why he goes on to say, (**verse 4**) – **Abide in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine.** Our hope, our strength, our life, our ability to see ourselves, as what it says in Jeremiah there, to conquer and overcome self has to do with God’s spirit; and it’s by the power of His spirit that we can make changes – by abiding in Him and we receive that strength from Him. It goes on and talks about various things here – if we don’t abide in Him what happens and so forth. But it’s a matter of God’s spirit living within us.

Colossians 1:10 - **...being fruitful in every good work.** What is every good work? Everything you put yourself to. Everything you do from the time you get up in the morning to the time you go to bed at night – whether or not you’re living God’s way. It would be good to the degree that God’s spirit is living within you and you’re yielding to God’s spirit. If we have anything to do in relationships, we all have plenty of things to fight and to repent of and to recognize we didn’t do something in a right way. You can be reminded day by day by day and you have to keep in the fight...and that’s a choice. **...every good**

work; in other words in *how you live*, how you speak to people, how you react to various things that happen around you, what's in the heart, where it is coming from, and so forth.

...and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, and increasing in the knowledge of God, that's what God is giving us right now. We're actually blessed to be able to increase in the knowledge of God, something that God wants us to have greater knowledge of; not just the knowledge, but the understanding that goes with it – to grasp and understand what God is doing.

Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience, and this word here means 'perseverance'. You have to throw yourself into this way of life and fight for it! You can't ever give up! That's why it kills me sometimes inside when I see people just *give up* and they don't continue in the fight. And that's been the history of God's Church. You either stay in the fight and see it's a fight and it's a battle and you keep in it, or we begin to get tired of it and begin to get worn out and kind of want to bury our head in the sand – we don't want to deal with problems, we don't want to deal with difficulties, we don't want to deal with *change*, we don't want to deal with seeing ourselves the way we are because that's just kind of unpleasant. Tough! It wasn't meant to be pleasant in this physical life – it really wasn't!

...unto all perseverance and longsuffering; and so much of this has to do with relationships – all the way through here... **and longsuffering** - it's a matter of something to do in our relationship with God and obeying God, that God wants to strengthen us to be able to have greater perseverance in doing the right things and having good work in our life because we're yielding ourselves to God's spirit. Because we're not good. We are not good. What is good comes from God and the more we yield ourselves to that then that portion of good that can come increases – it's coming from God. If it comes from us, which happens a lot, too much, and sometimes most of the time – it's not a good thing. **...and longsuffering**, this word in the Greek obviously means 'to be patient'. It has to do with patience. **...with joyfulness**; in other words, perseverance and longsuffering, patient. In what? In relationships! To work at your relationships! They don't just happen. You've got to work! Isn't that an amazing thing? Fellowship and drawing closer together as a family doesn't just suddenly 'poof' and it happens; you walk through the door and you have fellowship. No, it doesn't work that way.

You know what we have to do...and especially men oftentimes? You have to learn how to go up to people and start trying to talk and try to open up a little bit and try to get involved in a conversation. It's not easy! It's not easy for me; I have to work at it because that's not my nature. I have to work at it to try to have conversations with people. Today, at times here, beginning before services, there's been times I felt awkward because... especially if I go up and talk to some guy... because he's having the same battle I am, the ability to open up and talk about various things. What do you talk about? Well, if we have to start with the weather, we'll start with the weather – fine! We've got something on common ground there and then we build upon that and it's a matter of something, especially with God's spirit within the Church, that there is that desire for Family. And we know it's there. We know how we think toward each other – it's something awesome! Just like what you had at the Feast of Tabernacles this year – you were able to spend a little more time with people and what happened? You got a lot closer in a way that you can't get close to people in the world. You can't even have that environment! It's because of the Church; and there's something that's there (God's spirit) that does the binding and helps that relationship to become stronger; but you have to work at it.

That's why I've talked about in times past – if we don't get to Sabbath services until just before it starts, or we leave immediately after it's over, then where is the that time to fellowship? It takes time to try to mould and fashion a relationship, to be able to have communication with someone. It takes time. Family takes time. People have to spend time in talking to each other about various things. Sometimes you come home and you're not desirous to spend much time; you want to chill... or whatever you might call it - to just let the brain be kind of dead for a while because your day was so much pressure at work and you really don't want any kind of pressure when you come home, you don't want to deal with any problems – husbands or wives. You don't want to deal with something that might have not gone well that day in the family and you don't want to rehash the hardship of that day – you just kind of want to get away from it. But to develop a relationship you need to talk about it, you need to spend some time and share. You can't just bottle everything up inside. So there are some things that might be uncomfortable to do, but it's good to share and get a little feedback, a little help. It's all about relationships.

Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet, or in other words 'able' or 'possible' for us **to be partakers of the inheritances of the saints in light**: 'in light'... example of that sermon that was given by Wayne Matthews about darkness and light. That's what it is – it's about the light, it's about the truth, it's about the way of life that God has given us that we're able to receive something that we otherwise couldn't receive.

Verse 13 – Who has delivered, or in other words 'is delivering' because it's a process. As far as God is concerned it's happened, but as far as our response, it's a process; it is being delivered, it's a process that we have to work at and want. **Who has/is delivering us from the power of darkness**; it's a lifelong process taking us out of Egypt. We don't just leave Egypt overnight. We don't just leave sin overnight – it's a *battle* that lasts for a lifetime – including the misuse of power used to subdue, to wrongly control, to repress women in society and in the family...because that's the way the world is. It *is* the way the world is!

...and has translated/is translating/transferring/moving us, that's what it's about, **into the Kingdom of His dear Son**. It's a process we go through until we actually become a part of that Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is made up of those who are spirit beings, who are of the Family of God – and that's the process of going from the time we're under the water, had hands layed upon us, to the time the change takes place – until we're finally there. So there's this process of being 'translated', of being transferred or moving from in this process from darkness to light. It's a continuing process in life, it's a battle. It's a battle from the day it starts to the day it ends.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: so that's what our life consists of – repenting, seeing our human nature and repenting of what we are – desiring to be something different. What? What God says we should be like, what we can become like, what the Family is going to be like. **Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature**, so in the beginning here so much of the focus is about and upon, if you will, Jesus Christ; because that's how all this is possible. It starts with Passover, the ability to be forgiven of sins, the ability to see our human nature and the ability to make this journey, this being moved, transferred...that's what this is talking about, from one thing to another, this transformation as it talks about, Paul talks about in Romans 12 that takes place in the mind.

...the firstborn of every creature, actually a better translation is ‘all creation’ because it’s all about the creation that’s ongoing, that God has been working at for the last 6,000 years in some – that which is going to be intensified now during the Millennial period.

It’s about the Family of God, the creation of the Family of God – that’s the primary focus of creation that continues on. God established certain things in the universe that are there, life on this earth, but the creation that it’s all about and that God has desired and worked toward for all this time is what’s happening in our lives. It’s a creation taking place. It doesn’t happen overnight, it doesn’t happen when God commands it to come into existence. He can’t do that with us! We have to go through change because it’s of the mind, like we talked about during the Feast. It takes a lot of time to transform this mind.

For by Him were all... things, it says here, but it’s really the same word translated as ‘every’ in the previous verse. When it talks about ‘every/all creation’. It’s about the God Family, the context over and over again is about the God Family. **For by Him were all/everything**, if you will, if you understand what it’s talking about, **every creature**, that’s the context here. So sometimes the wording here is a little awkward but you need to know the context, what’s being discussed; over and over again it’s about this creation. **For by Him were all created... all what?** Again, it’s about the God Family, it’s through Him, it’s by Him; that’s what it means, **For by Him**, the word is ‘through’; **through Him all are created that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones and dominions and principalities, or powers**: when you’re talking about the Family of God and what God is doing – this same ‘all’ again. **...were created/are being**, as it really is in the Greek language here, **are being created by/through Him and for Him**.

So again, the focus is on Jesus Christ, it begins with Him by our Passover and it’s talking about ‘all power’, everything that God has ever planned whether it be in heaven or earth – because that’s where it started – before anything ever began. It’s just saying it in a different form of something that’s talked about over and over again here – God predetermined before time Jesus Christ – because He predetermined a Family before time, before anything was created. And that’s what these verses are talking about – all power, all principalities – everything was centered around what was taking place and what’s taking place now in the Church.

...are created by/through Him and for Him: and He is before all, in other words, this same ‘all’. Who? It’s the Family of God, the God Family, the creation that’s taking place of the God Family. **...and He is before all, and by/through Him all consist**, or as the word means in the Greek language here ‘are made to stand’ or ‘are established’. The only way we’re established or made to be is by Jesus Christ – by and through Him; He must dwell in us. His life must dwell in us. It begins with Passover, it begins with being able to be forgiven of sin so that God and Jesus Christ can dwell in us. It’s a lifelong process.

And He is the Head of the Body; again, the way Paul is addressing this, the way God is inspiring this to be given to the Colossians, the way God is inspiring this to be given to the Church (because that’s what it’s about) is showing an order of things – that God has this great plan and it’s about this great creation – that’s exactly what He said here. Through time, everything that’s ever happened has all been about *this* creation, of what’s taking place; and it’s all accomplished in and through Jesus Christ. *He is the Head*; and so that’s how Paul addresses it. **He is the Head of the Body**, we call it the Body of Christ, the Church of God, **who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all... all things?** No, all this creation that it’s talking about here again. And here even it puts it in italics because it doesn’t mean ‘things’; all

the way through here it's not about 'things', it's about *us*, it's about those whom God calls, it's about this process of this creation that's ongoing. And so Jesus Christ is the **firstborn of the dead**.

Again, **who in the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all He might have the pre-eminence**. Paul is addressing this, God is inspiring it to show that the focus is Jesus Christ, the focus of all that is sound in the God Family – it starts with Jesus Christ, is established upon Jesus Christ. **For it pleased the Father**, which again is in italics here, but it's indeed part of the context here, **that in Him**, in Jesus Christ, **should all the fullness dwell**. We touched upon that in the Feast of Tabernacles this year of something we don't even begin to grasp yet, that verse right there; **all in Him**, in Jesus Christ all the fullness dwells. There are things about Jesus Christ we have not yet been given. There are things about His life, His existence, His purpose, that are so awesome, so incredible that God has not even yet given those to us – more is going to be given to us after He returns – the ability to see and perceive and understand things about the God Family and about Jesus Christ that we haven't even been given yet that are awesome, that are inspiring, that are exciting – but it is not yet time and hasn't been given to us yet...and why God purposed and planned it this way from the beginning.

And, having made peace, so this peace again, how often does this come up over and over again through scripture, this peace, this desire that God has that we're working toward, that was so abruptly and horribly *shattered* in God's creation when Lucifer did what he did. *Peace was shattered* within a realm that God had created, within a family that God had created. It was the angelic family. They are His sons in a spiritual plane, not in a spiritual Family like the God Family, but they are a spiritual family of spirit beings if you will.

And having made peace through His blood, so going on here talking about the creation then of mankind and the purpose of mankind and what must take place. **And having made peace through the blood of His being impaled on the stake/pole, by Him to reconcile**, or this word here means 'to bring into one' **all**. What? All things? No, it's about the Family again! It's the same context over and over again here. It's talking about 'all', everyone! That's God's desire, that everyone who ever lived in time will have the opportunity before them. Some aren't able to receive it because they reject early on and become aborted, they can't be born.

So, **by Him to reconcile**, or to bring into one, **all unto Himself; by/through Him**, through Christ – the focus is upon Jesus Christ over and over here again. So everything is being established, that everything about God's Family is established on Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ – that this is how it's made possible...**whether they be things in heaven or things in earth**, as it says here.

I just want to read through this scripture here in Ephesians 2:16 because it makes some of these expressions a little bit clearer as Paul uses it. **Ephesians 2:16 – That He might reconcile both unto God in one Body**, talking about the Church of God. So there's this process we go through, this body we have to become a part of, this fellowship that we're able to have that is unique. And this is our arena for learning and applying in a greater way and learning about God's Family in a small way, if you will, but we begin to experience and apply certain things and we begin to have our own relationships within the Church and then we're tried and tested as to how true and how right those relationships are and the genuineness of it because it's a spiritual thing. And so it says here in **Ephesians 2:16 – That He might reconcile both unto God**, speaking of Jesus Christ – His desire to reconcile us unto God, into one – **in one Body by the impaling on the pole/stake**, in other words that's where it started, **having slain the**

enmity thereby. In other words it starts by being able to be forgiven of sin so that God and Jesus Christ can dwell in us to change us.

Going on in **Colossians 1:21 – And you who were in times past alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works...** You know, human beings as a whole don't like things like this. To say that all human beings... that's the life of human nature, of life on this earth – wicked works – people don't think that about themselves. They think they do good things and they don't understand their mind, the selfishness and the pride. And they don't understand how serious the sin is that's there and how God looks upon that and how much that hurts – until we get into the Church.

...and sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, because that's what disobedience does – it makes you an enemy of God if we choose disobedience, which man, that's all man can choose until he's called. **...yet now has He reconciled;** so this process that's taking place in us, **in the Body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blame and without reproach in His sight: if you continue in the faith.** And so Christ's desire is that He be able to present us before God; His work is in us to change us, to help this mind be transformed, to take us from darkness into light. And we're going through that right now in understanding things about men and women and how people think. **If you continue in the faith grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, the good news which you have heard.**

Colossians 2:1 – For I would that you knew what great conflict, in other words struggle or fight Paul is saying here, **I have for you and for them in Laodicea.** So again, he's speaking to the Colossians about that which he is going through personally for them. **...and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love/agape.** So again here, it's bringing in another part of something God wants us to see – everything begins in and through Jesus Christ and then... because what is it about? It's about that creation! That's what chapter 1 is all about; it's about this creation. And candidly, if you read it in the King James like that we don't *grasp* the significance and the depth of what is being covered. It's all about the Family of God, about a creation that's taking place and ongoing through time. And we're getting ready to go into a greater phase of God's creation as soon as Jesus Christ returns because everyone gets to be a part of that then if they'll yield themselves to it, to God's spirit working in them. And so it shows how it's accomplished – **being knit together,** that which binds – because it's about Family; it's about God's Family, the creation of God's Family. And how is it bound together, knit together? He says, **in agape/love.** And so we begin to experience this in the Church when we come into the Church. We begin to experience this with one another in the Church in the Feast of Tabernacles. We're still feeling the results of that in different areas as you go into different areas and the excitement people have and still talking about the Feast because for so many that was the first time that people were able to spend and share eight days together in that kind of an environment. And that was an exciting thing, inspiring, uplifting, helps you to have focus for the next one, or for what's coming behind that it all pictures in the first place! Looking forward to the Millennium.

God's love, agape, is not in us naturally. You don't have it in you unless God's spirit is in you and we learn that. And the more we yield ourselves to God's spirit the more that can live in us. And God's love is about relationships, how you think about each other; because how you think determines how you're going to react toward them or act toward them. And again, candidly in the Church of God men and women have not totally thought right toward each other fully as God desires us to do! And so He's blessing us to grow in that and we'll see as we continue through this series.

...being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, understanding that God's giving us in a greater way now, **and to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God,** which is about God's spirit dwelling within us that the world doesn't understand but we understand it, **and to the Father and of Christ; In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** And we're at a point in time where more is being revealed. We started even at the Feast of Tabernacles. I am dumbfounded by what God shared with us at the Feast of Tabernacles – because God has it all and He gives to us at different times.

I think of 1972 when God opened a door for us to be able to understand something in an awesome way! It truly does give great understanding of other things. It's actually led to the opening of more doors and understanding through time here. It is that there is a spirit in man; not the holy spirit. There's a spirit essence in man that gives us the ability to think and reason. All these are hidden with God and God shares them with us in His time. And I think of what was given to us at that time – wisdom, knowledge, understanding of things that we never before could understand or comprehend.

Verse 4 – And this I say, lest any [man]... and I want to make sure that everyone understands this – the word is not 'man'; just to show you that even in the translation of scripture into English there was prejudice by those who translated it. Why? Why not translate it the way it's really given? Because of prejudice and how people use language. Why did people use language like that? Because of an attitude of mind – a way of thinking. Why weren't women brought into it? Why weren't they focused upon more in scripture? You think there's any prejudice in the pages of this book here? Not from God's inspired word, but because of translations into English or whatever other language that's out there – because of how people thought and how their thinking was, how they actually thought in society, how people thought in society then is based upon what? How people think in the family because of society, because that's the way society is – just an ongoing mess until God comes along and desires us to change.

And this I say, lest any... and the word really is 'anyone' or 'someone', that's how it should be translated... **unless any...** that means *anyone*. It's not a matter of male and female. I think, even as you read through something like this and you think, "How disgusting can this be?" **And this I say, lest any should beguile you** – so it could be a man or a woman; it's not a matter of sex, it's not a matter of whether it be a man or a woman. Amazing how some things are translated through the Bible even because there's a prejudice in the thinking of human beings – truly is! ...**should beguile**, in other words, and this word here has to do with 'delude' or 'to use false reasoning' here, in other words, not based upon the truth or God's way – it's by human reasoning. ...**to beguile you**, to use false reasoning, **should beguile you with enticing words**, meaning 'persuasive words'; arguments. That's what it's talking about here – persuasive arguments, enticing words. It doesn't take long sometimes for people to start talking to each other – even within the environment of God's Church. And if you're not careful, because of a relationship, something seems to make sense, and maybe even talking about a scripture or something in the Bible and all of a sudden, "Yeah, that makes sense..." and people start sharing that and talking about it and after a while that's what they believe. That's not how you learn the truth. We don't learn it that way unless it agrees with what we've been given. We don't come up with something new that we've never heard before. God doesn't work that way...but I've seen it happen over and over and over and over again every year I've been in God's Church, it happens in people's lives and when it stays in people's lives it doesn't take long and those people are gone because God's flow of His spirit ceases to exist there – if it's held onto, something that is contrary, not at one with the Body. It's an awesome thing! It's happened throughout time!

So again, saying anything different than what we've been taught on the subject of whatever we're given – this would include some who do not get what the right relationship of men and women should be, especially when it comes to how to rule, or how one might think toward women in the ministry. Because we still have some difficulties out here; some have had to have some battles in some things they've had to address in their life and they're starting to address things in their thinking.

Whenever there's a difficulty in any of that, and somebody has a wrong reaction or a wrong thought come into their mind – you know what you have to do? You have to ask God; that's when you go back to Jeremiah and realize there's something buried inside that God is letting you start to see – that if you'll pray about it He'll help you to understand where it's coming from. Because you know what? You can't change that until you're able to repent of it – but you have to see it so you know it's wrong, so you know what to repent of. And that's the process we're going through in the Church in a greater way; the more repentance there is, of being able to see certain things that are not right, that are not sound, that are not just, that are not the way God wants them to be. You have to be able to see, first of all, that they're wrong and ask God to help to see where it comes from inside so that you can repent of it so a change can take place; otherwise it's going to continue to exist and live on and not bring you the kind of reward in life, happiness and joy and fullness that God wants us to experience in a greater way. Because you see, that's what we're going to receive in the Millennium and can begin receiving in a greater way now within the Church. The more we're able to apply these things and begin to work with these things... the result of, with blessings, is greater joy, greater happiness in life – more *blessings* that God will give to us which has to do with things of how we think and how we see and how we live, the fruit that's there as a result of this as we're going to find as we continue to go through these verses.

Verse 5 – For though I be absent in the flesh, in other words Paul is saying I'm not there with you physically, yet am I with you in the spirit, rejoicing and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Verse 6 – As you have therefore received Christ Jesus our Lord, so walk you in Him; so whatever you're given, Paul is saying, *walk* in it! Grab a hold of it! Whatever God has opened your mind to! And you know, within the Church I've been blessed over forty some years to be able to see a lot of things through time that have changed, when we come to a point in time where great growth and understanding is given, just like I said, 1972. That was *awesomely* exciting! That was my first great experience in something God gave in a greater plane of something that was new; because before that there was the grounding taking place from 1969 up to '72, and then all of a sudden Mr. Armstrong came out with this understanding about the spirit in man, that there's a spirit essence that gives us the ability to think and reason – not the holy spirit – because that spirit has to be impregnated with the holy spirit to begin to see things on a spiritual plane. But what an awesome thing to be able to see and grasp those things that gave a greater excitement and understanding to what God was doing with us and the process of how we change. That was just the beginning...and then we came to 1974 and greater understanding about Pentecost; and to understand the children of Israel, when they left Egypt, and something that God revealed back there in Joshua, in the book of Joshua, to grasp and comprehend on a greater way... things about a timing – that God is very meticulous in His timing and we had kept Pentecost on a Monday for a long, long time in God's Church because it had been lost through Sardis and hadn't been recaptured yet because God hadn't given it yet, because you can't have it until He gives it to you. And then He gave it to the Church in 1974 and all of a sudden we began to understand in a great way it's on

Sunday – always has been, we just didn't get it. And then we finally understood it; we finally started obeying what God gave to us.

And it's been that way all through time and that's the way it is right now – God is giving us more and the more we yield ourselves to it and obey it the happier and richer and more fulfilling our lives become. And we're at a point in time here where God is giving us much more right now; that He's giving us the opportunity of learning about things and the value of relationships because everything about His Family truly boils down to relationships in the first place.

And so as you receive new truth concerning women in the ministry and matters concerning the wrong kind of rule exercised in so many marriages, because it just exists because it's in the world... it can't begin to change until you repent. *Men! Husbands!* It isn't going to happen just by waving a wand, it's going to happen because we're going through series of sermons and we're going to begin to see things in our life... because I'll guarantee you God is going to help you see some things you haven't been able to see before – okay? And some things that aren't going to be very nice... and whenever you see that certain things aren't nice in your nature that's good! That's not bad! Now you can take it in a bad way and it can be a matter of pride and you can resist it or you can be thankful to God and say, "Now I can repent of that and change." Because that's the good; when you can see that you're doing things wrong – that there's a better way of handling things and doing things in a far greater way that God is offering it's beautiful, it truly is.

We're going to go through a lot in sermons here; we've already had some. And there is much that God is giving to us. This is important to God and it better be important to us; and I know it is. But please grasp and understand it's *important*; it's important to God. Don't you want a happier life? Don't you want a better marriage? Don't you want better relationships within the Church of God with others in the Church, in the Body? And much of it has to do with your thinking; and sometimes we just don't know what's buried inside of us until God gives us the opportunity of seeing it. To make marriage happier, to make family happier, to make relationships within the Church and in the world – and how you think toward people in the world around you – better.

Verse 7 – Rooted and built up in Him, we have to be *in* Christ – that tree as we talked about earlier in Jeremiah and has the *roots* that are there and then built up and strengthened and fortified *in Christ*; it happens in Him.

...and established in the faith; established in the faith means, again, God is giving you things to believe and then as you begin to apply them, as you begin to repent, as you begin to live what God is showing you, begin to obey more and you're blessed more in your life and in your family and in your thinking... because there's a process. I'm going through it! I'm experiencing it! And you need to experience it as well! Changes that need to take place! Okay? It's not easy; things about our nature that we have to see and repent of – okay? And there's not a one of us that's perfect; and every one of us has to change and do it better...*every last one of us – men AND women*. Okay? Because of how you have been treated, you've also reacted in a wrong way that affects your thinking and it reflects things inside of you that you don't even understand fully. And the more you grasp and comprehend those things the richer your life and the happier your life will become as well...regardless of whether or not men change... which they will. Give us time. ☺

And so it says here, **Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught**, no matter where we are in time we always can grow and we always *must* grow, because the reality is if we aren't something is wrong. If we're not changing on a continuing basis something's wrong in our Christian life – truly is! It's one of continual growth, which means one of continual repentance and drawing closer to God, becoming more *at one with God*. We actually come into greater agreement with God, with His mind, with His Word, with His will. That's a beautiful thing.

Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, it's something we have to be *taught* – that's where it begins. It *doesn't come* from our being able to go into a scripture – “Oh, now I see it and understand it fully.” We're *taught* it! That's why I continually tell people, as a whole and sometimes if somebody wants to twist and distort something and say, “Well, you're...” – like what happened here recently with someone saying, “You're telling people they shouldn't read the Bible.” No, I never have! ...or that you can't understand the Bible. Well, we understand we can't unless God's spirit gives us that understanding. But the reality is, I've talked about in a great way, and that's why I do and send people back to the website on a continual basis because we have so much there that's sound and that's balanced. And if you understand the spirit of everything that's written there – you're ahead of me, you're way ahead of me in spiritual life. Okay? And I speak facetiously. Because it's just a reality – there are ways that God works and the way His spirit works in our life and there is a process there of things... and the reason I said some of that is because there are things that I've written that I've gone back to read and that I've learned from – because they don't come from me. And there are things that God gives from point to point that are inspired. I've gone back and read things in the second book that I've come to a deeper understanding of that I didn't know at the time that I wrote it. Same thing on the website – deeper understanding. We can always grow in what God gives to us. There is soundness of mind and balance in what God gives and there is a process in how He teaches us.

But again, **Rooted and built up in, these things, in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving**. Why is anyone ever thankful for anything? When is it you feel thankful? Why do you feel thankful when you experience that? Because you understand what you've been given, you understand the *depth* of what you've been given, you grasp and appreciate something of the sacrifice that went to give it, or you grasp and understand the awesomeness of something that has been given to you. And when God gives us something and we're able to change and our life becomes better because we're not threatened by it – on the contrary, we realize that's just the way our life is – our life is one of change which means it's one of repentance, which means it's one of fighting and overcoming. And the more we do it, the happier our lives are and the more thankful we are to God that He's giving us these things the greater the love is between us and God. The greater the thankfulness the greater the rejoicing in what truth we have – and that's the way it is in marriage relationships. The more all of you, the more every one of you in every family will change, with thankfulness, because you are thankful to see these things, because the more you apply things that you're learning about yourself in the sense of repenting and changing – the more you begin to experience the fruit, the blessings of what God intended for us to have from the beginning in His Word, in His way of life. And the more we live that the more thankful you are; the more thankful you are for your mate, the more thankful you are before God and *give God thanks*. The more thankful you are for the blessings in your life, for your parent's, for your children – whatever it is, for members of the Body of Christ – the more thankful you are because you understand and see what God has given to you in a Family. And the more changes we make in those things and the more we repent the more thankful we actually become if we're going through this in a right way.

So again here **...abounding therein, abounding...** what an awesome thing that you can abound in... Do we grasp that the more thankful we are the more we rejoice, the happier we are? That's what this is about! **Abounding with thanksgiving.** I'll tell you, just like at the Feast of Tabernacles this year, there were people who had a greater thanksgiving for what they had, for what they were experiencing and there was what in that? Much rejoicing; a lot of incredible joyful times. To be able to spend that together with each other, to experience something that you have never experienced in your life – eight days together with others who aren't your physical family that you're closer to than your physical family! ...because it's spiritual. And then if you have the added blessing of physical *and* spiritual that's just that much more. How incredible is that? How awesome? And it just grows and grows and becomes greater and greater in the Family of God and on into the Millennium.

And what we're able to address right now I rejoice in. Because I've experienced in the years in the ministry so much sorrow and suffering and anguish in marriages, in people's lives. I have counselled so many people who couldn't find happiness... and yet all the tools and all the understanding is right here in this book, in the Bible. But you can't give it to anyone. And God is giving us an opportunity to grow in that now in a greater way, to remove so much of that anguish and sorrow and suffering because people don't understand their own God-given role in life. Incredible!

I have seen so much suffering. Now the world suffers continually in different things and some people find certain measures of happiness of what we would call happiness in the world and it's getting thinner and thinner out there; but even on a physical plane. But when God calls us we're to grow far, far, far beyond that which is within a physical grasp as physical human beings because it becomes spiritual. And what we're able to grasp that changes our minds and the way we are and what we're able to receive is far, far greater than anyone has in this physical world.

...abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any [man]; can be a man or a woman, **anyone,** again, the same word. Isn't it amazing? It's over and over again in the Bible; **lest anyone spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men/mankind,** and I'll tell you what – there's a lot of tradition of man out here that has to do with the relationship between men and women. You may have seen it, you just may not – it's a matter that there are things we just don't grasp yet and don't see; but I'm starting to see things I've never seen in this world before. And you'll start seeing things in a greater way that you've never seen in this world. Just like reading your Bible – maybe you've never seen it before that there are things of prejudice written here in how it was translated. It's important to see that, to realize these things are deep rooted in society and in the world. There are reasons why these things exist – it's because of how men think toward women. Incredible!

Beware lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, in other words, the Greek word for men here means 'after mankind', tradition. And what has been the tradition of societies and how people treat each other and think about each other? How about the work force? There is something even in that that has changed so much in the world where it used to be more of an agrarian society and now we have a whole different kettle of fish out here and different problems that exist because of how people think about themselves and how men sometimes feel about themselves or women about themselves and struggles in the work force and things that take place out here that aren't just and aren't right. And people experience those things and they see things that aren't fair and they aren't right – big surprise! It's a physical world and there are traditions of men that exist out here, or mankind – (and traditions of men) and of mankind that exist out here that it's just a struggle in the world and they don't even understand why it exists.

...after the rudiments, in other words the elementary principles, **of the world**. And some of those elementary principles of the world are not very nice – principles – the things that are built upon that make marriages what they are, that make family what they are because of wrong concepts and wrong ideas that people have – even in the world of Traditional Christianity – even in the areas of sexual relationships; because ultimately that’s a part of life in a marriage. And that one is so *messed up* in this world! People’s minds are so *twisted* and *distorted* to where men and women don’t think right in much of those areas. There is so much in society, so much in music, so much in movies and the way things are presented that are so twisted and distorted. I see things sometimes where I just cringe at because people have these ideas of what is good or what is right and that is twisted and distorted! This world is a sick, sick world, it really is; and so much of that goes back to what’s been taught by the Catholic Church – ‘the original sin’.

Some of you know what that is in the Catholic Church and some of their feelings and thoughts and some of their perverted ideas about sexual relationships to where even the Pope now just kind of came to a point where he’s all of a sudden decided some people can wear condoms. Sick! Sick world! And how priest are supposed to be? You know what? That’s a doctrine of demons. Men weren’t meant to be like that! Women weren’t meant to be like that! To ‘marry Christ’? How perverted is that in the world? That you have this kind of a religious order and that somehow because of this religious order... What it does is it distorts the minds of people. That’s why... oh, it’s a sick world! It’s a sick, sick world and people don’t understand that! And if it comes out of religion do we see how that affects society? Look how big they are! Look at those who’ve come out of them that have some of the same hang-ups and distortions in the mind about things!

You think this world isn’t messed up and that men and women’s minds aren’t messed up and jealousies that come out of that because then men aren’t *confident* and truly masculine in the way God made them? Because there are certain jealousies that exist that are just automatic in the human mind because... “You *looked* at *somebody!*” People get upset, people have fights because of things like that, “*YOU looked at somebody - I SAW you looking!!*” ...because they’re so possessive, because they’re so... It’s not because they’re so possessive. You know what it is? They’re so *insecure* in themselves. And we live in that kind of a world.

Until you come to understand your own mind and how you think and yet you’re willing to take something out because you’re unbalanced toward someone else? That’s the way this world is! It happens all the time! You see it in movies; you see these things out there continually!

When you go back and read some of the Old Testament stories and different ones have had more than one wife you know there’s problems. You know there are problems! If you think there weren’t problems and everything was hunky dory back then, something’s wrong in your mind. You remember the story of Abraham and Sarah? Because of jealousies Sarah all of a sudden... she couldn’t help it because it’s so deep inside of her. And Abraham/Abram – he didn’t handle things very well. People had to experience different things in life to come to understand, as God gave understanding through time of the way things are supposed to be. But always, it’s been a *long* road coming out of sin; it’s been a *long* road for God’s people coming out of darkness and God taught a little bit at a time along the way. To have different examples of things we can learn from, until finally the Church came...and even there, *things were not right* – not even in the environment of the Church. It’s taken 2,000 years to bring us to a point, finally, within society, within the world that we can address something and say it *is God’s will* that

women be ordained in His Church. It's taken 2,000 years, even within the Church, for God to bring us finally to this point in time.

Now that's an awesome thing when you understand a process that has existed for 6,000 years because of something that happened in the Garden of Eden between one man and one woman when they chose to disobey God; which every human being would do and has done ever since anyway, it's just the way of human nature. But how distorted the minds have become in things having to do with relationships between opposites, in the sense of two different sexes, of people in the world and all the feelings and emotions that are deep in people's lives – deep feelings that people have because of things concerning mothers and fathers and on it goes through time. It's the way it's been for 6,000 years! And the more we're freed from that – that's a beautiful, awesome thing that God's leading us to in the world we're getting ready to enter into.

...from the elementary principles of the world/rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, in other word, there are things that have come... In other words, there are things that *we must be on guard concerning what comes out of this world*, and not after Christ. There is truth that God gives to us that comes from Him, that comes through the Church, that comes to us all and especially like what we're going through now – that we can grab a hold of. Don't let those things... on the contrary, not only don't let them continue to imprison you but strive and desire that God show you where you're in prison, where you're still held back, where you're still in darkness, where there's still sin to repent of so that your mind can be healed in a greater way so that you can have better marriages or better relationships with others within the Church and in society in the way you think toward one another.

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; over and over again it's about the order of things here as to what Paul is giving in addressing the Colossians. It's about the creation of the God Family and this process that begins in Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church; and then goes through this continual process reminding us again, **For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;** leading us to that Family and what we're to begin to experience and understand in a greater way in this physical life that we need to conquer and overcome and live by and practice and obey so that we can be blessed. No more curses. The more we obey, the more the blessings, the less the curses of life.

And you are complete in Him, only *in* the Body of Christ, *in* Jesus Christ, *in* God's spirit; **who is the head of all principality and power:** 'all *principality and power*'...and we're going to begin learning things about God's Government we have not fully understood – because things are changing. Some things have been kind of shaken here concerning family, husband and a wife relationships, order of things within the Church, ordinations and so forth that have shaken that stability so that we can come to understand *more* about what *is* God's will in the way God tells us we should think and live in our minds towards each other and the *better* order, the true order of things that we haven't fully grasped and understood within the Church, within the Family of God.

Because, as it says here, **and you are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power.** And so there are things about order and the power of God and authority and the way it's to be exercised. It's all in Jesus Christ – and He'll show us. You're *not* to learn it from the world and you're not to hold onto ways you think it was supposed to be in times past and what you maybe have read in times past. That's why sometimes when we get to a certain point in some areas of life, when we come to a greater understanding – some things we might read of the past isn't what we need to have our main diet on. It's what God is giving us now, the present truth as we've been told. Why? Because we're

ever growing and whatever God gives us more at the *present* time is what we're to hold onto so we can become far more *balanced* and have greater soundness of mind – primarily in all of our relationships.

Verse 11 – In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; I love the way this is expressed here. It gives something physical and then something spiritual. Here is something happening on a spiritual plane! It's not anything about that which is physical. We understand that that which is spiritual reflects that which is physical which is about the heart. Circumcision is of the heart – it says in the Old Testament. Took them a long time to come to understand that! They had a tough time in the beginning of the Church to understand that one there; and finally God revealed it to them, helped them to understand that it wasn't about that which was physical, it's about that which is spiritual. It's a circumcision of the heart...**the operation of God made without hands;** it's done by God, by God's working... I like that word, 'operation'. Because there's a physical one and there's a spiritual one. The spiritual one God does and it has to do with how you think, how you are, what your heart is like.

In whom also you are also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body, the sin of the flesh; because that which is made without hands is about the heart and it's about getting *rid of sin*, **putting off the body the sins of the flesh.** As sin is revealed to us we want to get rid of it!

As God brings us to a point, even as you grow, from the beginning of baptism on – that your whole life is one about as you see sin a desire to repent of it, a desire to get rid of it, a desire to become something different. ...**by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism,** I just mentioned it – that's where it starts. We see the whole process, where it begins and how it continues on, **wherein also you are risen with Him through faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead.** And so we see this process of what baptism pictures in burying the old self and coming up and walking in newness of life, being a new person: new, different, continually growing and becoming something different.

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