

Greetings to everyone at this year's Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Tabernacles of 2014. For me, it's hard to believe that this year has already gone by and we are once again at the Feast.

I always remember the previous Feasts and how fast they have all gone by, and then as we return home the next year's Feast always seems so far away. It's hard to believe that Patty and I have been observing God's Feast of Tabernacles for 48 years now. That's a lot of Feasts, but it really doesn't seem that long. Throughout all of those years there is one thing that has never changed—each and every year as we approach the Feast, the *excitement* is always the same. That excitement builds and builds until you're finally there. And here we are once again.

Out of all of those years that I have observed God's Feasts, there is one statement that I have heard just about every year after the Feast is over. That statement is, "*That was the best Feast ever!*" That is the title of this split-sermon, *The Best Feast Ever*.

As I thought about that statement the question arose: Will the Feast of Tabernacles of 2014 *be* the best Feast ever? Brethren, will this be *your* best Feast ever? The answer is it should be! But will it be?

As I look back over those 47 previous Feasts that I have attended, I have had many a great and inspiring Feasts. Some so great that it literally moved me to tears when the last closing prayer was given and I realized it was over. We were blessed with tremendous sermons! We made new friends and the bond with some past acquaintances became even stronger. When you have that great of a Feast you literally dread going back home and stepping foot back into your normal routine, "back into the world," (so to speak). But in the midst of all of those great Feasts, there were some Feasts that I would not put high on the "best" list. Unfortunately, there is a reason why those Feasts turned out the way that they did, and that reason was the absence of right priorities. My priorities were not in alignment with how God would have had them to be. *God's* Feast of Tabernacles should always be in alignment with God, which will consequently make it the best Feast ever.

So once again: Will the Feast of Tabernacles of 2014 be *your* best Feast ever?

I'll never forget growing up in the church and attending some of the *big* Feast sites. And when I say *big*, I mean *BIG*. Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri—12,000 people. Jekyll Island, Georgia—8,000 people. We even met in a tent. Yes, a tent without air conditioning in Jekyll Island, Georgia! I remember driving up to that Feast site for the first time and seeing that tent, a tent big enough to seat over 8,000 people. Especially from the viewpoint of a 10-year old child, that was *so awesome!* The Feast seemed bigger than life itself.

Throughout my younger years, and even into adulthood, I even never forget seeing and hearing Mr. Armstrong. Sometimes it was in person, and other times it was a live satellite feed. I can still hear his

booming voice. There was an excitement in the air when *he*, God's apostle, stepped on to the stage. And then there was a question that he asked more times than I can remember. It was, "Brethren, *why* are we here?" That question is as valid now as it was 47 years ago. Why are we here?

Turn with me to Leviticus 23:34. **Leviticus 23:34** states, **Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation; you shall do no servile work therein. Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day, an additional day, shall be an holy convocation unto You, and you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; and you shall do no work therein.**

Let's pick up more instruction concerning the Feast of Tabernacles in Deuteronomy. **Deuteronomy 16:13** –**You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that you have gathered in your corn and your wine, in other words, after you have saved your second tithe, and you shall rejoice in your Feast, you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, all of those that are within your gates. Seven days shall you keep a solemn Feast unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God shall choose. There are eleven Feast sites that God has chosen to place His name at this year.**

Going on...**Seven days you shall keep a solemn Feast unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose; because the LORD your God shall bless you, and that is a promise that you can take to the bank, the LORD your God shall bless you in all of your increase, in all of the work of your hands, therefore, you shall surely rejoice.**

Once again, why are we here? We are here first and foremost because God commands us to be. It is an eight-day time period that God has set aside for us to observe. The Feast of Tabernacles is God's Feast that depicts a major part of His plan for mankind. This Feast pictures 1,000 years of peace, 1,000 years of happiness on this earth. Our Savior, mankind's Savior, Jesus Christ, is returning to this earth so that God's way of life can be experienced by the entirety of mankind for the first time in history. We now have the awesome privilege to live a taste of the Millennium right now at this year's Feast of Tabernacles. But in that command to be here, God knows what is best for us. God knows that in keeping the Feast there comes great blessings, so therefore, God says, "You shall surely rejoice." If we keep this Feast properly there is no other experience that can be had other than that: "You *shall* surely rejoice." We are here to have the best Feast ever. That is a command. That is a promise from our Great God.

But in order to do so, there is only one way. That one way is living God's way of life, living and acting the way God thinks. That way is outlined in Galatians 5:22-25. Turn with me there, to **Galatians 5:22—But the fruit of the spirit, *that* "spirit," that "spirit" is God the Father and Jesus Christ living in us and working through us. It is the mind. It is the being of God Himself that is there to lead and to guide us. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have put to death the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. We are here at this**

year's Feast to live and walk in God's spirit. Each and every action, each and every *reaction*, each and every word that comes out of our mouths must be governed by that spirit, which is or should be working in us. As we go through each and every day of this eight-day Feast, we should be applying more and more of God's way of thinking, God's way of living in *everything* that we do and say.

In this sermon we're going to examine priorities and those priorities are governed by each and every fruit of God's holy spirit. So where do we begin? There is a statement that says, "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail." Now, *that's* a powerful statement. That statement holds true in just about everything in life, whether it is spiritual or physical. Planning, or the lack thereof, affects our spiritual life, our education, career goals, family, and the list could go on and on and on. That statement is ever so true even in how we keep God's Feast of Tabernacles. We must plan and we must execute that plan throughout the Feast if we truly want to have a *great* Feast.

It is imperative that we consider and dwell on the fruits that we must exemplify this week. If we just take each day as it comes, each encounter with others (whether it be family, brethren, or even those outside of the Church) without considering how we should be reacting or talking, we will fail in having a great Feast.

So once again, **Galatians 5:22—But the fruit of the spirit is...** First of all, what is "fruit"? When you walk into a garden or an orchard, the fruit which is growing on the plant or tree is *why* the plant or tree is there in the first place. The fruit is the most valuable part. Without fruit, the plant is useless. It has no value whatsoever. That fruit is what is seen. That fruit is what is given to us to be nourished and enjoyed. That fruit also grows to be given to others.

In Galatians 5:22 there are nine fruits that are listed. The term "fruit of the spirit" sums up the nine spiritual attributes of a Christian life. These are not nine fruits that we can just pick and choose from, but these nine fruits collectively form one fruit, which is the life that each and every one of us must live. Just as the fruit in a garden, our fruit must be visible and be given to all who are around us, not only at this Feast, but throughout our entire lives.

So once again, Galatians 5:22 states, **But the fruit of the spirit**, those nine collective fruits that form one spirit, God's spirit, is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering**, which is "patience," **gentleness**, which is "the quality of being kind and caring," **goodness**, that is "moral excellence or equality of imitating God," **faith, meekness**, "meekness" is "humbly patient," **temperance**, "moderation or self-constraint," **against such there is no law**. These fruits sum up God's spirit. They sum up His character. They sum up how we should act, talk, and think as God's spirit flows through us.

Every time that I think of the fruits of the spirit my mind automatically gravitates to or thinks of the second fruit, which is "joy." So, what is "joy"? The definition of the word "rejoice," from which our word "joy" comes from, is "to feel great delight, to welcome, or to be glad." "Joy" is also "the feeling or source or the cause of great happiness." That word alone sets the stage for the best Feast ever! God says that we are to rejoice at this Feast. We *are* to have joy!

Whenever I consider "joy," I always remember my grandmother, who has since passed away. She lived to the ripe old age of 101. One evening Patty and I had come to visit her, and as I was talking I noticed a small plaque on the TV stand. At first glance I was a little perplexed because I couldn't make out what it was, so I asked my grandma-mom (that's what I called her), I asked grandma-mom what it was. She said, "Stevie..." (now, that's what she always called me), she said, "Stevie, if you take your time and look at it closely you will see." Have you ever seen one of those pictures that *really* don't make sense, but as you relax and stare at it a picture or a hidden message comes into focus? Well, this was one of those, but on a smaller scale.

So, as I relaxed and looked the plaque finally came into focus, and the word "joy" appeared. Once I was able to see it my grandma-mom began to explain. She said, "Finding true joy in life is much like finding the word 'joy' in that plaque. You have to diligently search for it and you have to keep your focus on it. True joy in life can only come to you in one way. It's something that we all want, but our focus and our priorities can stand in the way of achieving it."

So what is that one way that true joy can come to you at this Feast? How can we guarantee that we *will* rejoice at this Feast as God commanded, as He promised? Once again, it all boils down to our focus and our priorities, which must be governed by each and every fruit of God's holy spirit. It must be governed by our willingness to walk and live as God instructs us to do.

In Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus Christ expounded upon that focus and the priorities that sum up God's way of life in a few short sentences. Turn with me to **Matthew 22:36-40—Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all of your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all of the law and the prophets.** Brethren, did you notice that there is not a third commandment listed there? There is not a commandment that states, "You shall love yourself." And why is that? It is because that is our natural proclivity. We are selfish, or self-centered by nature, so that is why Jesus Christ related God's priorities in how we should live. He outlined an order, and that order of priority is we must always put God first. Then after God, our primary focus should be on the needs of others. And then lastly, ourselves.

So once again **Matthew 22:36—Master, which is the great commandment in the law?**

**Verse 37—Jesus said unto him, You shall love,** that is the first fruit of God's spirit. And what is "love"? Love is "unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the good of another." Going on... **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your mind.** To love God we must put Him first in everything that we do and say. Keeping God first has to be our number one, our top priority.

**Verse 38—This is the first commandment.** At this Feast of Tabernacles, how do we show our love for God? How do we show that visible fruit in our lives that God *is* our top priority, that we are loyal to and

concerned about our relationship with God? Let's examine just a few of the ways that are easily obtainable.

Turn back to Leviticus 23:34. **Leviticus 23:34**, God told Moses, **Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.** That fifteenth day began as the sun went down on Wednesday, October the 8<sup>th</sup>. On the first day, the 9<sup>th</sup> of October of this year, **it shall be an holy convocation. You shall do no servile work therein. Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Eternal, and on the eighth day, that's Thursday, October the 16<sup>th</sup>, shall be an holy convocation unto you, and you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. It is a solemn assembly, and you shall do no servile work therein.** The first and eighth days of this year's Feast are Holy Days unto the Lord. They are to be treated and kept just as the annual Sabbath day during the year, but these days are even more special. They are the High Days of the Feast. They begin and they end at sundown on the first, and the Last Great Day. **These *are* the Feasts of the LORD, it says in verse 37, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations.**

In order to keep the Feast, God says that we must keep it for an entire eight-day-period. Just as we cannot pick and choose which of the nine fruits (or spiritual attributes) of God's spirit that we will live and exercise, we cannot pick and choose which days of the Feast that we will keep or attend. Keeping or attending the entire Feast, God's Feast, is the foundation for the best Feast of Tabernacles ever.

After the Apostasy in 1994, I began fellowship with one of the first and largest of the splinter groups that sprung up, but I was still in a deep spiritual sleep. That was the time in my life that I experienced some of those Feasts that I would not put high on the best Feast list ever. I attended a site, but in all reality, I really didn't keep the Feast. God was not with me and my priorities were all wrong. I remember attending the Feast in the same area of Florida that my family is attending right now; so many attractions with things to see and things to do, and to be honest, some of them are quite expensive. I remember rationalizing in my mind, "In order to *get* the full experience of that attraction, we really need to spend the whole day there. Anything else would just be a waste of money. So what harm would it be if we missed out on just one church service?" Unfortunately, we took the day off for a physical attraction and we missed out on the main reason of why we came to the Feast—to hear the message that was being given that day, to put God first. We put ourselves before God and we did not keep the Feast.

Once again, the question from Mr. Armstrong, "Why are we here?" First and foremost we are here to keep the Feast of Tabernacles for the entire eight-day-period because it is God's Feast, it is God's commandment. God has inspired ten timeframes within these eight days, when sermons and split-sermons will be given throughout this Feast, and the inspiration from those sermons will come at their appointed time each and every day of the Feast. There will be two, in the morning and afternoon on the first day, one on each day thereafter, and two more, in the morning and afternoon on the Last Great Day. Our top priority in order to keep this Feast, in order to make this the best Feast ever, is to be in the presence of God each and every day and hear the messages that God Himself has prepared for us at its

appointed time throughout the entire Feast. That is what He requires of us, and that *is* the foundation for the best Feast ever.

I'm going to expose a little bit more of my past dirty laundry. What I am mentioning to you are not my best spiritual moments in life, but they are something that I've learned from, and hopefully *you* can learn from them and not make the same mistakes.

I remember another Feast prior to God awakening me. I'm not sure which one it was, but I remember coming down to the Last Great Day. We were driving home that year, and home was not close at all. It was a long drive to get there. Once again I began to rationalize. That rationalizing stuff is not good at all. Rationalizing always boils down to one thing. That one thing is "what I think, not what God requires." Anyway, that particular year we made another bad choice. We chose to leave God's Feast of Tabernacles after the first service on the Last Great Day so that we could get an early start on a long drive home. We did not regard what God requires of us. We did not pay attention to Leviticus 23:36 where it says, "Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, and on the eighth day, the Last Great Day, there shall be an holy convocation unto you."

A "convocation" is "a gathering together for a purpose," and if it is holy, it is for God's special purpose. "And you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. It is a solemn assembly." God's Last Great Day, the solemn assembly portion thereof, is not over until the last closing prayer.

God's sermons, God's messages to us must be our top priority of why we are here. We must plan our days. We must plan our activities. And we must even plan our fellowship with God's people so that it does not affect our ability to hear what God has prepared for us.

Fellowship is such a vital part of the Feast, but how could it ever come before God? We have the opportunity to spend eight days in a somewhat sheltered environment from the world. We get to spend an entire eight-day-period with friends, with physical and spiritual family, with God's called out ones. We have an *awesome* opportunity to enjoy eight days of true freedom. However, with that great freedom comes great responsibility. We must plan our fellowship so that it does not interfere with the messages that God has prepared for us. It is so easy to fellowship into the wee hours of the morning and not get the proper rest. For me, it is so aggravating when I'm trying to hear a sermon and I have to fight nodding off because of not enough of good rest.

As we fellowship during this Feast, exercise the fruit of temperance in your fellowship. Make sure that you get a good night's rest. Remember, "temperance" is "moderation or self-restraint." Make sure your priorities are in order with keeping God first. With great fellowship it is easy to put others and ourselves before God.

And then, of course, there is one obvious need that we must not neglect when it comes down to putting God first—that is our prayer life. *That*, as always, is *essential* to maintaining that constant flow of God's spirit in and through us.

Dwell and meditate on the fruits of God's spirit. Ask God for a continual flow of His spirit to help you maintain your focus and your priorities, to help you in achieving joy. God first, then others, and then yourself.

And as we go through this Feast, remember Matthew 22:36. Let's turn back there. **Matthew 22:36** states, **Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your mind. This is the first and great commandment.** But what else must we do to have the best Feast ever?

Continuing on in **verse 39 of Matthew 22** it states, **And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** We are to show love to others. That love, how we treat others (as I mentioned before), how we react, or don't react, what we say, how we say it, it should be considered not only with God's people but with everyone that we encounter in and outside of God's Church.

**Verse 40** states, **On these two commandments hang all of the law and the prophets.**

I remember keeping the Feast when God's Church was the Worldwide Church of God. Each year we would be issued a bumper sticker that we would put on our car. With the size of the Feast sites these stickers would help those who were on parking duty and directing cars to a parking area. For instance, red was for those who needed up-close parking, ours was green for general parking. It was exciting to put that sticker on the car just before we left for the Feast. That was the official, "We are leaving for the Feast" moment. It was even more exciting, as we travelled, to see another vehicle on the road with a sticker on it. Out of *all* the people on the highways you knew that the people in the other car were a part of God's church, and they also were heading to the Feast. There was a lot of smiling going on. There was an instant bond that was created.

I remember as we were driving the whole way to the Feast we'd be looking at just about every car, looking to see if we could find the sticker, the sticker that identified God's people going to the Feast of Tabernacles.

We should have that same excitement for each and every individual that is keeping the Feast with us. We are a spiritual Family. We have heard many of times during the past that living God's way of life is all about relationships, how we treat others. This Feast our focus and our second priority should be putting others before ourselves.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a unique opportunity for us to experience a foretaste of the Millennial period that is soon coming. It is an excellent opportunity to let God's love flow in and through us for the benefit of others. So when Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," **Luke 6:31** also states, **As you would that men should do to you, do you also likewise to them.** That's where the statement, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," originated from.

When you consider that statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself," how do we want to be loved? The natural proclivity for mankind is life is all about "Me, Me...and a lot more of *me!*" You've heard the

statement, "If mama ain't happy, then *nobody's* happy!" Well, it actually goes much farther than that. That statement applies to more than just "mama." That applies to each and every one of us. This Feast can be all about, "What do *I* want? What do *I* like? Where do *I* want to go? Who do I want to spend my time with? As long as everything goes *my* way, then I'll be happy." But that frame of mind is *so far* from the truth!

Turn to Acts 20:35—I (the apostle Paul) **have showed you all things, how that in so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.** The word "blessed" actually means "to be happy." True happiness, true joy in life comes from giving to others, putting *their* wants, *their* desires, and *their* needs before ourselves. The "all about me" attitude, the desire or yearning to receive is actually the source for *unhappiness*.

I've always said that most people think that marriage is a 50/50 relationship. Living a 50/50 way of life is the recipe for disappointment because you're always expecting something in return. In order to truly have a happy marriage, it must be a 100/100 relationship. Each person must have the mindset that they are willing to give of themselves 100% all of the time. When you think about it, if you're willing to give of yourself 100% then you can never be disappointed because you're never expecting anything in return. This frame of mind applies to more than just marriage; it applies to *every* relationship. Our major focus should be on giving and putting others first, not only during this Feast but throughout our entire life.

Brethren, during this Feast, how do we love others as our self? First and foremost, once again, we must consider and let the fruits of God's holy spirit flow in and through us. That is the *only* way to experience true love. Take away or ignore one of the fruits and all fails. We must then ask our self the questions: How do I want others to treat me? To speak to me? And how about, to include me? How I want to be treated is how I should treat others. Not one of us wants to be treated rudely. Not one of us wants to be talked down to or given an attitude. Every one of us wants to be loved. Every one of us wants to be included. No one wants to be left out.

Look around you. Who do you see? I see my friends. I see my family. I see people that I have met in the past. But do you see the person or person's that you have not met before? Will *anyone* see them? Will *anyone* include them in conversation? Going out to eat? Or special events? It is so easy to assume that they will be included by someone else. Remember, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Our priority, our focus, if we truly want this to be the best Feast ever, is to make sure that everyone around us has that same "best Feast ever." Everyone must be included. *No one* must be left out.

Put yourself in the shoes of the person that walks away from this Feast, that spent it totally alone. This must not happen to anyone! Our focus, our priority has to be on the second of the greatest commandments: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Put others before yourself.

That love that is mentioned goes much farther than just those that are in fellowship with us. Once again, I remember many of the Feasts that we attended with the Worldwide Church of God. I'll never forget that how when we neared the location where the site was going to be held you would see hotels, restaurants, and attraction with the words, "Welcome Worldwide Church of God" on their billboards.



These establishments were excited to have the church in their area for eight days. Of course, part of that excitement was knowing that we were going to be spending lots of money. 12,000 people showing up in an area with 10% of their annual income to spend in eight days? Now, that's a nice chunk of change! It was a financial boost to local economy. But there was much more to it than just that. We were different from others. There was a respect for God's people, because there was a different attitude or frame of mind that came with God's people. That difference was the fruit of God's spirit. We were a "weird" or a "strange" people with all of our different religious beliefs, but there was something about us that many of the people looked forward to each and every year. That something was a breath of fresh air. It really was a hope for humanity. We were unlike almost all other people that passed through their areas.

This year, each and every individual that comes across our paths at the Feast, wherever we are, should have the same feeling about the Church of God—PKG. All who encounter us should see a respectful, caring, and loving people. Our respect and our care should not only be for all people, but for all of our surroundings, everything that we come in contact with, every place that we step foot. Whether it be where we meet for services, where we eat, where we sleep, wherever we should go we should keep it and beautify it just as God and Jesus Christ would. We should always leave our surroundings *better* than what we found them.

I'll never forget when Patty and I went to the Mount Poconos in Pennsylvania for the Feast in 1975. There was this little "hole in the wall" restaurant that we frequented for breakfast. The very first day that we ate there the service was absolutely terrible. We waited forever and we might as well have been invisible. Our total interaction with the waitress was, "What do you want to eat?" She put the fruit in front of us and dropped off a check. That was it. She must have really been having a bad day. Now, the natural proclivity would have been to *really* get upset and to speak our mind, because we deserved much better than that—we were a paying customer. But fortunately for us at that time in our life, the only time that we ever got to eat out was at the Feast or on a Holy Day. We were just so thankful to be there and to do something special or different. It would have been easy "to show her," have a bad attitude, and not leave a tip. But we took an entirely different approach. We left an exceptionally large tip with a thank you.

The following day we stopped in for breakfast once again and the same waitress greeted us. And when I say, "greeted us," I mean, *she really greeted us*. We received the VIP, the "Very Important People" treatment. She was friendly. She was prompt. Our portions were larger than normal. And it became a very enjoyable relationship throughout the Feast. It became more than just the expectancy of a large tip for her. She enjoyed our company and she felt appreciated and she felt wanted. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

As you go through this Feast, remember that we are dealing with people that are abused. They're used and they're treated rudely on a daily basis. We live in a society that is plagued with the attitude of "Me! Me! And more Me! And no matter what, I never get enough." The people that you interact with are especially treated this way while performing a position of service. As you interact with others, naturally

you're going to experience attitude. You will experience carnal human nature in the raw in the absence of God's spirit. But at those moments, that is where it is imperative to allow God's spirit to flow through you.

Once again, those fruits, "longsuffering," which is patience, we must always be patient. Keep the "me" attitude out of the equation. "Gentleness"—the quality or state of being gentle, especially mildness of manners or disposition. How are you going to react? Will your reaction be one of mildness of manners or dispositions? Or will you react like the rest of society, with an equal or worse attitude? "Goodness"—will you imitate how God or Jesus Christ would deal with the situation? And "meekness"—which is being humbly patient. These traits go against *every natural disposition* that is within us, but the fruits of God's spirit flow in and out of you. Make a difference in someone else's day.

There is a possibility that you will meet that person face to face once again. It may be during the Feast, as it was for us in the Poconos that year, or it may be in a new era. Will they have the reaction of, "Now I understand why you treated me so well!" Or will they have the question of, "You were in God's Church?!" Hopefully it's the prior and not the latter.

Brethren, in order to obey the first and great commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind," you must *live* the second commandment of, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." For what is God? God is love. And what is love? Love is the unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the good of another.

Turn to **1 Corinthians 13:1**. This chapter is considered "the love chapter" in the Bible. **Verse 1—Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, which is love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol.** In other words, "I'm just a lot of noise!" Or, another way to put it, "I'm all talk and no action!" You have to "walk the walk" and just not "talk the talk" to truly be a Christian, to truly live God's way of life.

**Verse 2—And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, and have not love; I am nothing.** God's way of life is so much more than knowledge and believing. We must imitate God, who is love. If not, sort of harsh reality, but God says we are nothing.

**Verse 3—And though I bestow all of my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love; it profits me nothing.** Our love has to be so much more than a vain show. It *has* to be genuine.

Hold your place and turn to **Matthew 6:1**: Jesus Christ admonished, **Take heed that you do not your alms, which, "alms" are your charitable deeds—that is your love, Take heed that you do not do them before men to be seen of them, otherwise you have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven. Therefore, when you do your alms, when you do good, when you show love, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues or in the streets that they may have glory of men.** Once again, our love has to be genuine and it has to be more than just a vain show. We *don't* do it so

others will think good of us. It has to be genuine. Going on...**verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.**

And **verse 3—But when you do your alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does.** Love has to become a normal part, a normal routine in our life. It has to be our way of life so much that we don't even think about it; it's just the way that we are.

**Verse 4—that your alms may be in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.** There is an old statement that says, "You cannot out-give God." This Feast of Tabernacles, put God to the test. Prove Him in the promise as you show love and concern for others.

Let's turn back to **1 Corinthians 13**. We're going to pick up the flow in **verse 4**. It says, **Love suffers long**. In other words, "Love is patient." Throughout this Feast we will have *many* opportunities "to suffer long." We may have many opportunities to be patient. As we wait in lines, as we wait on the slowest server in town, as we sit in traffic, as we deal with wrong attitudes, remember patience. Many of us have come to this Feast with family. Many of you are sharing accommodations with others. I know of some of the singles that are packed into a hotel room like a can of sardines. And then Patty and I are here at this Feast with a 16-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy. And that 11-year-old boy, he thinks that he is a ninja warrior. He comes with all of the moves and the sound effects to go along with it. All four of us are in one hotel room and not our three-bedroom house where we can escape to our own areas. What an *awesome opportunity* to experience patience. What a *joy!* I say that jokingly, because it truly *can* be a joy if we put the wants and needs of others before ourselves.

Continuing on in **verse 4...Love is kind**. When that waiter or waitress is slower than molasses in the wintertime, when someone snaps at you for no reason, when you're five days into the Feast in cramped quarters and the kids or your roommates are getting on your last nerve, will you be kind? If you keep focused and your priorities are right, if you allow the fruits of God's spirit, God's love to flow through you, you will be.

Continuing on...**Love envy's not**. Some of us are at this Feast with friends and family, and we may be even looking forward to seeing people that we have not seen for many of years. We've looked forward to those times when we could spend some *quality* time with them, however, what happens when they are off with others? What happens if a group heads off to an activity or a nice restaurant and we are not invited? If we are not careful, we can be envious and even get our feelings hurt. We've heard so much in recent sermons about being selfish. There is *no room* for selfishness at this year's Feast. If others head off in one direction without us, that is an *awesome* opportunity to meet up with others who are not going, others that we may not have met before.

I know that we have told close friends at the Feast before that we would *love* to spend time with them, but we know and understand that if the needs of others outweigh the desire to spend time with us, we'll hook up with them at a later date.

Continuing on in **verse 4...Love vaunts not itself**, which is "to speak boastfully or brag." **Love is not puffed up. Love does not behave itself unseemly.** "Not behaving unseemly" is "to not act or to behave in an inappropriate manner." Wherever we go, whatever we do, our actions and reactions should reflect or imitate God and Jesus Christ. Every individual that we encounter, whether in the Church or without, should walk away with a *positive* impression of us. They should look forward to seeing us come back. Just as entire areas posted billboard signs stating, "Welcome Worldwide Church of God," everyone should have the desire to say, "Welcome Church of God—PKG." In order to show love to God and others we live by every precept, every way, and every law of God.

Continuing on in **verse 5—Love seeks not her own; Love is not easily provoked**, we keep our attitudes, our anger under control. **Love thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth.**

We are here to keep God's Feasts, and as I mentioned before, God's sermons, God's messages to us, the truth must be our *top* priority for why we are here. We are here to rejoice and take great joy in what God has prepared for us.

And in **verse 7—Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails.**

Dropping down to **verse 13—And now abides faith, hope, love; these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

For those of us who are attending the Feast of Tabernacles of 2014, our faith, which is our belief and commitment to God, does abide. We are here! That is such a *beautiful* thing to God and Jesus Christ. That is their desire for us for the rest of our lives. We still have our hope. We look forward to the fulfillment of what this Feast of Tabernacles pictures. We look forward to the return of our King, our Savior, Jesus Christ, so that God's government can be established on this earth.

But as verse 13 states, "the greatest of these is love." That is what this Feast is all about. Living love towards God and love towards others is the only way to experience true joy. It is the only way to truly rejoice at this year's Feast of Tabernacles.

In closing, turn to John 15:8. **John 15:8—Jesus spoke, Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.** This Feast, let the fruit of God's holy spirit (those nine collective fruits that form one fruit) be your guide, be your way of life. Jesus said, **and with that, you shall be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you; continue you in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; and even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, than that a man lay down His life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.**

Brethren, we have an entire eight-day-period to keep and observe God's Feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. As I mentioned before, the Feast is a unique opportunity for us to experience a foretaste of the millennial period. It is an excellent opportunity to let *God's* love flow in and through us for the benefit of others.

As we go through this Feast, dwell and meditate on the fruits of God's spirit. Ask God for a continual flow of His spirit to *help* you in maintaining *His* focus and *His* priorities. Once again, God's priorities are *always* put God first. And then? Put the wants and needs of others before you. The order of God's priorities is the key to happiness. It *is* the key to truly rejoicing and experiencing joy at this Feast. Brethren, if you keep this focus, this *will* be your best Feast ever!□