

I thought I'd mention here today that I hope the sound works great, better, maybe, than normal. That's my hope! Because I've adjusted some of the settings on this device I have and I think I've worked out some bugs that were in it as far as how my voice works. I'm not a good speaker in the sense of how I use my voice for speaking. When I get excited, moved, motivated, whatever, and speak louder it gets very loud and then people have to turn down the dial. But sometimes when I start speaking in a lower tone, or whatever, I get very, very low and I have to boost that on the machine here because I talk too low and then people are dialing up and down and driving everybody nuts. Especially for the pre-recorded sermons.

By the way, I thought I'd mention that all my Feast sermons have been pre-recorded and I have actually edited all of them and they're on the system and so I want to thank everybody for their prayers about that, getting that done ahead of time. Again, the recordings like that are primarily for areas where they maybe have a problem - primarily Australia - but even there we're going to finagle things, shift things around a little bit so that really all they have to listen to is one pre-recorded sermon so that they'll be able to listen to all the live sermons I give in Europe while we're over there.

Everything is working out well, it's just a matter of how you juggle some things to make them work. But again, I want to thank everyone for their prayers on that. It's kind of like the book, how fast it was written, and then the sermons that came together for the Feast here this year. To be able to get all of them done in one week like that, kind of unheard of. Well, it's really unheard of. And then to get them pre-recorded as well in the following week, it's been a good two weeks. Been stressful around the house but it's been a good two weeks.

I do want to make comment about something else here. Everyone knows as time has gone on here we've had a lot of different changes in the ministry and I've commented on that in sermons and so forth, and we've had some situations where we maybe moved people around a little bit because of a need in the area from one position to another. Anyway, I wanted to announce today that Brian is an elder in the area. He was an associate for a time there, raised him back to an elder. So you didn't know that, did you? Anyway, this is news to him too. But some of these things will happen from time to time because of the needs in an area and so forth. And I just wanted to pass that along today as well.

One last thing I wanted to make comment on before I start the sermon and that is concerning what I'm wearing as opposed to what some of you are wearing. It's fine that you're wearing suits and ties, but I want people to feel comfortable with the fact that if it's 80°, 85, in the 90's, you can wear something like this and it's perfectly acceptable in the church environment, okay? And sometimes it's hard for people to make that adjustment and shift, especially if you've been

around the Church for a long, long time. That becomes harder because it's kind of set in the mind that we always have to wear a suit and a tie. And that's fine if you're comfortable that way in the heat outside. But when I'm going in and out from outside, driving to services, and just going through that, sometimes you get so hot and it's very constraining. So when it's really, really hot, feel comfortable just to wear a short sleeved shirt. The one I'm wearing is not tucked in. You can wear it tucked in, out, whatever you want to do. But again, anyway, on with the sermon....

Today we're going to conclude the sermon series entitled *Own Your Choices*, with this being *Part 3*.

As this series has been admonishing we make choices every day and we learn to own, and we're supposed to be learning to own those choices as our own and not do what human nature usually lends to itself to do by deflecting personal responsibility away from itself. When we talk about owning our choices we're talking about some of the bad choices we make. It's one thing if your choices are good and there are no repercussions and you're living God's way of life, but there are those choices in life we make where we tend to get ourselves in trouble, where we tend to say things or may say things that aren't right. We get ourselves into an emotional state or state of being, if you will, that doesn't agree with how God's spirit works in our life. And we're to address those things. We're to deal with those things to make changes. And that comes by owning the fact that *you* did this and not deflecting it in the sense of trying to shift blame on someone else or trying to make excuse for what you did that's wrong in the choice, and definitely not blaming those choices on others as being a matter of their influence, their control in your life or persuasion, if you will, or even their fault, that it's their fault.

So again, we have to accept personal responsibility for choices we make in life. And as I have mentioned throughout this series no one can make you angry, no one can make you upset about anything in life except you yourself. It's no one else's fault. But that's not the way human nature generally tends to deal with those kinds of matters in life.

Let's start off today by turning over to 1 Peter 2. We're going to pick up where we left off last Sabbath as we not only address the need each of us has not to deflect, to excuse, or blame others for our poor choices, but that by owning our choices and learning to accept personal responsibility we can begin to see ourselves more clearly for who we really are. There is a unique thing about the human mind that tries to paint itself as being better or broadcast or give the idea to others around them that we are better than what we really are. And we really have to see our motivations. We have to come to see why we do the things we do before we can make any change. And that has a great deal to do with what this series has been all about. Because only by being able to look inward, being able to see what we're really doing and accept ownership can we really repent. Because you really don't repent of something until you actually acknowledge, "It's my fault. It's not someone..." If we justify something in our life. If we blame somebody else for their influence or their being the cause for what we're doing that's wrong, if we're blaming someone else, we're definitely not repenting. We're not trying to make any change in that

particular area of our life. So until we can see that we are the ones responsible for some of those kinds of things that take place in our life, for choices we have made, then we're not going to be able to grow like God intends for us to do.

So again, the reason for this particular sermon series.

Let's, again, turn over to **1 Peter 2:1**—It says, **Therefore, laying aside all malice**, and the word means "evil," anything that doesn't agree with God's way of life and how He says that we are to live life. ...**and all deceit**. Now, that's a toughie! Because we tend to deceive ourselves. The very fact that we don't take ownership of our own choices in life is a form of deception. We're deceiving ourselves! And that's why even in this subject matter you have to go before God and say, "Father, help me so that I don't deceive myself. Help me to be able to "see" what's inside of me that needs to be changed so I can come face to face with it and begin to address those things in my life and change." Otherwise, they just stay there. They just stay there! That's what happens in our lives. So many things just stay there and we accept it. Not in this way of life. Our whole calling is about change. We're to become something different. We're to yield our self to it. Not only yield our self to it but actually pray to God to reveal such things to us. Isn't that amazing? We actually pray to God to reveal to us things that aren't right in our life. And when He does, a lot of times it hurts. Because to bring us face to face with the reality of what we are, to see ourselves the way we are, human nature tends to suffer at that time. We don't want to see ourselves, or we don't want to be able to address such things in our life because we really don't like that about ourselves or don't want to see ourselves that way. And that's why it's easier to pass it off on others and blame others, and so forth.

Therefore, laying aside all evil, and deceit, and hypocrisies. Because deceit leads to hypocrisy, it really does. ...**and envying, jealousy, and evil speaking**. So again, it's not just in our actions, it's... and words are actions, but it's very much about our words and what comes out of our mouth, because those things reveal what's inside, what's in the heart, what's in the mind. And it goes on to say, **as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby**. You know, have a hunger to hear. Have a hunger to hear what God has, desires for you in your life. You've got to want it. You really have to desire those things in life. Just like being able to see one's self more clearly, or be able to see the deception in your life. And I'll tell you right now, if anyone listening thinks they don't have some deception in their life, they're mistaken. There are things, I don't care how long you've been in God's Church, there are still things about yourself that you don't see yet. There are still things in your mind, in your being that you still don't see yet.

I'm having a hard time staying out of some of my Feast sermons, because we talk about this a little bit more. And I'll try to keep out of those to save some of that for then.

But you really have to have a desire to hunger, a desire to change, a desire to grow, a desire to see those things that aren't in unity with God.

Verse 3—If, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord, speaking of Christ, is gracious. How much has he blessed us? How has he dealt with us in life? Because the more we come to see how he's dealt with us in life is a good way to begin to see a reflection, how do we deal with others then? Do we learn from that? Do we change because of that? Because we want to be more like God in how we treat others, how we relate to others?

Verse 4—To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, you also, as lively stones... We have a life within us because of God's spirit. That's what it's talking about here. And that should be our desire, to be a living stone, a lively stone - in other words, filled with God's spirit. ...are being built up a spiritual house. I hope that means a lot more to us after going through and talking about the measuring of the temple, going through and talking about Zerubbabel and what "the plummet" means, because that has a great deal of meaning for the Church today and what we're doing and what God is taking us through at this particular phase to prepare for what's coming. Because we've talked about that which we're preparing for and pushing ahead and what God's going to be doing.

So again, **you as lively stones, are being built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood.** Isn't that amazing? You're called, we're called and God looks upon us as a holy priesthood. He wants us to see ourselves that way. What does that mean? What is a priesthood all about? What was the Levitical system all about? It was about serving God. It was about service to God's purpose to others. That's what it was about. And that's what God has called us to. It's about change that can take place in our life so that He can use us. And so we have to go through a period of change before we can become effective servants for His power, for His life to live through toward the benefit of others.

...an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. And that's a little bit about what I just mentioned here, these changes we need to make in our life. There are things we have to sacrifice. But if we understand that there is that which is spiritual in our life because of God's spirit, like revealing things about deception, where we deceive ourselves; we ask God to help us. But the reason we don't see a lot of those things is because we don't really want to give them up or we don't want to address the change that has to take place, how hard it is to address and change certain things. Because it takes a lot of work. It truly does. We'll talk about that as we go along.

Again... **acceptable to God by/through Jesus Christ. Wherefore, also it's contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he who believes on him shall not be confounded.** And so we understand what it means to believe Jesus Christ. It's not a matter of just believing some of the things, as is often taught in Traditional Christianity and not going any farther than that. It's believing what he said. It's not a fact that he just came as a human being and did the things that he did, it's what he taught! And that's what this is all about. It's a way of life that he said we are to live.

So it always boggles my mind how, you know, some of the first things that Jesus Christ said, the world around us don't listen to it at all. They don't apply those things at all. "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets," Matthew 5 [verse 17], I believe it is, somewhere in there anyway, real close, right in the very beginning he said, "Don't think that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets," but it in essence talks about fulfilling the law. And so he goes on to talk about the law and those things that are magnified as far as the law is concerned, "You've heard that it's wrong to murder." He went on to talk about what the meaning of that is on a spiritual plane. Not to commit adultery, not even to look upon a woman to lust. And so he shows that there's that which goes on in the mind that's a lot deeper than that what just comes out of us in physical sin, when it's manifested. It starts in the mind and it's of the spirit.

And so he says, **Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling.** And so again, mentioned last Sabbath because this is where, these are the verses we ended on last Sabbath, **a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence.** Well, that's the way God's people are, "a rock of offence." It's offensive to others. It's offensive to the world around us because there are certain things they don't want to see.

They don't want to hear that Jesus Christ came and died on a pole! What does that do with the figure on a cross? That changes everything in Traditional Christianity. He didn't die with his arms stretched out. He died with them up with one nail in the middle right through both hands together, so that when they came around to break the legs of the two beside him they suffocated so they would die before the Holy Day came. That's why they broke their legs. But when they came to Christ they were astonished he was already dead. Because it covers in John 20 (I believe it is), [John 19:34], how that someone, a soldier had come along and rammed him in the side with the spear and out came the blood to the earth. It had to spill. That's what, the Passover Lamb, his blood had to spill to the earth. And that's how Jesus Christ had to die. He couldn't die by suffocation. He wouldn't have fulfilled the role of a lamb, the Lamb of God. Incredible! And so they want him to have died like this because of paganism and because of other beliefs out there about a cross. And when they would have come around and broke the legs he would never have suffocated. But they broke the legs because when the hands are up here you choke! You can't breathe anymore. You can't push yourself up to breathe anymore. Isn't that amazing? Something simple like that? But what does it do to Traditional Christianity. Incredible! They don't want to change it. They don't want to address those things.

Sad, this world. They're not going to like the things they hear. So when people hear stuff like that, you know what? They might be interested at first, but when they see this ripples over into many, many things in life - the Sabbath and how the Sabbath got changed back in 325 A.D.. Incredible! A ruler of Rome who took charge and even played the control during the Council of Nicaea and they changed the Sabbath to Sunday. Sunday became the official state time to observe

their religious beliefs. They changed Passover to Easter. Incredible! And it's primarily known for the trinity. They established the trinity.

"A stone of stumbling." People don't like it. And they don't like you when they begin to realize what you're saying and where you're coming from. Because they have to change and address all those things in their life. And human nature doesn't want to do that. Well, for us that's just the beginning of change, isn't it? That's just the beginning.

And that's much of what this sermon is about. It's very refined in that respect. We change the big things in the beginning. We quit working on the Sabbath and we quit working on annual Holy Days, we quit observing things that have to do with that which doesn't have to do with God's way of life at all, Christmas and Easter, and so forth, and Sunday worship. And we change all of those things! And those are the big things. We begin to tithe. Those are the big things in life. Those are the very physical thing, really, that we observe. But then you have to begin working on something else, and it's what's in here. The very way you think. The very way you think, so that we can begin to take ownership for the way we think, so that we can begin to repent of *our* sins. Because so often human nature is always able to find the sins of others. It's so easy to find fault with others. That's just the way we are. But boy, oh, boy, it's hard to look in here, isn't it? God has to do that. God's the one that has to show you how to do that.

So what we're going through is very much about this, this looking inward, this looking at self. But when you read through scriptures like this and think about Jesus Christ, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," please understand that when you're called to be a part of that body, the Body of Christ, you become the same thing to the world around you. Isn't that amazing?

...even to those who stumble at the word, that's what it's about, stumble at what he said, stumble at what God says and how we should live, **being disobedient: whereunto also they are appointed.**

Then continuing on from where we left off last Sabbath. **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.** There is a way that God wants us to see ourselves and to yield ourselves to a calling that He's given to us. That there are those things that we can't even begin to see in life until God actually opens your mind to give you certain insight and understanding. And so to be chosen? "A chosen generation." To be amongst those? It's incredible!

You know, I walked outside a little while ago to walk around the building here and think about the sermon and some of the thing today, and one of the things that really hits me a lot in this area - I'm always thankful when I see the people who stick to the fight. But I'm also hurt to the degree that I see all the people who have gone by the wayside. And I was talking to someone last night about how long I'd known one individual that was in a particular area, under, I guess it was back in the... had to be back around '87. Had known them that long out of a particular area, that they were up in this area. And to turn away from this way of life after all that they've gone through,

after having gone through the Apostasy, having seen all the things they did, having been awakened out of a spiritual sleep after being spewed out of God's mouth, as it says about the era of Laodicea and what would happen to it after the Apostasy... Have some things to say about that during the Feast too. It's incredible, our history and what we've gone through. And another individual, an elder, has gone back to working on Saturday. How can such things be?

And so God has called us to be a chosen generation. But to come to that point of actually being chosen is another matter. He chose us, in the sense of calling us out of the world and giving us this opportunity, because no one can know what is true until God opens your mind. You just can't know. And then there's something that happens in the mind that you can't explain to anyone. You see it. You know it's true. You know things about the Sabbath, the Holy Days. And when you hear it, or maybe read it, you just know it's true. And you keep building upon that because God's spirit has to give it. And Jesus Christ made it very clear no one comes to him except God the Father call them, draw them. That's an incredible thing to understand. But when that process begins in you and your mind begins to be opened up, God's called you for a purpose. And we know the scriptures. I think about these often now because of how small we are, "Many are called, but few are chosen." See, God chose to call individuals, but as to whether or not they become the chosen, that's a whole different thing. You have to stay at this way of life. You have to fight for this way of life. And that's why in this particular series and some of the ones building up to it, we've been talking about, as we went through that entire (well, not all of it, almost all of it. I'll probably come back to some of the latter part of it), but Mr. Armstrong's Bible Study clear back in 1978 that applies to right now in God's Church. Incredible to understand that and to go through and read some of those kinds of things.

But he was talking about, at that time, putting the Church back on the right track. Well, in some respects, for us, we have gotten a bit of a taste over a period of time of three years (to be explicit about it), that what our human nature tends to do is begin to coast. Because there are certain things not being given to us in the area of admonition, of correction, or whatever, for things that we need. You know, we just need a boost every once in a while in the sense of this isn't what we should be doing. We shouldn't be letting down. We shouldn't be doing certain things in certain relationships and so forth. And those need to be corrected because they hurt us spiritually. And so God has, and at a very timely fashion right now, is stirring us up. And I'm excited because I see people responding. I see people repenting. They're acknowledging that. People are writing in and talking about different things that they have addressed in their life and they've changed it. They are sobered. They're stirred up. And that's exciting to see that because that's what it's all about. It's about responding to God's spirit and what He's giving to us at a particular time. Because we have a work in front of us that we thought we had in 2008. Well, we did have at that time, but it wasn't what we thought it was going to be. And that's how we learn, through that process as well. But what God has given right now and what's coming out in the new book - incredible! Incredible! It truly is.

And so He gives us an opportunity to have been called, to become a part that's chosen - a chosen generation. He wants us to see us in that light. Keep fighting! Keep working for it! Because it doesn't... That's why this admonition is being given by Peter. There are things we have to do in our life, to address in our life, where he said, "laying aside all malice, all evil, all deceit, hypocrisies, and envy, and evil speaking," because *we're a chosen generation*. That's what he's saying! Because we're a chosen people, that God has given us an opportunity. How incredible is that to be called out of this world? To be this size, to be called out of the world, one in 14,000,000 people! Incredible!

You're a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation. That's how God sees us and that's how He wants us to be able to see ourselves in a calling that God has given to us. ...**a peculiar (special) people.** Not because we're anything great. No! It's because of God's calling! Because He's offering us something great, to be a part of His Kingdom, to be a part of His Family, to be able to live on into the Millennium or to be changed at Christ's coming, whatever, wherever a person is in that as far as the Church is concerned right now.

So again, **You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation...** Now, for a holy nation we better be living that kind of life. That's what the admonition is here. We better be responding and living that kind of life. Otherwise, what are we? Said up there, he said earlier in verse 1, no hypocrisies. Got to get rid of that because hypocrisy doesn't fit into being a holy nation, a holy people. "Holy," means God's in it. "Holy," means that God's spirit is in it, His holy spirit's in it. And that's why, you know, even in the world and talking about taking God's name in vain - they don't even care about that anyway - but even within the Church sometimes one of the first things we learn about that or think about that is that we don't want to use God's name in vain in the sense of curse words. It goes way, way, way beyond that on a spiritual plane. It means because when we receive God's holy spirit into us we better not take that name in vain. We're a part of the Church of God. We have God's holy spirit dwelling in us because we've been begotten of God's spirit, and we better be responding to that power to change our lives, or otherwise we take it in vain. We take God's name in vain. And God doesn't want us to do that. He wants us to yield to the change, to the process of that which has to take place in the mind through repentance and spiritual growth in our life.

So again here, **a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a special people** (is what it means), not "peculiar" in the sense of weird. We are weird to the world because we're a stone of stumbling, you know, a rock... just like Christ is a rock of offence. Well, we fit in that too. We're rocks, as we talk about the temple, that are being molded and prepared, fit into place. **A special people; that you should show forth**, I love this word... **that you should show forth the praises...** It's a word that means, "virtues," "the virtue." It means "character." It means, "moral excellence," in Greek. It means all those three. You can't separate. They all fit together. So we're to show forth the moral excellence, the character, if you will, okay, of God Almighty, the virtues. Because our life changes and if God's spirit's living within us then we're going to begin

living different. And were going to grow in character, in Godly character. We're going to grow in a different way of thinking that's natural in this world that's not be normal and natural in us. We're to fight against what's normal and natural by selfishness, and we're to yield ourselves to God's spirit which is a willingness to love others even to the point of sacrificing self. Spiritual sacrifice is what Peter said just before this, a few verses ahead.

And so again here, we're to show forth by how we live, by how we talk to others, by how we treat others, by everything that comes out of us, that we're different. And people are to see that. Even if they don't agree with it they're to see that you keep a different day. You don't keep that secret, as a whole. There are neighbors, there are people who see you do things and they know what you're doing. I'm amazed sometimes when people find out... I worked at a place down in Houston, Texas before I was in the ministry, and the place was filled with people. I can't remember how many employees it had. But when I was leaving to go to another place to work that was a competitor - got more for that, raised in responsibility and everything - anyway, that's how you... Sometimes you have to do things like that in life. But, anyway, I was amazed at the number of individuals who made comment about how they respected certain things I did concerning the Sabbath. They all learned about the Sabbath because it was a talk amongst them when it came down to inventory in October - I wasn't there because it was done on Saturday. And I told them. Everybody had to be there. It was mandatory. And told my employers. They knew I wasn't going to be there. They already knew I didn't work on the Sabbath or on Saturday (for them).

So we do things like that and we don't realize the impact it has on other people's lives. I remember one individual that was - how do I describe this - better in a worldly character than many of the others who were there, who had some principle about him. And he came up and said that one thing he wanted me to know before I leave is that he'd always admired that, that he saw that, that I'd stuck to a principle; that he respected. I didn't know what he was talking about at first and then he went on to tell me about the Sabbath. I had no idea anybody there, in that respect, even knew better or talked about it, because the shop, the place wasn't opened up, the business wasn't opened up on Saturday at all. But it was that one time in the year. Incredible. Sometimes we don't know the impact we have on other people, whether it be neighbors, whether it be someone at work, whoever it might be. And you know what, in time all of them are going to have an opportunity, as a whole, to be called, whether it's in this age or in an age to come. And they knew you. They know you. Or they have known you. If you become, if you continue on and you're a part of God's Family, they're going to know. It's going to be in their mind. God sees to it; says so.

So, You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special people; that you should show forth the praises, the virtues, the moral excellence, the character of God. Because that's the only way it can come through, is if God is in it, if we're yielding to God's spirit and there is change in how we treat people, how we think... or how we talk about people. We don't talk about people, see, and people notice that. People realize that you're different in the community,

or whatever it might be. They realize that you're different. ...**of him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Which in time past were not a people.** It's the way of the world. Until God calls us, as human beings, until it's His purpose to begin changing us, to do something in us which He purposed in all of mankind, and why we were created in the first place, until God begins to do that work we're left to ourselves. The world is left to itself, as a whole. When Jesus Christ came along, did the world change? Did the world accept what he said? Very few did. Most went away! When the Church began, then, in 31 A.D., you know, it talks about 3,000 of all the thousands that had heard him and were moved and motivated by certain things, that began in the Church, when they began to hear the things that were being preached. And still, a very small Church, because all those people that were there at that time, they scattered out into all the different areas of the... It mentions them. It mentions the different regions they were from. They went back to those regions, those individuals did. Amazing, the history of the Church and what we've gone through and things that even began so long ago that are still a part of life. Very few. Very few called through time, through 6,000 years. Very few whom God has worked with through time because it isn't His purpose until later on. The vast majority are meant for another time and they don't know it. Sad.

Verse 11—Dearly beloved... let's back up here, **Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God.** So what's that mean? Not God's people? The whole world belongs to God. All mankind belongs to God. Everything that exists belongs to God. But as far as having a relationship with God, it's not in the world except those that God has chosen at a particular period of time to deal with.

That's why I marvel sometimes in the Old Testament. You think of *4,000 years, 4,000 years* and how many were dealt with. Not that many! Because God worked with them individually to mold and fashion certain things as a part of a government and part of what He was building at that time during the first 4,000... Most of the construction, as far as the numbers are concerned of 144,000 has happened in the last 2,000 years in God's Church. So in the previous 4,000 years you don't read about a lot in the Bible. What was Noah? The eighth preacher? Was that, is that what it says there? Eighth preacher of righteousness? All that period of time, a thousand, two hundred, whatever it was, I have to go back and look it up, before the flood came. And Noah, by his time he was the only one? None of his family, just Noah. The only one at the very end, by that time, who would respond, who was listening to God, because God had called him for a specific purpose and worked with him for a specific purpose. And then after the flood? Ten generations down the line, Noah is still alive and he teaches Abraham. Abraham learns from him, Abram at that time. Incredible! Because he lived 300 plus years after the flood. I can't comprehend that! But I know it's true.

And so here Abraham, finally, Noah dies and God speaks to Abraham and says, "Going to move you away from your family and from this area of the world and..." basically, it says, "he went." He obeyed God. He followed and God is working with another man, and his wife, Sarah. The only

place where we see the first example of two people, husband and wife, being worked with as a team. And God worked with them, molded and fashioned them, prepared things that are in them that are going to be used later on as far as where they are in the Temple. We don't, I don't know where they are in the Temple. Some have speculated where some people are. Some people have speculated where Moses might be in the Temple. How many of the Israelites, several million people taken out of Egypt during the exodus, how many people did God work with at that time? How many people were given of His holy spirit and worked with by God? I know one. Moses. After that, Aaron, Miriam, beyond that, Joshua and Caleb. Do you know of any more? I don't.

There is no evidence through that entire period that there were more. On the contrary, the Israelites, that's not what they were called for. They were called to set an example of something else. They were given the 10 Commandments on the day of Pentecost. Isn't that an awesome lesson and has such meaning for what the day of Pentecost is all about? Israelites given the 10 Commandments on the day of Pentecost and they didn't keep His law. They couldn't because they were missing something that wasn't given until Pentecost of 31 A.D., God's holy spirit. Without God's holy spirit mankind can't keep that law, that way of life. We have to have help from God. Because it's in the mind to change selfishness to that which is unselfish, to that which is in agreement with God. Incredible, what mankind has gone through.

So do we see ourselves as the people of God and realize how precious a gift and blessing we've been given? Because I'll tell you right now as a whole so often we don't! We really don't. We tend to forget that as human beings. We tend to forget and not really dwell upon or think about or meditate upon the reality of how awesome it is of a calling we have! The more we understand that the more we'll esteem it, the more we'll magnify it, and really, the more we'll respond to God because we realize how precious it is. Because it hasn't been given to many thorough time. After 6,000 years, as a whole, there are only going to be 144,000 human beings who have gone through a process, who have listened to God, who are going to be in the first resurrection and come back with Jesus Christ to rule on this earth for 1,000 years, and plus another hundred over mankind. But that's the allotted time for all of mankind that will ever be born, because there will never be more born after that. God's plan is over for the potential growth of His Family by that stage. Incredible what we know, what God has shown to us!

And so to have such opportunity to be a part and to understand that at the end-time, if you're blessed to be called to live on into a new age, you're at the foundation of something incredible. Because now, see, those that live on in the Millennium are still going to die, but they're going to be resurrected if they go through the process, yield to the process of a life growing in them that can be resurrected at the end of the thousand years. Because everybody else had to wait. Like, going back to Abel, righteous Abel, the very first. It wasn't Adam and Eve. They weren't worked with by God's spirit. They didn't respond. They sinned. They were cut off. And so Abel came along, Cain killed him, but Abel came along, lived right with God and he was the first preacher of righteousness to live God's way of life. Incredible! Now, he's had to wait - we don't know what

stage he was killed, whether, was it a hundred years into the... after God had created Adam and Eve? Was it two...? We don't know. But he's waited, he's been... He didn't have to wait. He's dead. But he's been in the grave, in that respect, and a time period of nearly 6,000 years has passed before he'll be resurrected.

As I said that I couldn't help but think about how exciting that has to be to God Almighty - the ones he worked with through time and He's so looking forward to, such a pinnacle of time, such an important phase of time, when those He knows - and that says more than I can say by any words ever - those He has known and knows, He so looks forward to them being given life again in what He has sacrificed for from the beginning of time, God Almighty, and them becoming a part of Elohim, being resurrected. Can you imagine being resurrected in the God Family? That's why I love the book of Hebrews when it goes through and talks about those promises given, that God has given for mankind, if you will, and what we see now we don't yet see all things put under mankind. We see one that everything's been put under him, Jesus Christ, who is, in essence, has been given to be in the God Family. But there's a lot more going to be added to it is what the book of Hebrews is all about.

Anyway ...**but are now the people of God.** We need to see ourselves in that light. We need to understand. We need to be in *awe* of our calling, of what we've been offered. I've read through these verses and scriptures and I've given sermons that have quoted 1 Peter 2 throughout the time I've been in the ministry, several times, and the vast majority who have ever heard are gone. The vast majority who ever heard it aren't here right now. They're not a part of the Church. Many are asleep and I look forward to many of them being awakened in a particular time here. But again, do we grasp what we have? You have to fight for it. You have to fight for it. That's why I've been saying the things I have. If you really want this way of life, if you grasp what God has given to you, you will fight for it. But the very fact that people don't continue to fight reveals something, a great flaw, if you will, in our human thinking. And that's the lack of the appreciation and a grasp of what God has really offered to us and what He's placed before us. If we could really see it for all that it is - and you know we can only see it to the depth of what we're yielding to God and what we're crying out to God for as far as prayer and a relationship we have with Him. It's unique. But it's something you have to fight for if you really want it.

Verse 11—Dearly beloved, I beseech you... Well, let me read the whole thing again. **Which in times past were not a people (verse 10), but now are the people of God, which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.** The world hasn't receive that yet, but we have. We've received mercy, you know, the kind of mercy where we can be forgiven of sins, where we can have a relationship with God, where God's spirit can work in us to transform us into something different. **Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.** That's what we are on this earth, because very few have ever been called and worked with. I remember of sermons a long, long time ago when some ministers would go through and talk about, give the analogy of (probably heard 2 or 3 sermons since I've been in the Church in all those years), of the

example of people going across this country at a time, you know, travelling from the east coast to the west coast in covered wagons and the hardships and the number of people who died on the way because they were.... they were... What did we call them? I wanted to use the word "pilgrims," they weren't pilgrims. Settlers? Trailblazers? Pioneers! That's the word I was looking for. Same sort of thing here. That's what we're talking about. You forge out to do something different. You set your heart on something different. You fight for it. And it's a battle. They had a battle. And doing something that the way hadn't been paved yet. There wasn't a way out west, in that respect, but they made it! And look at our highways today!

But that's an analogy that was good, in that respect, to look at on a spiritual plane for us in what God has called us to be a part of. And that's what we're like in the world. We're like a pilgrim, or a pioneer, and we go through a lot of suffering because the way isn't here yet for the rest of mankind. We're few in number. And the vast majority, we look at mankind, we realize we're not... but we're about there. The Millennium, as soon as it's established then the way is clear. After all that God has worked for, finally will be here. To me that is such an incredible thing, to understand 144,000 and Jesus Christ on this earth ruling and reigning.

Talking last night about some of that and thinking about when you're a part of that Family. I can't comprehend being able to be in one part of the world and then in another part of the world, and then in another part of the world because you're going to be working all the time, in essence. Teaching, leading, guiding, directing, whatever it is in life that each one in that family will be given to do in a very powerful way because human beings have to sleep and you can be in one part of the daylight in one part of the world, be in another part another time. It's going to be incredible and incredibly awesome! I also think about the world hearing something like this, thinking, "You are nuttier than a fruitcake!" Ah, well.

Going on to say here, then it says, **Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against your life.** Because they do. That's why I love the verse, talks about basically what we're made up of as human beings, our selfishness, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." That summarizes everything that we are as human beings. That's just what we are. And again, I'm excited about the Feast sermons because we go through and talk about... I never get tired of discussing and talking about some of these kinds of things and what God's doing with us and what He's offering mankind.

But going on, **Having your conversation,** and this is "conversation," indeed, can be, but it can also be "conduct." This word is sometimes translated as, it's more often should be translated as "conduct," than just "conversation," but in this particular case it is about conversation in the context here. But it's a word oftentimes that just means "whatever conduct comes out of you." But so much that doesn't agree with God comes out of the mouth and what we say. It comes out of conversation, and it reveals, really, what's inside our heart, what's inside the mind, if you will, deep inside. It reveals it all.

Having your conversation honest among the gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. This has never been truer than today. "Stone of stumbling?" That's what Jesus Christ was. Well, we are, too, "stones of stumbling," as God is molding and fashioning something unique within us. And talk about stumbling in the way people look at you in this world? It's sad. Because they can't grasp. They don't understand. But I'm looking forward to the time that they will.

... so they may speak against you as evildoers, look down upon you, try to find fault. I think of... A few years back I was kind of dumbfounded by this once the internet was up and running as it was. And this has to go back about 15 years, something like that. And I think of a period of time I just did a search for Mr. Armstrong because I was looking for something, and I went after page after page just looking at the headline of what it said in the search. All the garbage, all the people that hated... You could tell instantly how much people hated him. Page after page of lies and hatred. And that's what we're talking about here. **Whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.** That's what I was mentioning earlier, that people may not know why you do some of the things you do, and they may find fault and even hate what you say and represent when you speak about the Sabbath. Sabbath keepers don't have a good reputation in this world. Look at the Jews. Do people esteem them and admire them? Not as a whole. Be honest about it. Seventh Day Adventist? Not as a whole. Traditional Christianity, Church of Christ, Baptists, do they esteem the Seventh Day Adventists? Oh, no, no, no. How much more you because you keep annual Holy Days and the Sabbath and so much more. Incredible!

Verse 13—Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers. And so there is that which is established that even an example that God has given from the very beginning of time and it doesn't mean that you are to submit yourself to everything in the sense of... Let's use the military. Does it mean that if you're called in the military you're supposed to go in the military? That's not what it's saying. But you're to submit to them without... You can do what you can do to a point to not have to go, but if it comes down to a point in time where they punish you or correct you, you're to submit and yield to that. Because they're there out of necessity, for a purpose in life. And because of the way the world is, if that didn't exist where would we be? What would happen to mankind? How would mankind be? So there's order that God has given for a purpose, and I'm thankful that we have the kind of order we do. It's getting less and less in this whole world because of where we are in time, but I'm thankful for it. And if it wasn't there, I think what it's going to be like in a very short time from now when trucks aren't running up and down the highway, when that stops, and groceries, you can't just go to the supermarket and pick up what you want because we're not prepared as a nation, as a people for what's coming.

And so when some of these things happen and people get hungry, mankind can turn very violent. You haven't seen anything yet. You can't even comprehend it yet. And what it's going to be like in some large cities, it's not going to be a pretty picture.

And so again here, **Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, as it says, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.** So I think of Jesus Christ and the perfect example he set. He did that. Doesn't mean you have to agree with certain things that take place, but you yield to the process. He didn't fight back. He didn't become belligerent. There are lessons to learn from this in life and how we should be, because this carries over into many aspects of our life.

It carries over into our relationship with employers, how we respond to people that are a matter of order and employment, if you will, and job sites and so forth. Let's go on here. I think this comes up a little bit later in some of what we're covering here.

As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all, you know, show honor, respect people. That's what we're being told here, how you act toward other people. Because today we live in a society today where there's very little respect shown to other people, very little honor shown to people. And yet that's the way we should be in how we treat people. I don't care what they're doing, how they - as far as a job or phase of life or whatever things that people go through - to not show honor to me or respect toward others is disgusting. And we see it out here all the time. People are so incredibly selfish. Now, that's the way of man anyway but it's getting worse and worse and it's accelerating. Truly is.

Love the brotherhood. In other words, one another. Love one another within the Body. If there are battles and wars and fighting within the Body or contention within the Body, it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be that two people who have God's spirit dwelling in them would get upset with each other, that they would get upset to the point of being angry, offended. And yet it happens. It happens all the time because we're human beings. But we're to bring those things into subjection to God's law, to God's way, to bring...to learn to control our behavior, to learn to do right in how we respond. Because there is no excuse for responding wrong. So that's why we have to *own* our choices. And when we make the wrong choices and respond in a wrong way and people get into conflict with one another, that needs to stop and it needs to stop quickly. But too often it goes on and then things can fester and those things happen. They're still happening! Less, but they're happening, because we're human beings. And the more that people are together that's just the way life is. The more that people can tend to be together in a... familiarity can breed contempt. And after a while you get to know somebody really well and somebody says something and it upset you because... whatever the reason might be - drama, drama, drama! Whatever happens in life. And then you can hold something against somebody and there should be lessons learned in that. No one has a right to hold anything against any other human being. Only God Almighty has

the *right* to not forgive. Only God does. Truly. We don't as human beings. We have no right to hold something against someone else at all. God makes it very clear to us.

So we have to be forgiving. That's what He says. We're to be forgiving all the time as far as an attitude toward other people is concerned. We have to look beyond, because we've done the same things. We've done things we want people to forgive us of. We've done or said stupid things and we hope that they will put it away from them and not hold it against us in the future and hurt the relationship, but on the contrary, to get past those things. And that's what makes us unique as a family in the Church, it truly does, because as a whole this is what people learn to live and as a whole that's what people are practicing. But every once in a while... It's like that example of the watery grave, when you go fully under the water and the head pops up, take a 4X4 and pop him back down - to self. Because we don't want, we want the self the old man, the example that is given there, the old man is buried and put in the watery grave and we're to walk, come up out of the water in newness of life, because that means we're living differently toward one another. And the old self, those things have to be put to death, they really do, ended in our life. And so we're constantly battling in this, and it is a battle.

Love the brotherhood. Love one another. That's what it's telling us, love one another. Don't ever not love someone else. You know what? That's why I love the book of John, 1 John. When you start reading through and you really study the book of 1 John and when it starts talking about a failure to love one another, you know what the description is? It's one of murder. It's one of hatred. If we fail to do, to love each other the way God says we're to love each other, then God says it's hatred. And if you hate your brother, you're a murderer. That's how God looks upon it. Because hatred is murder, spiritually, as far as God's concerned. Because we're to love.

And so if we know that we can love and treat someone in a certain way, forgive something, put it away... Why can't we forget something? I don't mean to be stupid in the sense of if something has been done wrong, that's wrong, and it's been done wrong several times, and you know that this individual may have a weakness in a particular area - they may have a weakness of something in their life. So do you have patience with them? Because that's what comes next. Do you have patience if they're still fighting the fight and they're striving to be in God's Church and they want this way of life, and they're fighting for it, are we willing to give them some time to make the changes? Or do we expect them to be where we are in that particular area right then and there, and if they're not, you know.... So that's where patience comes in, of being patient with one another.

If we can't understand how patient God has been with us... and I guess, the longer you're in God's Church the more you can learn that. Because it's deeply engrained in this brain, how patient God has been with me, since 1969. See, the longer you're in God's Church, I think it can probably have a bigger impact in your life. And so you realize He's been merciful, He's been patient. But you see, the big lesson in that is, can I in turn learn from that, love that, and want to be that way toward others? Want to be patient toward others. Want to be merciful toward others, because I

know how patient and merciful God has been to me. See, that's what it's all about isn't it. And so we learn how to do those things. We cry out to God for help to do those things. Because of and by ourselves we just can't live that way. We can't think that way. It requires God's spirit in us to help us. And if we want it, you know what, He'll give you the help. He'll give you the help to do that.

Fear God. Honour the king. Fear to do wrong. That's what it's talking about. Fear to go against God. Fear not to love your brother. Fear not to fight for this way of life. It boggles my mind that people don't fear fighting for this way of life. If you're not going to fight for it you can become a casualty very quick and be like the vast majority who have been called in this area in the last 12 years are. They're not here. The majority. Far more than what's here. And that's been repeated. There have been hundred and thousands who have been called, even during this period of time, who are not around anymore. They quit the fight. They quit fighting. Why? What happened? Exactly what Peter was addressing earlier - a lot of it envy, lust of the flesh, different things that happen in people's lives, being deceitful, hypocritical, speaking evil of others. And it gets you after a while. If you don't repent, if you don't change, if we don't yield to the change and fight against ourselves, fight against our own nature. Because that's where the biggest battle is, right there anyway, it's in self. And so we have to fight self, fight against this nature that we have as human beings so that we can become something different. Do you *really* want to become Elohim? Do you *really* want to become more like God, to become that as far as a virtue of life, the moral excellence in how we think? And if you want it, you'll fight for it.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear. Now, we can look at this today. Employers. Be subject to them. They have given you a job. You have employment. What kind of a worker are you? Are you doing it for them or are you doing it because it's right before God? Had a lot of people over the past three years, some of them made it very clear to me and a few others, because there weren't very many of us, "Why are you working," sometimes just say, "Why are you working for the man?" Well, who's the man? Anyway, "Why are you working so hard?" That was another one. "Why are you working so hard?" Because around there it wasn't the norm that people really put themselves into whatever job they had. Well, I told them, "I'm not doing it for them, I'm doing it for me. I'm doing it for my sake, for the way I see myself and how I feel because of that." And they don't understand that. I didn't tell them about God because they would never grasp that one there.

Anyway, do we do things because that's the way God says we should be? We should... I think of the sermons I've been giving up until this time. A lot of it's been about *work*. *Work!* I'm not just talking about spiritual work. I'm not just talking about what we have to put into this battle and fighting self. I'm talking about just the thing about work, physical work, labor, and the need that people have to work. Because that's what we've been called to in large part, if we have that ability. I have also, please understand, I try to put this in the proper category all the time; if you're retired, if you're old, if you can't do certain things, that, we've done that, that's understood. But if you're younger, you have the ability, why aren't we? And how much are we? And

are we striving to improve our part in life if we can? There's a lot to be understood there. That's why I love what Jesus Christ said, "I work and my Father works." "I work and my Father works!" They work, okay? And anyone that really grasps and comprehends God's way of life understands there's a lot of work to be done.

And there's, I read that... I think I read it last Sabbath, or maybe it was during the week, maybe it was a Feast sermon. Anyway, there's a verse that talks about that very thing. I think it was last Sabbath - the reward that God has made it and made us as living beings, that there is a reward of life you receive from the hard work that you can't explain in any other way until you've done it. It's something rewarding about putting time into something and what you... The satisfaction. Not just in what you receive in pay from it. It might be something you don't get anything for at all. It might not be a matter of employment at all. But of something, a finished product, it might be something around the house. It might be something you've done that you build, or whatever it might be, and the fact that you put labor and effort into it and you can stand back and look at it and there's a reward in that that comes through experience and time. And the more you do that in life and think about those things in life, the more fulfilling. And it can be that way on jobs too. It depends on how you think about what you're doing. Why are you doing it? Why are you working harder at it? Why are you throwing yourself into it? So, anyway, a lot is to be said about work and the mindset there and what we need to put into things in our life.

And so again, some of that fits into this in a very powerful way because it reflects... You know what? It reflects something in our thinking. It reflects how we think. And that can affect us how we live, then, spiritually and how we work on a spiritual plane. If we're not putting into things... Laodicea. Laodicea-Laodicea-Laodicea! We've seen that in the Church, what it did. Drifting. Lukewarm. Not zealous. Not working hard, but just kind of coasting. And what did God do. He said He spewed it out of His mouth, just like vomit, because it's not a part of Him. It can't be that way. There is that which we must apply ourselves to in life. Because that's what life is about. It's about what you put into it and it's about what you can receive out of it - whether it be on a physical plane or a spiritual plane in God's Family. Because it's going to be the same way in the Kingdom of God, God's Family and what God does.

[Now I lost my place because I didn't put my little tab there. Can anybody tell me what verse I was on? Uh, what part of the Bible were we in? No! I'm just kidding. It's 1 Peter 2, right?]

Anyway, **servants be subject to your masters**, oh, no wonder I didn't move it, because I didn't move down on the page. Anyway, **Servants, be subject to you masters with all fear**. In other words, it's about a matter of a relationship toward God and how we think about it in the first place and why we're doing what we're doing and the fact that we're seeking to do more for God's Church. Because that's... Because it's a matter of serving God. And so on and on it goes. ...**not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh**. So not just when everything is going peachy keen and everything is fine on the job, but even when things aren't going well and you have a hard person to work for. And there are plenty of them in the world. So there's a certain attitude

of mind we need to have toward them and how we think, because that's life. And candidly, in the world, you know what? Everything's not going to be fair! You want things to be fair? You're not going to find it out there. There are going to be times when you're taken advantage of, when things are done and taken out on you just because you're there and they know they can get by with it because they pay you. Put more hours on you? Absolutely. Fire a whole bunch and put more work on you? Oh, if they can do it, they'll do it. It's not fair. How do you respond to that? Buckle down and strive to do more?

Verse 19—Oh, I love these verses here. **For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience sake toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.** See that's why it says even to the harsh or to the cruel. Even to have an employer who is unjust, harsh, and whatever. There is a certain mindset God says we're to have to them. They're in the world. They don't know what they're doing. We know what they're doing, but how do we deal with that? Now, if you can't go on and get a different job and that door is not opening up, then even more so better be a certain way you deal with it. No matter what though we're to deal with it in a certain way. This word, "thankworthy," is the word translated as "grace" most everywhere else except right here in 1 Peter. There's going to be two words we're going to look at. This one here is translated "thankworthy," but it's the word for "grace." This is what grace is all about. This is God's grace towards us if we can grasp and comprehend how grace works.

For this is grace... This is what grace is. And grace involves the qualities, the character, the mind of God in how He deals with us, how He deals with mankind. Mercy. Patience. All the other things that involve this thing of grace. **For this is grace, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it...** Now this is often translated as "credit." "For what credit is it?" But it's about accomplishment, to be pleased with in the sense of how you've gone through something and when you've done something right, you know what? You should feel good about it. When you've battled something in yourself and you've done well and you've come through it because you've been able to do it God's way with God's help, there should be... It's like this thing of work. There's a reward with that. And so there is with this, that there is that which you've accomplished something and you can look back at it and say, "Wow!" Because maybe you didn't accomplish that the time before, and maybe you weren't able to do that before, but now, all of a sudden, you're able to do it and you're able to see it in a different light. And you talk about reward and feeling good? We should feel good when things are done that way, when we're able to respond and we've conquered something and come to another plateau as far as spiritual growth is concerned.

And so this is how, again, this matter of grace works in our life. ...**For what glory is it, accomplishment to be pleased with, if when you are buffeted...** The word in the Greek means, "to strike with the fist." That's how strong this is used here to get the point across, "to be struck with the fist." And so when they heard this a little different than what we hear it. What's "buffeted?" I know Jimmy Buffett. Is it Jimmy Buffett? Anyway, **when you be buffeted**, so again,

to strike with a fist, but can be about being corrected, chastened strongly in a hard manner. That's what it's talking about. When you are buffeted, **corrected harshly for your faults**. Do you get that? What grace is there? What kind of a mind is there that is in agreement and unity with God and how God's mind is when it comes to mercy and patience and other things. What kind of grace is there if when these things happen to you and it's happened because of your faults, because you were wrong? If you're wrong, didn't you really kind of deserve it then? If you took the forklift and turned over the whole pile, don't you think the boss is going to be a little upset if all the whatever it is you were moving with the forklift and it's all over the floor and destroyed and thousands of dollars worth of damage? I think he's probably going to get a little bit upset. So if he comes to you and he's not a real happy camper and he lets you have it and he's willing to keep you on?

The point being is when we've done really dumb things on the job, like I did one time as a teenager. I don't know why this came to my mind. I worked at this grocery store to help work my way through the first couple years of college, and worked at a gas station too at the same time. Anyway, trying to work my way through college at that particular time. And I worked in all different parts of the grocery store, and one time I worked in the meat department and learned how to cut up everything that there was - cow down to whatever it needed, and chickens. I saw thousands of chickens. Cut them up. Anyway, you didn't even know I could cut up a chicken do you? Okay, I've kept that from my wife. Anyway, one time I was told to go out to a country club to pick up some meat that they had that they used when they cut up themselves, and they put it in the back of the freezer and they wanted to make it into hamburger and they didn't have the machine to do it with the hamburger. And so they had all this meat out there at this country club, so I went and picked it up. And it was Friday and I got back and... course back at that time, it might have been Saturday, I don't remember. But anyway, whatever it was, I left it in the van. I forgot about it. I got sidetracked with something else. And it was the summer. So they tried to... and the blood came out through the cartons, the containers it was held in, and it stunk. Oh, it was bad! By the time they found it, when the weekend was over and they went out to use the van and they power washed the thing and they power washed it and basically that truck, it never really got clean. There was that smell that was in it for a long, long time to come. Anyway, my boss wasn't real happy. He didn't fire me but he wasn't happy.

So it doesn't matter what you do in life, you're going to do some dumb... Some time you're going to do something that is just dumb. That's all you can classify it as. It wasn't the right thing to do. It wasn't the correct thing to do and you're going to get corrected for it. And so if you take it patiently is that anything to feel good about? Well, the fact you might take it patiently might, for some people, because a lot of times people justify and, "Well, 'this' happened, or 'that' happened, and it really wasn't my fault," this deflecting thing again, not owning up to your own personal responsibility. Well, you better suck it up and just say, "Yeah, I did it and I was wrong!" But a lot of times what people do on the job - and employers, this happens to employers all... "Why were you late?" How many...? Today, especially in today's society, so many young people show up so late

and sometimes don't even bother showing up or they show up late. There's no timeliness anymore. You're supposed to be at work at 8:00 and young people... You ask employers out here if they have young people working for them, as a whole, or even older people now-a-days, doesn't matter, but especially younger generation. It's getting worse and worse, where they don't show up on time! It's a common thing! Has been for a long time here, actually, several years now. It's getting worse and worse. But they don't show up at 8:00. "Well, this was..." "I had..." "I slept in late because..." "I don't care how late you slept in. You're supposed to be here at a certain time. We're relying on you. We're depending upon you." "Yes, but..." And it's never their fault. And you know what, as a whole they never change! Because it's not their fault and you're being kind of too harsh here to expect me to be here at 8:00 every morning! I mean, that's the way some people think! I could tell you some crazy stories that have happened within the Church in that area, as far as certain jobs and what people have told me that happened on their jobs. And I think, "You've got to be kidding me! You told your boss that?"

So what good is it if you're corrected for your fault and you take it patiently? There is no honor in that. You just did what you should have done anyway. You better take it patiently. **But if, when you do well, when you've done the right thing, and you suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is, not the word "acceptable," this is grace with God.** That's what grace is. See, a mindset, an attitude of something that's unique within us as we learn about God's grace and we are able to live that then towards others. And when we've done something right - have you ever done something right on the job - and you got corrected for it, you had a boss get mad at you for it? I've known a lot of people in the Church that have told me stories of things that have happened like that. It hasn't? It happens. Things that happen out here that people get upset at employees for and give them a hard time for just because they have a bad day that day. And you did everything you're supposed to do, that you were told to do - but if you take it patiently, you don't respond back, "Yeah, but you told me last week!" "You told me yesterday...!" That shouldn't come out of our mouths. You just take it patiently. Grace.

Verse 21—For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. There is a way that we shouldn't respond, that people shouldn't respond to their employers, and sometimes they do. It's not a smart... That's not even a smart thing to do, but sometimes people do to justify self or to deflect, to deflect it on to somebody else, maybe at work or whatever. How much more when this applies to other things in your life, in families or whatever it might be? What about the Church, whatever it might be in certain things that happen sometimes in people's lives?

Verse 23—Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. It's not a matter of, you know, somebody gets mad, upset at somebody and they lose, they become angry at you in this world. I'm not talking about within the Church - as hideous as that happens in the Church, obviously. But if it happens in the world how do we respond? You get back and get in their face just like they're

in your face? It happens. I've had people tell me that too, of things they've done. Get back right on their level. You think that's going to go well? Is that worth losing a job over, especially in this day and age? Just shows you what we're like sometimes as human beings, if we can really "see" it.

So again here, **When he was reviled, didn't revile back.** He didn't act in the same way. **When he suffered he didn't threaten; but committed himself to him who judges righteously.** That's what it was talking about earlier when it talks about submitting, submitting to those, submitting to rulers over you, whoever they are. Doesn't matter whether it be an employer or whatever. **Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you are being healed.** It's a process we go through. That's what the words are there, that this process we go through of a healing process that takes place in the mind.

So again, ownership. Ownership because of our choices. Because a lot of that, even in conflict, it will reveal... I mean, how are we going to respond? Again, so often we try to deflect, we try to find excuse, we try to justify what we've done or what we're doing. And that's not right with God. Even when you're right you have to be careful, because of a right relationship with God. Even when you're right you have to be careful how you respond. There is a right way to respond and there's a wrong way to respond. So it's how we live and how we think.

Let's turn over to James 1. So indeed, we are learning, and then growing in our ability to become more fully honest with ourselves. That's what this is about, being honest with ourselves and striving to get rid of the deceitful nature that we tend to have as human beings. Because this is a self-protection kind of mechanism that human beings have. Because of what? Because of our selfishness. It's just the way we are without God's spirit. But with God's spirit we become something different. We can actually think differently. We can actually respond differently to things in life around us. And that's the beauty of it all. That's what it's all about. So that's why we're focusing on some of these things in the manner that we are.

James 1:1—James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. That's an amazing verse! What was going on? I think... I believe... I don't just think, I believe there is much we have to learn about this here concerning James and what they knew about the twelve tribes. Judah, they were in the area of Judah. They knew about Judah, but what happened to the other tribes. They're scattered abroad here. All the tribes, as a whole, were scattered abroad because this is understanding here that there's more, that there's even Ephraim and Manasseh. Incredible! I can't wait until we find out some of these things later on when we find out the whole history of things that have happened exactly the way they've happened rather than the way mankind has written it. But this is, even with the Church, obviously, even more meaningful and more interesting.

So how much did they know? Well, I don't know. We're going to find out one day. That's why I love some of the stories of things that happened when I was in Bricket Wood, of how there are things

of history in that region of the world where they believe that Peter was in that area teaching. Amazing! Because the Roman Empire was there. Ambassador College was located right below the Roman wall that was built - but I can't think of the wall right now. Anyway, they built a wall across that part of England, or Great Britain, or whatever. Anyway, the College was just below it in that particular area. And incredible history that goes along in that particular area. And some believe that maybe even Jesus Christ... I think Mr. Armstrong said that, maybe, I don't know, something he had written. I didn't go through that in that last Bible Study? I don't think he mentioned that in there, did he? Anyway, something I read recently. Anyway, about Jesus Christ may have, before he started his ministry, there are things about him possibly having traveled to some of those regions as well, because it was the Roman Empire and the ability to travel and where there was movement of trade and so forth in different parts of the world. So, anyway, it's going to be exciting one day to find out where... some of these things that really happened back then.

Anyway, **verse 2—My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different "temptations,"** it says, but it's about **trial and testing**; it's about what this is covering. ...**count it all joy when you call into different kinds of trials and test.** Do you? We don't tend to. You know what it does, generally, it just causes stress when you fall into different trials and tests in life, when things are... Because tests and trials generally are a matter of something in our view isn't going well, isn't going right around you, that might come upon you. But you know what he's telling here? These are opportunities for growth. That's what he's really saying. If we really understand the big picture, when you're tried and tested - And what are you tried and tested in? How are you going to respond. How are you going to respond to different things that happen around you? Now, we have battles there.

I had stress this past week. I get edgy when I have the kind of pressure of several sermons to get done, and then to put them on the system to get them done and recorded. I just... I feel the stress. And my wife feels a little bit of it too, I think. Do you? Oh, she said a lot! It's just there are things we have, and sometimes we don't even recognize the stress we put on ourselves in life by different things that we do. We get edgy about certain things. And, anyway, we have to learn to keep those things in check as much as we... and especially not to do anything wrong.

So, again, it says, "count it all joy when you fall into different trial and testing." Because the trial and test is how are you going to respond when things aren't going right? There's going to be... What is the fire? What is the trial? What is the test? It's testing you as to what your response is going to be to a certain given situation. And He says, "count it all joy," because these are opportunities to grow in. You can come to see yourself in a mirror. That's what we're supposed to do. And that's about this matter of accepting person responsibility then for our choices, owning our choices, and going before God and say, "Father, this is what I did. This is what I said. This is what I..." maybe it was just in the mind and you were fighting it, but there's a fight there. But the ability to battle it and battle it, you have to ask God for help because there is a war inside.

That's what we're told, there's a war that goes on inside the mind. It's a matter of whether you're going to yield to your selfishness or whether you're going to yield to God. And you've got to fight!

That's why I mention this over and over again, and maybe sometimes we get tired of hearing it, but if you want this way of life you've got to fight for it! And the biggest fight is in yourself. That's where the fight is. Otherwise, you give up. The fight is in yourself. And if you're not willing to fight, you're not going to make it. You're not going to come through this. This is not a cakewalk, and it wasn't meant to be easy. *It's a battle!* It's a battle. God has called us to battle, indeed.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different trial and testing; knowing this, that the trying of your faith, what you believe, works patience. Well, how does that work? What do you believe? What do you believe in how you're supposed to respond to people. Maybe something happened on the job, you're going to be tried. Or maybe something happened at home, or some relative... It's in a relationship of some sort, and how are you responding to whatever it is that's happened that's causing you to have to have a battle in the first place. Usually it's from the drama-drama-drama. Somewhere something has stirred things up. And so how are you responding to that? How are you dealing with that? "...the trying of your faith." It says "faith" because it has to do with what you believe. What do we believe? Well, we better believe something about how God tells us to respond and *not* to respond. That's the trying of your faith. "...could work patience." You may be perfectly right about something in life, in some situation. It may be toward another member in God's Church.

And sometimes we expect everyone in every situation to deal with things exactly the way "I" would deal with it. Because you know why we think that way as human beings? Because "I'm right." That's why there's conflict, because I'm right and you're wrong. That's just human nature, isn't it. The trying of your faith can work patience.

Now, let's just suppose, in this unique case, that you were right in this particular time. The patience can come in because of how you deal with another person. Somebody may be very wrong about what they're doing toward you. They may have said something wrong toward you. Are you willing to be patient toward them because you know how God has worked with you and been patient with you? If they're still fighting for this way of life shouldn't we be patient with one another and give each other a little slack in some of these things in life? Husbands and wives have to give each other slack in life. My wife gave me a lot of slack last week. She gave me some space, actually, so I could get these things done, these sermons done. And when she knew I was a little irritable at times, she was patient with me, because of the stress that I never had... No, the stress that I was having because of these things, to get them done. I don't know why but we all have different things in life and different things hit us at different times, and when I have that... Anyway.

So, are we patient with one another? Even husbands and wives or family members, we have to... That's how family treats each other. We're patient with one another. And we should be that way in

the Church, in the Body, patient with each other. That's a matter of love, isn't it, of being patient. God loves us, He's patient with us. He knows us inside and out. But as long as we're fighting and going before Him and striving to respond in the right way and crying out for help and repenting He continues to be patient with us. And so we're patient with one another and we give people time. Someone that is just coming along, or newer than what you are, hasn't been in the Church... We should be even more patient with them because they haven't had the kinds of experiences and opportunities we have had yet of the trying of their faith to get them where we might be on a spiritual plane. So shouldn't we be, even by that measure, patient, more patient with someone who hasn't had those opportunities? Absolutely! That's the way it should be. And so we learn from this. "The trying of your faith works patience." So when it's tested, James says here, "Count it all joy." It's an opportunity to grow. It can also be dangerous because it can be a time to flop on your face too and have to go before God and say, "Father, I did it again. I messed up. Forgive me, please. Help me to be patient, more patient."

But let patience have her perfect work. Isn't that amazing? There's a work! And it says it's "perfect work." There is something God wants to work in us to help us to learn this, because there is a necessity to learn this as a quality of life. ...**that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.** It's a matter of growing in character, Godly character.

Going on it says (this is a very bad translation here). It says, **If any of you lack wisdom...** Now the reality is, if we can acknowledge it, we *all* lack wisdom. And that's really what's being said here. "Seeing that *all* of you lack wisdom," we all lack it. We're... What is wisdom? True Wisdom, we understand, is like the Word - Word in here, it's the Word of God. True Wisdom, right Wisdom, soundness of mind comes from God. It doesn't come from human beings, because we're selfishly motivated. True Wisdom comes from God. So we understand that in the Church. And so seeing that we all lack in those areas, that we need... What does that say? "I need to grow. I need to grow more in the mind of God, being at-one with God and growing in the Wisdom, in the thinking of God." To be in unity with Him. So seeing that we all lack that, **then let him ask of God!** Because He's the source! That's what it's saying. "Let him ask of God." So seeing that we all lack that in how we deal with a lot of things in life, we have to ask God to help us.

When you're in a situation and a circumstance in life that challenges you, the trying of your faith, whatever it might be, some test comes along, you want to ask God for help to go through it. There is some time you may be driving down the highway and something happens and you just have to ask God. Stop and ask God for help to respond properly. You know what? That's what God wants, because we're learning to become in unity by what we're going through, by the experience, and we're changing.

Let him ask of God who gives to all liberally. God wants to pour out His spirit upon you. He wants to help you to do what is right. He wants to help you to bring into control those things that you do wrong. He wants you to be in greater control of your life, **without reproach**, as it says here, **who gives to all liberally, without reproach, and it shall be given him.** So when seeking

right things from God, that's what it's talking about here, accepting personal responsibility for our choices. Then God will not, at that time, reproach us nor point out fault. That's not God. That's what it's saying here. On the contrary, you're *acknowledging* that there is weakness, you're *acknowledging* that you need help. And of *all* in God's Church with His holy spirit, we know this, or we should know this. And God wants this to be in the forefront of our mind to realize, "I need help to live right. The source doesn't come out of here. It doesn't come out of my mind." It didn't come out of me; it didn't come out of you. It comes from God. And that's why we ask God for His holy spirit. That's why we cry out! "Because I want to do right. I want to respond when there is a trial," and especially when you're in it, that you go through, or test of some sort, and those are, as again, a matter of relationships usually. That's what pops up. How are you going to respond?

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting. In other words, do we really believe that's the way God is? Do we really grasp? Are we really convicted this is how God is? Do we believe this with all of our being, that because we see and we understand what we lack and we know that it comes from God and because we believe that then we are striving then to ask, we're asking in faith because we do believe it? That's what it's talking about. "But let him ask in faith, not wavering, not doubting." That's the way God is. And God will help you. *God will help you!* Do you believe that? Do you believe that God actually searches out those whom He has called, that when you're in a test, when you're in a time of trouble, that He will help you, that He will help you to know what it is you need to do, that He will even help you to accomplish it. But even then, in that there, He may tell, in essence, because He communicates to your mind, He may let you know what it is and you'll remember, "Ah, this is what I'm supposed to do," but the choice is still yours. But He's there to help. And if you start doing it, He'll help you through it. It gets easier as you go through it. It's an awesome thing! Awesome!

For he who doubts is like a wave in the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Says, For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. You know, if we doubt, then why is God going to help us. He doesn't want us to doubt. He wants us to... Why? Because it's how we think toward God. It's what we believe about who He is like, what He is like and what kind of a God He is. He wants us to see Him for who He is, that He is there to help. He *wants* to help. He loves us. We're a royal priesthood, a holy nation. He *wants* to live in us. He's called us to dwell in us by the power of His spirit. He *wants* to give us more of His holy spirit. That's awesome. If you believe that and you cry out to God and know... Know He's there to give you the spirit, the strength, the help you need to go through whatever it is - *if* you're asking, *if* you're crying out for it, *if* you're fighting the fight. And if we're not fighting for it, you know what happens? Like the majority who aren't here today. They'll quit. They'll go by the wayside because they didn't believe God. That's the reality.

And so it says, **A double minded person is unstable in their ways.**

Verse 9—Let a brother of low degree... Some of this is really awkward translating because they didn't get it. Those who translated so much of the Bible, especially in the New Testament, they

didn't get, they didn't understand, they didn't know God. They did it without God's spirit. Some of it's just done by word to word. And you know what? You can't translate something that's true and has things on a spiritual plane by word for word. The translators learn that very early on, who translate, help to translate in the book and so forth, and some of the posts and things that are out there, in the different languages. And sometimes someone will catch something and say, "Wait a minute. That's not what..." "That's not what... It wasn't...." It's not word for word because you have to understand the intent of what's being said. You have to understand the context of something that's being stated.

So, again here, **Let a brother...** It's about a person who has been brought low. It's not a matter of somebody that's lowly the way human beings think about someone, or you're not as good as, or whatever, or it's a fake sort of thing in how you're looking at yourself, a fake humility. It's talking about one who's been brought low, one who's been humbled to want help and change. They want to change and they want the help from God to accomplish it. So one who has been brought low because of something they've gone through, a test, trials. See, sometimes those things, if we respond properly, can bring us down to a point where we're not elevated in pride because we suffer, we go through something, whatever it might be, or we're in a battle of some sort spiritually and so it's putting things in the proper perspective. So if we let it do its proper work, let a person who sees themselves, who sees their weakness, who cries out to God, "I need help." Why are you crying out for help? Because you're not lifted with pride and thinking - what's the problem usually(?) - I'm right. That's why there's conflict. And you back away from that and ask for help, "Am I seeing this right. Is there something I need to change? How am I responding to the other individual? Am I being patient with them? Am I getting upset with them?" Whatever it might be. Because if you start getting upset with someone and you start saying words that you shouldn't say, you've sinned. You've done what's wrong before God. You haven't handled it properly. And so the kind of tests that try us, if we're brought low through the tests (that's what it's discussing here), **Let a person who's been brought low**, been humbled, and realizes that they need God's help, **rejoice in that he is exalted**. If you've been brought low because you see yourself in the right light you should, that you need help and you're crying out to God because you know you lack wisdom and help to resolve this issue, that you don't always know what's right and what is best and you're asking God for the best way to deal with it, you want to handle something in a Godly fashion and you're asking God... That's a beautiful thing before God. God will help that. That's what it's talking about here.

Know! Don't waver, don't doubt. Know that God will give you the help you need. And He does. He does. And so again here, "rejoice in that he is exalted," in other words, of what can be received from God because it's God who'll lift you up. When God communicates to you then and lifts you up because you have the answers you need and gives you the help to do the right thing? There is nothing more beautiful in life. It's the right way before God. It's a beautiful thing before God when we yield to a process and we don't act like we might normally act, we don't respond like we might normally respond. We learn to keep the lips shut, whatever it might be, and not to say

something that will hurt someone else. Words can hurt. They can cut very deep. And it can take a lot sometimes to work through those things. So we have to be very, very careful, what we say. Don't we? So we're ever learning that, ever growing in that.

Verse 10—But the rich, in that he is made low... What does that mean? If you think you're rich and you don't need help, you know, be thankful when the test comes along to bring you down a few pegs so that you can see, "Yes, I do need help." Or the fact that you even sin and been made low because you see what you did and you realize, "I shouldn't have responded that way," and then you go before God and repent. And hopefully the next time, then, you'll catch it quicker and you'll ask God because you realize, "I lacked in wisdom there. I lacked in what I should have done, and so I'm crying out to God." And you get to a point where you learn to respond better toward God and say, "God, I need help right now." Just ask God for help, whenever it is. When you start to feel a certain way and you know that you're in this, whatever it might be, and you know the emotions or feelings, ask God for help.

So it says, **But the rich in that he's made low.** That's something to be thankful for, to rejoice in, God says, on a spiritual plane. ...**because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers the grass, and the flower thereof falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in - what does it say(?) - in his ways.** It isn't *our* way to deal with things in life. We can't *justify* the wrong things we do in life. We can't shift blame in order to continue in our ways. But it's a matter of desiring God's ways. It's a matter of fighting this fight and a desire to bring this mind into subjection to the ways of God. And so when a trial or test comes along to try you in a certain area, something happens to put you to the test, ask God for help. Because if we don't and we continue to do things our way, the way we've always done it, and we're not trying to change, "fade away."

I mention it again, look at all those who are not here. They all faded away. What a horrible path in life to have that happen. You have to fight and continue at it on a spiritual plane. And that's *exactly* what James is saying here.

Verse 12—Blessed is the man/person who endures trial and testing. You endure it! You know it's a necessary part of life. It is a part of life. And the trial and the testing is a matter of then what are we going to do when a situation arises? Are we going to yield to God or are we going to continue doing it "my" way? Because our way is just wrong! ...if it's our way, getting our way, being selfish in how we deal with something. And that's the way we tend to be as human beings. And that has to change. We need the mind, the love of God living in us in order to respond better, to bring things in better control, to have better relationships in life.

Blessed is a man who endures trial and testing, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life. You know when it's said and completed, then you receive the crown of life, **which**

the Lord has promised to those who love him. And if we love him and we're living that in our lives, this'll become a reality through time.

Verse 13—Let no man say when he is tried/tested, I am tempted of God: for God cannot tempt with evil. You know what it's saying here? I've heard this misquoted. I've heard people misuse these verses. It's talking here about when something comes along to test you as to how you're going to respond, it's talking about the choice you're going to make. What choice are you going to make? And if it's a matter of it being a test and a trial, it's because of your nature. It's not because God put it on you. It's not God's fault, He put it on you. Something happens in a relationship and you're about ready to say things that you shouldn't be saying, things are going to be coming out of your mouth, out of your attitude, or whatever it might be that are wrong, God didn't do that to you. He didn't bring this along to make it happen. It's just the way we are. And that situation just brought it to light.

And so sometimes people go so far, and I've seen it, I've heard it in the Church. It's like, "Well, this is a trial from God," and well, be careful if it's a matter of how you might respond to a situation. Okay? Because it's a matter of how you're going to respond, as to whether you're going to do the right or wrong thing. That's not what this is about. The trial is there, or the problem is with us. That's what it's saying here.

Let's notice what it says, **For God cannot be tempted with evil,** tested with or doesn't try, **neither does He tempt any man,** as it says here. This is not God. This is not a way of God. He is not like this and He doesn't want anyone in His Family to be like this. It's God is God. God is righteous. God is just. His way is the way of loving to the point of sacrificing. If we learn nothing else we must learn that. He started it when He created the angelic realm and knew that there would be those who would take away peace from the angelic realm. He knew by how Satan was created, Lucifer was created, that there would be those who would choose. And so He forfeited peace so that we could be called and become a part of Elohim. A lot more is going to be said at the Feast. And we're already heard sermons about that and we're going to build upon that at the Feast of Tabernacles this year. It's an incredible process of how God works with us, it really is. It's astounding what God is giving to us to know and to understand and to see Him more and more and more.

So, "Let no man say I am tempted..." okay. **Verse 14—But every man is tempted/tested when he is drawn away of his own lust,** "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life." "I'm right; you're wrong." Talk about pride. And look at - don't look too much; don't look too long - politics today. All the fighting! And you know, news today, when you turn on the news, it's not a matter of news anymore, it's a matter of how everybody thinks it should... They even want your tweets. Tweet us what you think about this. I hate it! Nothing just make me sicker than, "We want your opinion out there of what you think about what happened in Benghazi," or whatever it might be. And you think, "Isn't that sick!" Sick, sick world we live in. Because you know what, everybody is right in their own eyes. That's the way human beings are. That's what God says about human

beings. We all think we're right in our own eyes. That's why there's contention. And God's bringing this out. "You can't govern yourself because you all think you're right in your own eyes anyway." And so you're going to rally behind what? And today it's like, and people are saying this more and more, "Two bad choices." Now, I'm serious. It's what some people are just acknowledging, and so the least of the worst. We can't govern ourselves, and God's bringing this to light. We can't! That's why we need His Kingdom. We need His Kingdom to govern human life because we're total failures as human beings. And He's bringing that to a head after 6,000 years.

Awesome to understand what's taking place out here, that He's bringing and making manifest so that people can see it at a time when they're going to be given opportunity to see it. Because He's going to begin letting people see the result of all that and what's going to begin happening... soon. I don't believe over the next year, but that's soon enough. It's coming fast enough. When semi's aren't going to go up and down the highways anymore. When you can't go flip on a switch and all of a sudden you have electricity. When you can't go turn on a tap and out comes water automatically. You're coming to that day in this country. See? We understand that. We know that. That's what this world is coming to. Incredible what one little explosion in the atmosphere can do - one little explosion in the atmosphere a hundred miles above this country and what it will do. Just one. From the east coast to the west coast and you won't flip on a switch, and you can't get in your car and drive it unless you have an old one that works. Because it's going to fry everything else. That's the world we live in today and we're going to go back to the stone age, in one respect, if you understand what I'm saying. Anyway, sick, sick, sick world. It really is. I'm not sure why I got on to that.

But again, it's about how we live and how we live toward each other. And we're blessed to be able to make so many of those changes in our life, and an incredible calling that God has given to us at the end of an age.

So don't shift the blame and say it's God's fault. **But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,** "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." That's the way. We all think we're right. (That's why I went that direction.) We all think we're right in our own eyes. That's when conflict comes up, people, and they don't get along. Why? Because they're both right. And if they're both right in their own eyes and there's a conflict in that they're never going to have peace. So "every person is tempted/tested when they are drawn away of their own lust and enticed." You know, the selfishness is very akin. That's what it's all about. Lust. Selfishness.

Then when lust has conceived... You might just say, "When selfishness has conceived," because that's what we're talking about, our nature is one of selfishness, inward. **Then when lust/selfishness has conceived it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.** That's where it leads. And God's calling us out of that to be different. **Do not err, my beloved brethren.**

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights. That which is good and really right in life, there's only one source for it. That's why Jesus Christ said, and we're told. He said, "Don't call any man good. There is only one who is good; it's God Almighty." I don't like that, because of that verse, when someone says, "Oh, you're good," or "You've done good," or "it was a good..." Whatever it might be. I don't want to hear that. The good is from there. It comes from God. He's good. And we can, in the Church, we can drink in of it. And that's an awesome thing. But we're not. Our nature isn't. We're not there yet.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Constant, the same, His way, *His* way, God's way, the right way, the way of outgoing care and concern for others to the point of a willingness to sacrifice self in order to accomplish... That's an awesome thing to understand. Awesome!

Verse 18—Of His own will He has begotten us with the word of truth. I love this verse. I love them all but some of them stand out sometimes more than others. The "word of truth"; that's how we're begotten. We're begotten because God places something in our mind, we're able to respond, we believe it. He gives us the ability to see it. And then that begetting of His holy spirit empowers this. We're begotten. He begets us... It's His Word. It's God. That's what we're coming into agreement with, the Word of God and His mind. And we want that mind to be in us, to dwell in us, that thinking. Not human thinking that's selfish, but of learning how to love others, or learning how to respect others, learning how to get rid of the prejudices and the biases in our life that lead to wrong judgment because we all... we have a pot full of bias deep down inside that takes time for God to work with, to bring to the surface, that dross, so that we can see it, so we can ask God for help to change it.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. It's all in the context of what we're talking about here. "Let every one of us be swift to hear," to hear God. Who lacks wisdom? We all lack it. Are we willing to listen to God and how God says to do it? "...slow to speak." Are we willing to try to bring this thing under control in the mouth? It goes on in James and talks about some other things, about shipwrecked and a little rudder and how big of a ship a little rudder can steer - and look at the tongue and the fire it can create and cause, in essence. That's what James goes on and talks about. He's talking about the use of the tongue and how great a power we have to hurt and to destroy that comes out of us. It really comes out of our minds, but it comes out in our speech.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. We shouldn't be so quick. We shouldn't be so quick. Because that's the end result. So if we can back up each one of these - if you're slow to wrath, you're going to learn to be in greater control. "...slower to anger," you're coming back to the point of being slow to speak. You're trying to get control, of not responding here. Because if you speak, if you say something at certain times, it can just kind of light the fire a little bit more, the tension gets greater. And you know

what happens? After a while, if you're not careful, you're going to become angry because you weren't slow to speak and it came back at you. Well, surprise, surprise! Anyway, that's why it says here, "be swift to hear." Stop. Stop before you ever get started.

For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. It's about what comes out of us as human beings. **Therefore, lay apart all that is filthy,** in other words, in conduct and bad behavior and *wrong choices*. Work to get rid of them and own up to them. And to be able to do that you have to repent. That's what this sermon series has been about, owning our choices. **...and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word,** wisdom. See, the whole context, you want the mind of God, you want the wisdom that comes from God. You want to do it His way, not our way, because our way is wrong. And if we stay in it, it destroys and it withers like the flower. That's why that example is given. It's here for a while, but it's going to disappear. They're not going to be around.

So again, "Receive with meekness." That word has to do with "a teachable spirit," a willingness to listen, a willingness to... a desire to put it into practice in our life, so much so that we want to live God's way, "which is able to save your lives."

We're going to stop there. I've gone longer than I thought I would in this particular series. Had more I wanted to say, but this is supposed to be it. This is going to be the end of *Part 3*, and the other scriptures we may have at another time in another series. We'll see what happens. I don't know.

Anyway, we'll stop with *Part 3* there and just remember, again here, to focus upon those things, to pray about them, that we ask God to help us to take ownership of our choices and not shift blame, not try to justify things we do that are wrong, but just to say, "That's mine, my choice," and repent of it.