

Last Sabbath we started a new sermon series entitled *Our God of Great Mercy*, and this today will be *Part 2*, and the final portion of that particular sermon.

And as it was mentioned last Sabbath, the reason we're going into this sermon is because at this time there is a need for the Church to grasp the lesson of God's great mercy, to learn from that. We are to learn from attributes and things of God and there are things that we are to live by then as a result of that. It's an awesome thing to understand, that we can begin to live some of the attributes, the ways of God, the mind of God, the mind of God that can dwell in us. And not only are we to be able to do that, we are *supposed* to do that. That's a part of what we're to practice - God's way, God's mind, God's love toward others - and He tells us how to do that. And it's a reality that you can't do it on your own. You have to have God's spirit. We must be close to God, draw close to God in order to have His spirit in us that enables us the ability to love others, to be merciful to others, as an example here in this particular sermon, to understand God's great mercy. And how can we of all people, if we really understand our human nature, if we grasp who we are, if we know who we are, if we can truly "see" what our nature is, our human nature, we'll be thankful to God. We become more thankful to God and we recognize more and more and more His incredible mercy. To give us all that He has given to us, to give us the kinds of opportunities and the blessings of life that we have and how He treats us as selfish human beings.

Because we are, by nature, selfish! And yet God has incredible patience with us. But we're to learn about that mercy, of how He has dealt with us, and to begin in our lives more and more and more to be merciful to others. How can we just be on the getting side of this, the receiving end of this? It's something we're to practice. It's something we're to live. And if we're not doing it we're missing the mark, horribly so. And so this is an opportunity at this particular time to zero in on this aspect of life, of mercy, of how we think toward others, of how we treat others, because so much of it does boil down to the reality: Are we truly being merciful to others?

So again, there is a need at this time to focus on that and to learn to extend mercy to others, and especially those in the Body of Christ.

So this means, as I mentioned last Sabbath, we are to be *far more forgiving*, a forgiving spirit, forgiving attitude. It is an attitude. It's a way of thinking. It's a mindset to be forgiving toward others. And it's a matter of God's spirit. We're talking about things you can't do on your own - not in spirit and in truth. It's just like the truth. It is a marvel to me, and I have witnessed it, talked about it from time to time with my wife and some in the ministry, and I think of Johnny and Myrtle there in particular, talked to them about some of these things and conversations we have and thinking about the Church and working with the Church and this matter of people throwing away the truth and the ability almost as soon as it comes to a point in time where someone

becomes disfellowshipped, to realize how quick the mind can lose the truth they once had, to lose it.

You may not think, especially some of you who are newer in the past several years, may not grasp that to its deepest and greatest meaning by any measure. But the reality is you can lose it so quickly and you can barely hold on, too, for a time. You can go through that for several years, just barely holding on and being lukewarm, and after a while there'll come a time when God doesn't extend mercy any longer and time any longer. And there are choices you have to make in life.

Please understand - you can lose this way of life so quickly... so quickly! People who have been in service in the ministry in God's Church, who have been in the Church for a long, long time lost truth just like that, truth that you think in your mind that, "No, I would never believe differently. I would never believe differently. Once that I have learned that Jesus Christ didn't eternally exist I'd never change my thinking about that." Don't be so sure. To understand there are truths you cannot hold on to on your own because they are given by God. The conviction, the mind to "see" and to hold on to those things is so easy to take for granted. And yet even as I'm speaking I know there are some who don't "see" that; probably quite a few who don't really grasp that and don't really fully believe it.

So again, this matter of having mercy upon others means we are to be far more forgiving in spirit than we are now. It means we're to learn more fully about God's judgment rather than our own, how to judge matters. We, as human beings, judge from our perception of people and situations and matters and we tend to judge people oftentimes very harshly, oftentimes selfishly - it's just our nature - from our vantage point, from the way we think they should be. It's so much easier to see how others should act and be and what they should or should not do than it is to see ourselves and the way we're supposed to live. That's just human nature! So again, that's just a trait of human mind and ability or inability to judge the way God judges. And so we have to have God's help to judge righteous judgment.

So last Sabbath the sermon ended just before we were to start reading what is written in Chapter 6 under the heading entitled, "God's Love and Mercy." And that's at the bottom of page 260. And I did tell some we wouldn't be going through too much of this, but I've had a change in heart. We are going to go through parts of this and finish this one section. I have a lot to cover and yet I may get through it quite quickly today, I'm not certain here, because there are some things we have been given before, and hopefully the understanding is growing there. But it's good to have a review of some of these because I mentioned some of this last Sabbath.

So again, at the bottom of page 260 it says:

If people get nothing more than only **one thing** from this book, I personally hope they could begin to receive an awesome truth. It is that **God is just**, and a God of **infinite love**, and **great mercy**.

Now, the world doesn't know that. They don't understand that. They don't really understand what that means. And even within the Church, as we grow spiritually, we come to see and understand that more and more and more. The kind of love that God has is something you grow in, and it's something we can grow in in having that kind of love live in us as well. It goes on here:

The Psalms speak often of this fact, and I am going to quote a couple of those verses here.

And so this is from **Psalms 145:8-9—The Eternal is gracious, and full of compassion...** Now, when you read through something like this do you think about self? Do you think about yourself? Do you think about your mind and how you think toward others? Gracious? *Full* of compassion? Empathy toward others and what they're experiencing and going through in life?

...**slow to anger**. This is not the best translation because when we think of anger we think in terms of human anger. We think in terms of retribution. We think in terms of people not being in control or people... I've even heard expressions about "righteous anger," for human beings to have righteous anger. Be careful! Be careful! Because in times past some in the Church have talked in those terms. And when you come to understand what this word means, especially when it's talking about... any place it really talks about God, it isn't like human anger. And the word isn't really with that intent whatsoever. It's about how He responds, in essence, to human beings who sin, and has to do with carrying out judgment toward them, righteous judgment toward them. And it says God is slow in that.

It's not a matter that God is looking up at mankind and all of a sudden He sees somebody do something and He gets angry like we do as human beings, you know, "You shouldn't have done that!" Whatever. And we strike out at people. We get angry. We drive down the highway and somebody cuts us off and we lose control or we get angry and we scream at them or we holler at them and people curse. They do all kind of things! They get out a gun and shoot somebody, you know, out of anger!

That's not God. God doesn't have that kind of anger ever - *ever, ever, ever!* And so those kinds of thoughts and ideas and concepts in the human mind need to be gotten rid of, because God Almighty is not like that! When you read things in the Old Testament about anger and how certain things have been executed by God it's not anger as we think as human beings. It's about what He's executing because of righteous judgment, because of time, because, in some cases, it's a matter of a merciful thing to end life for people.

So I think of the flood. It wasn't God's up there, you know, like we think as human beings, pulling out their hair, fed up with mankind and going to wipe them off because I'm angry and upset! It's not like that. God is not like that! Those kinds of concepts really... that's a distorted Protestant

thought. It really is something that comes from Satan. Satan wants people to think like that, to think that God is like that; God gets angry at us! Huh. Amazing. We don't even grasp the kind of love that God has, the kind of patience that God has, the kind of... when it says God is gracious, *slow... slow to correct*, in essence. That's a better way of looking at it. Slow to chasten. In other words, not jumping right at it, giving us opportunity, giving us time, whatever it might be in human life, giving mankind a great deal of time to go his own way and learn lessons of life. God has incredible patience with that.

It is a marvel the mind of God, to watch humanity do what they've done for 6,000 years and the wars and the destruction that God has allowed mankind to go through. He could have stopped them all. Could have stopped them all. Could have sent down angelic beings, just a few, taken care of every war, any war that came up at any time. And to come to understand why He didn't, to come to understand His patience, to come to understand His love in that as a process of time is incredibly unique. Because it's a process of helping mankind come to see himself, and that's not an easy thing.

How long? How many years sometimes are we in God's Church before we come to "see" certain things about ourselves that we have not been able to "see"? And then all of a sudden we come to see something that we didn't recognize before. How many years sometimes go by and all of a sudden you see something in self that you didn't see before? That's why I've often talked about raising up this lid over a sewer. And you look down in there and you get a big whiff of self and it stinks! It stinks! And thankfully that lid goes right back down again because there are things we can't take, there are things we can't deal with in life. If we saw everything at once we would be so despondent, so discouraged. Thankfully, God's merciful and doesn't let us "see" that way, how our human nature really is.

Because I'll tell you what, the longer you're in God's Church, the closer you draw to God the more you come to see how ugly, how incredibly evil selfishness really is, because selfishness is evil. And God allowed it to exist because of free will. Free will had to exist in mankind, free choice. And there are things human beings have to experience in life so they can become convicted of, *this doesn't work! We can't rule ourselves! Look at our history! Look at how we treat one another! Look at how we think! Look at what we're capable of doing with enough time, and especially now, enough technology. We're destroying this earth so fast! I marvel at technology today and what it does to the human mind.*

Marveling at that this morning, thinking about some of that, what it's doing to people's minds in ways that it *didn't* fifty years ago, or a hundred, or two hundred years ago - *couldn't* in the way that it is today. And we live it and we don't really "see" it for what it is fully, because it's just a normal "this is just life," normal experience out here. Everything that's on TV, everything that's in the movies, everything that's a part of society and the thinking of society and the like, it's just our norm and we live in it and we don't realize how polluted and the garbage and the filth that's come into our minds as a result of what's out there. It's just the norm! But it's evil. It is so sick!

And it's going to take a long time to get rid of that. You can't get rid of that in a short time. It's going to take a long time. Thankfully, we're at the end of an age where God's Kingdom is about to be established so that so much of this garbage can be gotten rid of and what is true can begin to be taught and the minds of people begin to be healed. That's a part of the healing process that has to take place. But for us to really see it for what it is? *You can't!* You really *can't* see how evil it is. But as you grow you come to see it more and more and more.

So God is slow to deal with many of those kinds of things, to deal with sin, to deal with matters, because time has to be given. And then God has given that time because there's some, a greater purpose that's going to be accomplished when it's all said and done, when people are finally resurrected a second time in a human body and then given an opportunity to "see" God. And they're going to be able to "see" a contrast. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to judge. And so they're going to be able to "see" a huge contrast between what man did over 6,000 years and what God's going to do over 1,000 years. And it's going to be a marvel. But people have to experience those things to prove it to themselves, to have it proven to them. And then there are still going to be many, many who will not pick (choose, decide upon, want) God's way of life. That's an astounding thing! Because of selfishness and because of pride, because of evil that exists through choice and not fully yielding and loving what God offers.

So again ...and of great mercy. **The Eternal is good toward all.** He's good toward all. Some that we can look at as human beings and think, "Why are they even allowed to have life?" And they are. And hopefully, so many of them one time when they are given that opportunity will change. Yet many won't. **The Eternal is good toward all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.** Tender mercies. Our Great God, God of incredible power and might, tender mercies towards us as human beings, exceedingly merciful to us.

So going on, reading the rest of what it says here:

The creation and purpose God has for mankind is the greatest of all His work. This verse describes the true desire that God has for all people.

**Psalm 86:5—For You LORD are good and ready to forgive.** Again, do we see ourselves? Do we think about ourselves or just about God? Because there are things we are to learn from God about God - how to think, how our minds should be toward others. "For You LORD are good and *ready to forgive*." Is that a ready spirit within every one of us in the Church, in the Body of Christ? A ready spirit, ready to forgive, always right there eager, ready to forgive, readiness of mind to forgive? Or do we tend to as human beings hold things against others? Do we tend to allow certain things because we know individuals and we keep a certain category going here, "And there they go again!" "There they go again!" "There they go again." Judging by our human selfish judgment rather than the way God does and the way we're to see one another and think about one another?

...and abundant in mercy, abundant, so much mercy, to all those who will call upon You. And so there is a relationship that we're blessed to have with God, to call upon God, and we receive that much more mercy, forgiveness, ready to forgive because... And that's an awesome thing, once we're called, God has called us to that, to an opportunity to be forgiven through Jesus Christ who was beaten and finally died, had a spear rammed into his side, blood spilled out on the earth, to fulfill the role of Passover so that there is that means through faith that we can have our sins forgiven us through our High Priest, through our Passover, through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And so God has a means there whereby we can be forgiven of sin. And so God's desire is, indeed, that we be able to repent, that we are able to be cleansed, that we are able to be healed. So when we're called, that's the purpose of it, to cleanse us, to heal us, to transform our minds and to bring us to the point of what this is all about in the first place, entry into Elohim, God's Family. Awesome!

Going on, reading here:

That verse says so much. God is always ready to forgive and show mercy, but the problem is with people who simply will not go before Him to repent so that He **can** forgive and grant mercy to them. Mankind is so stubborn, selfish, and self-willed, just as this end-time is revealing. How long will people refuse to willingly humble themselves and repent of **their ways** to then begin embracing God's true ways? Mankind's track record over 6,000 years is not good.

And that's what it's all about, to learn that, to understand that truth and to desire something different, to be thankful for something different that God offers us.

**The Eternal says**, quoting here Ezekiel now, **18:23—The Eternal says, Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?** And I think about, "And what about those who are disfellowshipped from God's Church? Less pleasure in that. It's one thing if people out here in the world who are wicked, because of the way they live and because of what they do toward others they come a point in death, and it's not a matter that there is enjoyment from that, satisfaction from that, because it hurts to see people hurt themselves or to hurt others. That's not what God's creation is about, but He's let free will exist and so that's what human beings have done. That's the history of 6,000 years. That's the point. And we're to become different. And in the Church we're to become much, much different.

And that's why I hate to see people separated from the body. I hate to see it come to that, but there comes the time in responsibility where those kinds of things have to happen from time to time because of the sake of the Body, of the health of the Body. "A little leaven," as Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 5, "leavens the whole lump." A little leaven. A little leaven (it doesn't take a lot), begins to spread in the Church. I have seen that over and over and over again in God's Church. A little leaven, a little sin here or a little sin there and the example those things set

within a Body and what it does to others, especially if others are pulled into it. Horrible!  
Horrible.

Going on: **Do I not rather that he should turn from his ways and live?** That's God's desire. That's what it's about. But what are people like? Even within the Church, I marvel! I marvel at some of the greatest examples that have been set in the Church, of what mankind is like, that we're not there until we're there. Until we are changed, our nature, even with God's holy spirit, is not a pretty thing. On the contrary. That's what we have to see. We have to see the battle is here, first and foremost. This is where your battle is, in self, in the mind. And the more you battle that then the more God can use you, work with you, heal you, and be a blessing to others. That's how it works and a better example to others. Maybe we don't even think about that sometimes, what kind of an example are we to others in how we live our lives? What do they see when they see us? It's a good question to ask. What are we doing? How are we living?

Because there have been a lot of bad examples in God's Church that have hurt a lot of people. Most people have gone by the wayside because of bad examples and because of bad choices that people make. And it's just sad. Going on:

The last section of this chapter should help reveal the greater depth and kind of love God has for mankind. People have not known the great purpose of **WHY** they have been created and put on this earth in the first place. They have not known **why** they have life.

I don't know if you do, but I marvel at that. People don't even know why they're alive! They don't even understand their *existence*, let alone who gave it to them. They think they crawled up out of slime over millions of years. You think, "Give me a break!" But people would rather believe that then there's a Great God who has a purpose of having put them here. You know what the problem is? God tells you how to live life, to receive the most out of life. And people don't want to live that way. They don't want to have a right relationship with God. They'd rather walk around in the trees like Adam and Eve did, "Hope God doesn't see us. We can maybe hide back here, withdraw ourselves."

You know, just saying that I think of some people in the Church right now. I know of some people who are withdrawing, even within the ministry, who are pulling back. It's too bad. Too bad. Pulling back, drawing back from the Church, putting emphasis in other places in life, in whatever it might be - family, job, the world, whatever it is. But it's not in God's Church! That's why I have hit it so hard over and over again this had better be first in your life. *God* had better be first. But if God is first you know what that means? If Jesus Christ and God Almighty are first in your life you know what that means for your life and what you're living? It means that *this Body, the Body of Christ...* Because this is our arena where we live! This is what reflects our relationship to God! Should be so simple, but it's not. And sometimes we don't grasp it for what it is. And so if we want this we have to fight for it and we have to fight against selfish human nature and there are changes we need to make in our life and live better and live better toward one another.

So I cry out because I ache inside when I see these things are taking place and happen, and anybody letting down. But it's always been in God's Church. But the closer we get to the end here, the closer we get to the end of this age in some ways the more I ache in those things to see people let up, to see people let down. And it's so obvious, letting up and letting down *spiritually!* You can't hide it any more than Adam and Eve could hide in the garden! You just can't hide it. And it's there! And it's not that hard to see if you have the eyes to "see" it. And so prayerfully we can see ourselves. But the point is, so often we can't because we deceive ourselves into thinking we can hide and nobody is going to see it. God sees everything. He knows everything in your mind. He knows everything about what you're doing in life and why you're doing it. He knows where your motivation is. He knows what you value. He knows how much you value it! How much do we value fellowship, being with God's people, rejoicing with God's people, being focused on God's Family in a right relationship with God?

Well, I think we're so close and yet people are willing to throw it away... throw it away. For what? Because they don't "see" what they've been given. They don't grasp the mercy that God has granted them and the time that God has granted them. But so often there comes a time when no more time can be offered and God says, "No more." Especially now because of what's coming. The greatest time in earth's history. That's what we're approaching, the greatest time in earth's history, when the one who was predetermined billions - we don't even know the time factor - billions in our earth years, billions upon billions upon billions of years ago and God had a purpose and a plan, a design before anything was created. Before a spirit realm was created there was God.

I don't understand that and you can *never* understand that as a human being. We don't have the ability. We don't have the mind. God hasn't given it to us. It's something you learn through time. And I'm convinced that there are some things in the God Kingdom, in the God Family that can't be learned right away. It takes time. There will be constant growth. But at that point in time we will be fully at-one with God, growing, always learning, ever learning thousands and thousands, millions and millions of years. Life never becomes dull. *Always* growing. *Always* learning. You can't comprehend that and neither can I, but I know it's true. Awesome, our Great God, the power of our Great God, the mind, the being of our Great God, and we see so little. And yet we've been given so much.

So I think of 6,000 years of mankind. We're approaching a time when the one who was predetermined before a spirit realm was ever even created, before the angelic realm was ever created, long, long, long, long before mankind was ever created - there was a purpose for the Son of God to come into being, to exist, through which everything else would be built upon, upon him, through him, the God Family. It's all about God's Family. Everything is working towards being a part, being able to become a part of God's Family. And that's hard for the human mind to conceive.

It's easier for the human mind to think that, "Old Joe died. He went up to heaven and he's up there fishing! He's reeling them in! Whoo-hoo-hoo-eee! Look at that one!" Well, how many big ones can you catch because it finally starts getting a little dull, a little boring? Seriously! You hear people at funerals talk like that. "He always loved to fish." Really! The human mind so shallow to think like that? But that's what we do as human beings! Now, I like fishing. I haven't been fishing in... forty years? I don't like it that much, I guess. Thirty-five, I don't know, some Feast I guess we went out with a bunch of people and went fishing one time. We did up in Erie a little bit, not much. I did around Cincinnati a long time ago, twenty some years ago, thirty years ago. Anyway, it's an enjoyable thing to do, but who wants to do that forever?

What is the most enjoyable you've ever liked? Ride roller coasters? What is it you like? What is it you would like to do, go out here and do right now? Horseback riding. And how many horses? How much riding before you finally start getting tired of it? You know, after a... I don't think... If that's all, if that's what you're doing, forty years? A hundred years? You're up there in heaven riding around, you're going from planet to planet out here and seeing all kinds of things, and you can go so fast on this particular horse, or horses, whatever they are. A thousand years? Ten thousand years? You think at some point it'd probably become ultra boring? And sadly, that's the way we are as human beings. We don't *grasp* God. We don't *grasp* God's plan. And He has things planned *so far* into the future we can't even begin to comprehend it! We don't! It's all planned out. It really is! Into millions... We can't even think... I can't go... I'm getting closer to seventy. Think, "Where did it all go?" It goes by so fast! Your body changes. Things don't hold together as well anymore, you know, underneath the chin and arms. And your health, your heart, your arteries, and the good food we have? Our bodies begin to take a beating. And we can't comprehend living a thousand years, ten thousand years, a hundred thousand years. We can't begin to comprehend that kind of thinking. What an incredible God we serve!

But *now* is when we're being judged. *Now* determines our course and where we're headed. *Now*, really, even for the Church right now, now more than ever before determines whether you're going... Because what you have been given is more than anyone else in 6,000 years.

Someone responded in one of the elder's reports here this past week or so about some of that and thinking upon some of that. And it really is profound to grasp, to understand what's in front of us and how much we have been given. That the apostle Paul didn't know all that we know. John, Matthew, they didn't know. Peter. They didn't know the kinds of things that we know. Now, they knew so much more than the world before them, things that they grasped about what had happened in history through time, through the prophets and Israel and the things they saw and understood.

And then Jesus Christ came along and magnified those things so much that their life was filled with things that they were beginning to establish and have and be able to see that we, in too large a part, kind of take for granted now. And we shouldn't, but we tend to as human beings. And all the things they built upon that's in scripture that you can read about in here, of things that

Jesus Christ magnified when He was with them, that they began to understand, additional things that were given to them while he was here for the forty days after he'd been resurrected. And you have been given so much more than what they had, an opportunity for a maturity and ability to see things. And it's hard for us to grasp that. And now we're almost there, to the time that Jesus Christ is about to come to this earth.

And there is no one in God's Church, who has opportunity in God's Church now, because of all that God has given to us, that if we don't take this and embrace it with all of our being and love it with all of our being and grasp a hold of and fight for it... Why? Why? Why? Why would we be given the honor and the glory to live on into a new age if we don't treat this as a most precious thing? And candidly, that's how we're being judged right now. This body has been given much, and to whom much has been given much is required. Truly is. It can't be taken for granted. Because if it's taken for granted, no matter what age it's in, if anyone takes for granted the things that God gives and treats it without the sense of value that it has, treats it with disrespect, well, there's a judgment that goes with it. And some of that is for the last Hundred Years.

I think... Amazing! So much more could be said on this, even about the Body of Christ. Maybe I'll save that for another sermon, things that God is still revealing, continuing to give to us and helping us to understand more and more and more about opportunities we have now and how we embrace them and how we use them and the judgment that goes along with not using those things like we should, fighting for them like we should. There's a choice in all that. And God wants to see what is it you want, or how much do you really want it, what He's offered you. Do we *grasp* what He's offered? Incredible!

So again, reading this paragraph:

The last section of this chapter should help reveal the greater depth and kind of love God has for mankind. People have not known the great purpose of **WHY** they have been created and put on this earth in the first place. They have not known **why** they have life. It is because of a **loving Father's** plan that has been in motion for billions of years and is only now coming fully to light.

So again, we've been focusing upon our God of great mercy as I've been reading this specific section in Chapter 6. And as it is stated in the beginning of this new series we are to learn to become more at one with God and seek to reflect His ways and His will in our life in how we treat one another.

With that we'll turn over to Matthew 9 and start focusing on some of this, about God's mercy, what we're to learn from it, how we're to live it, how we're to grow in the aspects of mercy, what it means in our life, our arena of life, which is the Church. This is our arena of life to learn and practice these things that God has given to us.

So in **Matthew 9:9**—**As Jesus passed forth from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom.** In other words, receiving of taxes. Now, tax collectors haven't always been looked upon very fondly in the world, and far less back then, in many respects, because it wasn't a matter of people filling out forms and so forth, it was a matter of people coming around and taking it and certain things; you were to be there and you were to give and so forth. Anyway, it was... there were things that went with that that were not good and it wasn't a just system. Kind of like today!

Anyway, going on... **sitting at the receipt of custom: And he said to him, Follow me.** I don't know; we can't grasp that. Even this, what went on before this? Why did he listen? Why? What was it that was taking place in his life? What, how was God working with him that all of a sudden he would make such a decision? So there's stuff in the story here that we don't know all of yet. I look forward to hearing the rest of the story because there's a lot more here. So this is kind of is a summary of it.

**And he rose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat down to eat in the house, behold, many publicans, tax collectors, some friends, some different ones of Matthew came along. ...many tax collectors and sinners...** Because they weren't well liked. And yet there was something unique here in Jesus Christ and things that had transpired before this in Matthew's life to bring him to this point in how he responded and how he was thinking, something that God was doing in his mind with his being. He prepared him for this moment. Sometimes it's an awesome thing to grasp that there's certain things in life that God prepares us for even within the Church, for a certain moment in time. It might be for a very short time, a few days, a few months, a few years, something very specific. And then an opportunity above all things to be a part of a family at *this* time. It's awesome! Again, maybe a sermon in the future. So many things to cover. So many things that God gives and is giving and we only have a short amount of time to go through it all. Incredible! Always learning; never comes to a halt.

So again **...many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why does your Master eat with tax collectors and sinners?** Little strange! Because, "We don't do that! We know what they are. We know what they're like - sinners, people who are known for how they live their life! Why spend time with them? Why break bread with them?" **And when Jesus heard *that*, he said to them, They who are whole do not need a physician, but those who are sick.** See, there's a way of thinking. They didn't realize how bad off they were, the Pharisees and the Sadducees whom Christ continually revealed their spirit and their attitude and their way of thinking and how wrong it was and condemned them over and over again, became very vocal about certain things about them: "Snakes in the grass." How does that cause people to respond? You know why they wanted to kill him? Because of a lot of things like this that happened. That's why they wanted to kill him, put him to death. They hated what he said and they hated him. Amazing!

And so, "They who are whole do not need a physician." So, obviously here then, "You don't need Christ." And they already knew that in their own mind because they were better than that. They just were looking for things to find fault with. So there's a lot to learn in this. **But go and learn what *that* means...** You think they went to learn what it meant? We are able to. Once we're called God begins to show us what it means. And others who have an ear to "hear" because of God's spirit and because of being drawn by God's spirit can look at that and begin to learn what it means.

And he went on to say, **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.** Now, we've heard about sacrifice and other things as well, but this is in the context with mercy. This what God desires from us. This is the way God is, merciful. And it wasn't the sacrifices that He took pleasure in. How many times have we gone through scriptures like that? It wasn't about the physical things that we can go through a routine and do toward God, to give to God. That's not what it's about. It's about what's up here. It's about the mind. It's about how we think, and really how we think toward others, how we treat others. Because that's the kind of sacrifice that counts. It's not the physical sacrifices, it's the spiritual. It's the mind. It's what we see about self and the changes then that we're to make in ourselves through the power of God's spirit living and dwelling in us because we cry out to God, "Help me to change!"

If you see certain things about yourself that God shows you, you have to cry out to God to help you to change. You have to fight! You have to fight something about your nature and about yourself that you're beginning to see that you don't like, that you realize, "This isn't right and I don't want this! I don't want to *be* like that!" And you have to cry out to God, "Help me to change! Give me the strength! Give me the mind to where that is gone, to where my mind is healed. And so whatever it is that God reveals to you, you've got a fight on your hand, you have got a battle on your hand. There is a battle that you have to enter into at that time. It doesn't just go away! You can't just go and pray about it one time - you have to fight it! You have to enter into a war with this, with the way you think, and seek to change, seek to become something different.

So in the sermon we're going through now where we see where we're lacking in mercy, perhaps in an attitude of forgiveness toward others, whatever it might be, you have to ask God to help you to "see" self more fully, more clearly, and to know how and ask for help to know how to fight that battle and to desire to continue to fight it, and not just to sweep it under the carpet, but to change, to seek change!

So it goes on to say, **I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** See, we have to see what we are or we won't change. Those who think that there's not a need for change, or those who are satisfied with the way they are, those who pull back from the Church are beginning to be satisfied with the way they are and they want something different. They want something different. For whatever reason, the truth of the Church or whatever doesn't excite them anymore, it doesn't stir them up anymore. Woe to anyone when that happens in life. If we can't be stirred up by a sermon we hear, if we can't be stirred up by things that God gives to us, if we can't be excited, that's a dangerous thing. And to

cry out to God for help to be excited, to be moved, to help our focus and our vision to be on what He's doing and to get it off the world, and to get it off pursuits out here in the world. Because they're going to disappear one of these days. Whether it's 2019 or not, doesn't really matter. That's not the point! It's not the point in the timing. It's the point in what's actually being lived and what's going to be lived, what we have opportunity for and what is to change in us, truly, if we grasp it, if we understand it.

So is that worth fighting for? There are still people who are still passing time to get to 2019, just like with 2012, "That'll solve my problems!" No, it won't! No, it will not! You change *now*! You respond *now*! You cry out *now*! You seek to change *now*! You seek to grow *now*! You don't put anything off. You don't allow yourself to get pulled out here in the world, by the world, and by pursuits in the world and your focus begins to leave the Church and this way of life. Because if you do, *you're gone*! Because I know it with all of my being! I have seen it over and over and over and over again. And since the Feast of Tabernacles, I'll just tell you, it's happening. And God is showing it's happening in far too many people's lives!

We need a bit of a shaking spiritually! And this has a lot to do with what we're talking about. It's about how we think, how we think in our relationships towards others, how we're working, how we *feel* about one another, how we *feel* about the Body! How do you feel about the Body of Christ? Do we understand what Jesus Christ died for? So that we can have the Body of Christ? So that we can dwell in it? So that we can participate in something together *until* our change come - for some soon, and for others at the end of a thousand years. How much do you want that?

You know, one of the worst things I can think of, once we've received a calling like this, to have everything we've been given, (and then no matter how long we've lived it), and then all of a sudden life ends and we have to live it a hundred more years. I don't want to live in this another hundred years. I really do not. I don't know to what depth you can grasp that. Some know exactly what I'm talking about. Others have a little bit of an inkling. Others, totally void, do not grasp that one iota in God's Church. Okay? I don't want to dwell in this body for another hundred years. I've had quite enough of self. That's what you have to come to. You have to come to a point in time where you realize there is so much more beyond this. But we can't, as human beings, we think of the here and now. Our physical lives surround us...

And, you know, if you're young, you don't know what it's like to be 67. You don't know what it's like to be 77. You don't know what it's like to be 87. You really don't have the slightest little inkling until you're there. Now you can try to appreciate things that you hear, but until you're there you don't really know it all. You can't see it. You can't fully grasp it because you're in a different space of time. And that's the way it should be! But what you're learning while you're in your space of time, that's important. Where is your vision? Where is your focus? How much do you want what God is offering you? Do you realize some of the battles that are in front of you in life? What is it you want to embrace and hold on to? What is it you want right now? What are some of the top three things in your life you want, you would like to have right now in this physical world?

What is it you would like to embrace and have in life? What is it? You should know. How much do you really want it?

And compared to what God is offering you, where does it rank? Is God first? Is God's way of life first? Is the truth first? Is the Church first? Is this what you're fighting for above everything else? Is this your primary focus? Because there are some in God's Church, this is not your primary focus. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I have to say that, but I know it's the truth. For some in God's Church, this is not your primary focus. And I wasn't kidding last Sabbath; I believe it was last Sabbath when I made the comment, "If we get whittled down to a hundred... If we get whittled down to fifty, so be it. So be it." So be it! If you want this, what God has offered you, fight for it. If this isn't your primary focus, but you really want it, let God know that. Ask Him for help to get your focus and your vision corrected so that you can "see" the way you need to "see." Because the cleansing goes on. The revealing of things that must change is going on. The standard is being raised higher and higher and higher the closer we get. That's what's taking place in the Body of Christ, in the Church of God. We are so near - incredible! - so near to being given so much that our minds cannot even begin to comprehend it.

And that's sad. It's sad because I see it. I know it. And I hate to see people not grasp a hold of it with all their being, with what they're being offered. Instead, something else out in the world is grabbing their attention and their thoughts and their focus and desires in life and they want that instead of this...instead of this with all of your being. And candidly, when you told God Almighty at baptism, you made a covenant with God Almighty and you said, "I am Yours! I belong to You! My life is Yours as You will." *Awesome*, if we see it! And if we don't... it's that last hundred years. I'll just tell you, it *is* the last hundred years.

Matthew 23. So, sadly, within the body, with far too many that I see pulling back and letting down spiritually... See, I could come up and tell you "I see it. I know what you're doing; you're letting down spiritually. You're backing away from what you used to be. You're not the same person that you were a few years ago," or whatever, "and it's very obvious you're pulling back and you're letting down." That's not my job. It is through sermons. Ears to "hear" and eyes to "see." And that's between us and God, each individual.

So, it's not the other way around. Because, you see, if I did that it wouldn't produce what it needs to produce, has the potential to produce. On the contrary. It's by your desire and your will alone and your relationship with God alone as to what it is you really want. And if you want this with all your being, or you're striving to want it with all of your being, then let God know. Because it's between you and God. And if you pull away from God's Church, if you pull away from truths, you're pulling away from God and you're starting to do what Adam and Eve did on a very physical plane when they hid in the garden. And *nothing* is hidden from God.

**Matthew 23:23—Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** Called it like it was. They didn't like that. That's why they wanted to kill him. Over and over and over again, wanted to see him dead, gone. They hated what he said because they realized the condemnation was toward them. **Hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint, dill, and cumin,** so meticulous of thinking that, "Let's make sure we're not..." It isn't wrong to be right down to the penny, but sometimes that isn't healthy either. Why not round it off? Do we get all caught up in the how meticulous we are, counting something so small? They were because it was like a matter of righteousness. It's like the Sabbath when you're in Jerusalem. The sirens go off way, way, way before sunset, and after the sunset on the Sabbath you have to wait a while before the sirens go off again, because you've got to be just a little bit more righteous in keeping the Sabbath.

And the Days of Unleavened Bread? Ah, the Harrell's, my wife, we know what it's like over there! I ate unleavened bread longer than I ever want to eat it again, because three days, well before three days, and sometimes more than that you can't find any sandwiches to eat. You can't find any pizza. You can't find any bread of any kind. It's like it's been wiped from the face of the earth, and so many things as far as food is concerned, because they count a lot of things to have leaven. Certain kinds of sodas, as an example, and they deem it has a certain amount because there's this mind. They don't realize that no, it's *unleavened brrreeeeead*, not unleavened *cooookie*. So if anything has leaven in it, you know, beer, anything, whatever it is, there are for certain, things, it's not around. Forget it! I don't want to go through the story. Take too long.

Anyway, it's this idea of a little extra righteousness, a little more righteous. I've known of ministers in God's Church - I think of one right now and the people in that area know exactly what I'm talking about - when it came to keeping Atonement you don't dare eat before... You make sure it's way, way, way before sundown, because if you don't your attitude is just wrong. Because if you're just eating until the last ten minutes, shame on you if you eat up to the last ten minutes before Atonement starts. You're not very righteous! And if you look to go out and start eating as soon as the sun goes down on Atonement, what is your spirit like?! Really! Seriously! This was taught. It was implied. Something is wrong with you if you... No, thank you. When the sun goes down - that's what God gave - *give me a drink of water!* I'm thirsty! I'm ready! So it doesn't take me.... I know what... I can tell you exactly because I look it up on the computer and it tells me when sundown is. I'm ready! And there's nothing wrong with that. You're not more spiritual because you wait another hour! Seriously! It's like if you rush out to go eat someplace, something is wrong with you. Well, that's what the Pharisees were like. And a lot of people in God's Church have been like that in times past too. Sad, because they didn't get the spirit of it. And that's what it's talking about here.

**Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees.** And we've had *a lot* of them, not a few, in times past in God's Church, and sadly within the ministry of God's Church. Hypocrites! **Hypocrites! For you pay tithe on mint, dill, and cumin and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law,** amazing what's being said here, **judgment, mercy, and faith.** I've given sermons on this in times past,

what this is about. I can give a lot of sermons on this right here, this verse alone, various aspects of what its saying. Incredible! There's so much here on a spiritual plane. Judgment, how we judge. That's why it's said in the beginning of the sermon, things concerning mercy and the judgment that comes out of that. You can't separate them. You *can't* separate them. Judgment has to be mingle with mercy. There has to be a mindset that's involved there as well. Righteous judgment requires mercy as well, it truly does. It's the mind of God, a mind of love.

And faith. It has to do with what we have been given to believe, what we see and know, and how we live according to it at that time. The present truth, whatever God has given to us at any moment in time, that's what we're judged by and that's how we judge, learn to judge righteous judgment.

So again, just to repeat it again. I want to repeat what was said at the beginning of the sermon. The reason we're going into this sermon is because at this time there is a great need for the Church to grasp the lesson of God's great mercy. And it is that we are to learn to extend great mercy to others and especially those in the Body of Christ - in the world around us, too. We shouldn't be harsh. We should be merciful. And if there's mercy there are a lot of other attributes that come out of that in how we respond and think toward people. And we all, every one of us, has work to do on this, because wherever we are there's another plateau we can work to go toward, or work toward.

Going on, what was said in the beginning: This means we're to become far more forgiving in spirit than we are now. It means we are to learn more fully about God's judgment rather than our own.

Let's turn over to Ephesians 4, going to focus on some more scriptures. And actually, this was mentioned in last Sabbath's sermon. I just want to repeat it because I made comment about it. But let's take the time to focus on this.

**Ephesians 4:32—And be kind one to another.** Just to be kind. And I think of since the Feast how many situations my wife and I, and some of those in the leadership of God's ministry, evangelists, and so forth, how many things we've had to get involved in because people haven't been, in too many cases, kind to one another. And so when they haven't been we have to get involved. Sometimes, sadly, within marriage, not able to be kind to one another. I don't know how that can be done, really. I mean, how can you not be kind to another person? And yet we've all failed in that, and we all fail in that to varying degrees in life. But that's where the battle is. But sometimes things get so stirred up, so far out of kilter. But whenever those things happen, when that kindness hasn't been shown, we need to look in a spiritual mirror and cry out to God to forgive us and strive to become better, different.

**...kind one to one another, tender-hearted.** We don't tend to be that way. We live in a world of incredible stress. We truly do. This isn't like the horse and buggy day. It's not like that. That's reflective of a world that was different. Seriously! And the world was different when there were

fewer people and not the large kinds of cities we have today where almost had to think twice about really having the Feast in Orlando as I was driving down the freeway a few times. Because you get on the highway, Route 4 out there, anything going toward Disney World. I don't know what it is out in that area, any time of day I've been out there, I just don't like it. I'd rather get on International Drive and be on that, but I keep going out on the freeway thinking, "Oh, it won't be as bad this time." And city after city you go into! We drove through part of San Jose, Oakland, San Francisco area when we were out there. Oh, I really can't comprehend... I do, because I did at one time. But people driving to work in that day after day after day, and really, they don't understand what that's doing to them. Really! If people really understood what it's doing to their health, to their lives... Another story.

So I don't care where you go in large cities and people have to drive. I remember having to drive at least an hour sometimes and more getting to a place in Houston when we lived there, many years ago before I was in the ministry. And the place where I worked was clear across the city in another region. And it just becomes a way of life. And isn't that sad? That becomes a way of life. And how you deal with some of those kinds of things and how it affects you in your life, sometimes we don't really grasp that. Causes tension! It creates stress because you have to constantly watch. And I remember in those days, and there was even a saying, basically, you have to watch out for the other guy, and there are some crazy people out there. Not just you, there are some other crazy people... I mean, there's people out there driving in that. And you wonder how they ever got a license! But that's another story. And you think that doesn't affect you? And people on the job today, especially with the economy like it is. What happens? Corporations, they may cut back on employees, but you know what happens? If you get to stay around you get to put in more hours. That's kind of what's expected. And if you don't do it you're going to be the next to go. It's pressure. You feel compelled. You feel there's more you have to do. And so these kinds of things, you just magnify them in every aspect of life.

People want to get away for the weekend. They get out on the highway and they get in the same traffic and they try to get back into town from that fun time they had getting out of town and they get back in the same... I mean, you run into that all the time on the weekends. And it's always there - stress, stress. And you think the children in the car are happy? You think the family is totally happy? There's a lot of stress out there and it affects relationships.

And it does in God's Church, sometimes far more than what you know. I don't deal well with stress. And I would... Well, I'd say, I'd wager... expression. I would, that you don't either. We're not equipped to do well in those categories of life. We live in a very stressful world and we live at a very stressful time. If you don't think that because of what we're living through isn't stressful, it doesn't have a measure of stress because of our human frailty, because of our human weaknesses, of whatever it might be, that it doesn't have a measure of stress on you? Well, I think you see that. I think you know that. But maybe you don't know it to the degree that it really exists. And so every day you're dealing with stressful situations around you. And that has a great deal to do with

how you respond to people, how you react to people, how you say things to people, how you think toward people. And these are the battles we're to fight. This is where... This is your arena of life where you can learn more, you can grow more, you can cry out to God more. Every time you do it you can grow in strength and faith. You can cry out to God and say, "Father, forgive me. I don't want to be... I don't want to react that way! I want to be different." And then you'll find times that you're able to get a hold of it immediately, and those are the times of victory. But there are also times you're going to fall flat on your face and have to cry out to God again, "Father, forgive me! Help me to change. Help me to respond differently." So if you don't think you have battles...? I hope you understand you have battles. And candidly, you're supposed to have battles.

And at the end of this age you're to learn about certain kinds of battles that they didn't have to learn about two hundred years ago. There are things we're to learn about, what technology is doing to this world. We're to learn about these things and understand what it does to human life, what it does when you put people together like rats, in an area together, squeezed together, you know, living together. Rats don't fare well in that and neither do we! We take it out on one another then because of that stress. You don't even have room to expand, to breathe. It creates problems then. And candidly, we're not created to live that way. So we get to change that, but you've got to understand what's taking place before you can have a hand in helping to change it! You've got to understand what it's doing to life out here.

You've got to understand how the internet has to be changed. You have to understand how there are things that have to be changed out here in the world quickly. Social media that has to be changed quickly out here, that we're not going to be able to have in the future. Why? There are things that are going to change in entertainment quickly. They're not going to be allowed to exist, and they're going to change drastically. There are some things that aren't meant for human beings. There's certain kind of socializing that's not meant for human beings. A 2 year old, a 3 year old, a 4 year old, a 5 year old, a 6 year old, a 7 year old, an 8 year old, a 9 year old, a 10 year old, a 12 year old, a 13... is not to spend their whole day, learning to spend their whole day on a little machine as the babysitter - all day long. And a mind begins to develop and a social life... Well, that doesn't really develop, does it? Something else develops and it's very dangerous. And yet that's an experience that this world has to experience and come to understand. And we have to witness it and be a part of it and see what we're going to do with it and how we're going to work with it.

There's so much to change. This world is so sick! So perverted! So *perverted*! When I wrote things in that book about "as in the days of Noah," God began to show more and more why these are *really* like the days of Noah. Because what took them 700, 800, 900 years to pollute in the human mind, we're able to do in 10, 20, and 30 years to the same degree, in some cases, worse. We're destroying ourselves. We truly are.

The most important part of human life, do you know what it is? It's the mind. The mind is the most precious thing that God has given to human beings. The mind, to think, and how we think. And drugs and certain things out here in the world have so screwed up the human mind that there are some things that can't be reversed, "as in the days of Noah." Some people have gone so far with some of those things they have so destroyed their minds there is no resurrection that will change their mind. You say, "Well, then, God can heal the mind." Well, what do you mean by that? What does that mean? How is a mind healed? It's not like an organ that can be changed. The mind is unique. The mind is precious. The things that are in the mind and how we are, it's a precious thing. And we've had many - we have many young people in God's Church, and some who have acknowledge it, that say, "I know what I did and I know what I'm blessed to not be a part of anymore." It's like a firebrand being plucked out of the fire before you're destroyed. How blessed are you to be pulled out of that kind of a world where those kinds of things aren't there in your life anymore? Because I'll also tell you we've had many come along in God's Church that have gone too far and they can't experience healing in this life. They can't experience healing with God's spirit because they can't think right. Scary stuff.

I'll tell you, it's really scary stuff if we really grasp and comprehend the kind of world we live in today. "Oh, a little puffing on this doesn't hurt." Marijuana. "It doesn't hurt." And yet there are many people I can go up to and say, "I know you used to have some marijuana, didn't you? Do you think it didn't affect you? Ha. Ha. Ha. Oh, yes it did." And so we're paying penalties. All of us in life, physical life, we're paying penalties for things we've done wrong in our past. That's a reality. But if you've imbibed in a culture where you've been pulled out of, thank God for that! Thank God that this can still be healed. Thank God! How precious is that? Because that's what God has to work with. It's the human mind.

I didn't mean to go off in that direction, talking about some of this. But I'll tell you what, sometimes we just don't grasp the age we live in and what we've been blessed to have opportunity to begin to be called out of, to escape certain things so that we *can* have help to change, so that we *can* see truths and embrace them and say, "I can see it! I know that's true!" How do you know it's true? How can you "see" so clearly that Jesus Christ didn't eternally exist? What an incredible truth! How clear things then become when you realize he had a beginning and there was a purpose in it. And only the Great Almighty Self-Existing Eternal God has indeed eternally exist, or has eternal existence in Him to give to others - first of all, in every respect, to His Son to become a part of Elohim and then the rest to follow. Incredible!

**...be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.** That says so much! We're to embrace it, to realize what he gave his life for - so that we have opportunity of how we can think and how we can live and change. We can change.

**Matthew 6:14—For if you will forgive,** which as we talked about last Sabbath, "to leave alone, to permit," **men their trespasses,** "a false step." Because this isn't the word for "sin." There is a

scripture, if we get to it here, that does talk about sin and how you're to respond to someone sinning against you. This is about a false step, something that was done in a wrong way, said something, maybe, doesn't matter, unintentional, something came out and we heard it in a certain way and we became offended by it and there's a way we're to act. But there's an attitude of mind we're to have towards others that there are things that happen in life where someone got in your way, some way or another. Might have been on the highway. Might have been here this morning before services even began. I don't know. Did something that didn't strike you in a nice way - whether it was something said or not said. Sometimes people, because something was not said, you know, people take something in a wrong way, or whatever it might be in life.

And anyway, if you will "tolerate, allow, permit," a lot of it has to do with "people to be different." We're not all to be the same. We can't all respond the same way. And sometimes we react to somebody because we judge that they shouldn't have said something or acted in a certain way and yet we don't know their motive, their intent. But it's how we take it. So we have to allow certain things in life, to allow a wide variety for the differences in people. Thank God we're not all the same! If you were all like me I would not be a happy camper. Life would be so miserable. It really would be. I have enough seeing myself, rather than seeing myself over and over again. And you would just... Anyway.

**But if you will forgive men their trespasses... if you will not, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses, your false steps.** And if it's false towards God, that's another matter. See? So how do we think towards others? Are we of a ready mind to put something aside, to work things out, to talk things out, whatever it might require?

And then finally, like we talked about last Sabbath, **Matthew 18:15—Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault.** And it may not even be a "fault," it's your perceived mind toward them. It's not always a fault, but what you perceive in your mind as a fault, something they said, or maybe *didn't* say. "You didn't greet me this morning." "You didn't come up to me and shake my hand." I've known of people in God's Church that get upset about things like that, even toward me and toward my wife, or whatever. Got something else on my mind. To me, it's this, it's that, and if somebody becomes offended I can't... I'm sorry. You know, I try to warn everybody, this is where my focus is and I'm trying to get that thing focused.

So we have these different perceptions sometimes. And somebody said something and it just hit us the wrong way so we strike out in our thinking toward them. But if it happens, if you really think there's been some kind of an offence, something really done wrong (and you have to judge that), but be ready when you go to them alone, as it talks about here, you may just... Be ready, it may just fully be up here in your own mind and not theirs at all, that they didn't mean anything by it whatsoever. It's the farthest thing from their thinking in their mind. I wouldn't know where to begin in the number of times that this has happened in my life, in situations with people. Wouldn't be able to count them because I know it has to be a lot.

...and if he shall hear you, you have gained, means "as to win over," **your brother**. You know what? God's way works. If you really apply this and live this toward other people you can work things out. It gives people an opportunity to begin to ... It's a matter of communicating. It's a matter of realizing we think differently in life. You're going to learn more about yourself most often than you do the other person. And you'll still learn about the other person, but you're going to come to learn more about how they think and their motives in life and realize that so much of it has to do with your perceptions that are wrong.

I remember a... going to tell the story of when I first went to Ambassador College over in Bricket Wood. And we were all coming together in a particular area of a dorm and greeting, meeting each other, meeting a lot of different people. And I heard this one fellow. Now, I grew up in Kansas, Midwest, and this fellow was a... I heard him introducing himself. I should say the whole thing. "My name is Dave Fentress, and I'm from Kentucky." I said, "Your name is Dave Fentress and you're from Kentucky?!" I don't know why I even said it! I was just messing around because I got a charge out of his accent. Because I'd never met anybody from Kentucky with that deep of an accent. And he came up to me afterwards and he said, "I just wanted you to know that that bothered me." And he said, "That..." I think he said something about hurting his feelings or whatever, whatever it was. And I said, "Oh man," I said, "I'm so sorry. That was so stupid." And we became the best of friends. The best of friends from that point forward.

Sometimes if you'll just go and share something with someone else, you don't know where someone else is coming from... And see, when you go to someone else so often people don't know where you're coming from. They don't know. I didn't know that I was being offensive. I was stupid. I was just plumb stupid, you know, and I didn't think about that. I didn't think about his feelings, or someone else might be offended by the fact that you, in front of others, made a comment about their accent. I *liked* his accent! You know if it'd been German or Russian I'd probably would have tried to imitate some of that. But I didn't realize it can hurt people's feelings doing things like that. So I was able to change some of that. And we became the best of friends from that point forward, until he was killed in a car crash a week before the Apostasy. Incredible! Anyway, things like that happen. But those things can, you can draw close to people because of sharing and just sharing what you're... "This hurt me." "That hurt me, what you had to say."

And that, because God's... And that's the point. God's way works if you practice it. But you know what? This is the one thing in God's Church that has not been applied, hardly at all! That was one of my pet peeves, if you want to look at an area of scripture that the Worldwide Church of God didn't incorporate into their lives, people didn't incorporate in their lives, is going to their brother alone when they thought something had hurt them, or they didn't like what somebody else said or did or whatever it might be. And if you'd just go talk it out!

You know, that's something husbands and wives have to learn early on in life! You've got to talk things out! You've got to discuss them! You've got to see where the other person's coming from and why. And you learn to draw closer together because of that. You learn how each other thinks. You

don't just magically, somehow your minds are paired, you know, and there's some miracle that takes place when you say, "I do." And all of a sudden everything just kind of melds together and you become one, like God says. It takes time to become more at one in your thinking. It takes work! And it takes applying a lot of this. It has to do with communication. And so it is in God's Church. We have to learn to apply these things and go to one another.

If there is one thing I wish people could have done throughout the history of the Church, it would have been to do this. It would have resolved so many problems and people would have had the potential, could have had the potential to be much closer together in relationships to one another. But you have to do it right, and that's the problem too. Because so often when people did apply it there was a wrong motive behind it. "I'm coming to you and I'm going to tell you what you did was wrong!" You know? "I saw you do (say) blah, blah, blah..." It's a judgmental, condemning attitude. Well, you're going to win a lot of friends over that way! You're going to work some things out that way! They're really going to receive you well that way if you're coming in a condemning spirit and you're ready to jump down their throat and your voice is raised and you have kind of this attitude of self-righteousness in the first place because you would never do that, you know! And so how many times I've seen where people have applied some of this, which is rare, and then they apply it wrong because there's an attitude that goes with it. So there's a right way of doing this.

Well, again, there is so much more to a verse like this, but let's go on and notice here in **verse 16** —**But if he will not hear you, then take...** and it's an interesting word here. It means "to receive or take." It's not in the way we'd normally necessarily understand this. **But if he will not hear**, in other words, you're going to someone and in this particular case, as an example, let's say, the individual has really wronged you and they really said something that was hurtful and wrong and cutting... cutting, purposely so. Now, I've know some examples of this happening just in recent time here. It's happened some in the Church. And some cutting things were said to some people and it was wrong. It was kind of nasty! And... more than... several situations. Anyway, things that shouldn't exist in God's Church but they do. We're human beings and people... Sometimes familiarity breeds contempt. People get to know each other too well, if you know what I mean, and don't understand the kind of responsibility that goes along with that territory of getting to know people well. In a marriage you get to know people well. You get to know others really well. But that's the way it's supposed to be. But how you do it and how you use that, that's another matter. And so it is in the Body of Christ in *all* relationships.

And so, **take one or two with you, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses...** Now, some people don't understand what this means. And this is something that God has given over time, of better understanding of how this is incorporated, how it can be done within the body. It was in times past that people thought, "Well, I'll take along a couple of friends and we'll go and we're going to get every word established now and I'm going to tell him where he's wrong," or her, "where she was wrong. And they're going to be able to witness this and see that..." Anyway, that's

one attitude. Another one is that somebody did do something wrong and you're going to take two friends along with you. Now, are you going to take two of their friends or two of your closest friends? Well, that's another matter. Motive, motive, motive, and why you do what you do. See, there's so much to learn from things like this.

It really has to do more with leadership within the Church. And once, when we were larger, we were able to do something like this in a stronger way where sometimes when something gets bad in a relationship, sometimes it's good to go and ask for guidance and counsel, how... "I've talked to an individual. This is the response and I don't know what I can do next." Well, if we were larger, like we used to be in Worldwide, a couple of leaders of God's Church, or whatever, perhaps a husband and wife, elders, or whatever, could go with someone and ... whatever it might be depending on the training and the like that an individual has just to talk out something and get it talked out. Do that in people's marriages, let alone other people in the Body of Christ and go and talk things out, and let them talk it out. And, anyway, with that so often then comes direction and sometimes correction and saying, "No, you don't understand what they're saying. This is... And they didn't mean that," and try to resolve an issue. I don't want to get into all the ifs and all the examples of things that happen.

But this doesn't mean for you to grab two people that you know in God's Church and then go and talk to this individual again. It has to do with establishing "a *witness* in the mouth of two or three witnesses." And as a whole that is something that has to be done within the ministry of God's Church. Because the point is something has to take place and a change needs to take place. The reality is we should have good relationships within the Church. And if someone has hurt someone else then there is a need, indeed, to address those situations in life. And you are held accountable to address them first yourself. You have a responsibility.

Even if someone indeed has committed sin, has done something wrong you can't just wink at it as though it never happened. You have a responsibility to go to an individual and say, "Hey, I don't like doing this but I saw this. I heard you say this and..." depending on what it is, that you're convicted it's wrong. Even in the area of sin. And when it's an area of sin you have a responsibility not to wink your eye. You have a responsibility to go talk to the individual; that hopefully they're going to respond to you and acknowledge their error and repent. And that can motivate them to that.

Sometimes between a husband and wife. See, it starts there oftentimes. But it's also throughout the body, responsibility before God to bring things out in the open, to discuss something. It has to do with love.

And I hate to rush through some of this. But again, if you don't know how to do certain things ask the ministry. And if it's a situation they're not familiar with or don't know how to deal with, I know what they're going to do. They're going to go up the ladder and they're going to find out how do I proceed with this? What do I...? What needs to be addressed in this? How do we go about it? And

they'll be told and it'll be worked out. But it's about resolving differences. It's about resolving problems. It's about the best way of uniting a body to become more at one and working together in harmony. It's about conquering certain things when they're done wrong. And there are things, sometimes, that just happen that are wrong. And love should be to want to help someone, too, if they get caught up in a certain way, a certain thing that they're doing and you're aware of it, to go as a friend and say, "Hey, I'm concerned. Now, I don't like doing this but I know I'm supposed... I have to do it." And hopefully they can be reached. Hopefully, as it says here, "If they will hear you, you've gained a brother/sister," whatever. You've gained someone in the Body. That's the object. We don't want to see anyone go by the wayside. We don't want to see anyone leave the Body. Because sin will drag you... Especially when we're talking about sin, sin will drag you out of the Body. Sin will drag you out of the Church.

If you continue in certain things in sin... I'll use an example that's been common in times past in Worldwide. People... There are a lot of things, but this one here just comes to mind. Because we're human beings and you know what, we bring our problems. Because, see, when we're called and we're baptized we're not made perfect. We have a long way to go. And whatever it is we had in the world that we were doing wrong, oftentimes, that becomes a pull that's brought into the Church. Someone who was an alcoholic in the world is an alcoholic in God's Church. See? And they have to deal with that. Someone who partook of drugs in the world, *oftentimes* still partakes of drugs - at the beginning especially - in God's Church.

Now, if there are certain things like that, as an example, that you know of and you're aware of and you've seen someone... I've known of people that forgot to take their cigarettes out of their pocket. "Ah, you know... Well, this is awkward!" We talk to our brother alone. You know, something little like that. Because that is little, in one respect. But there are other things we may be aware of and saw or witnessed and we have a responsibility then. You just can't wink your eye at something that's wrong. You have to go and talk to your brother alone, even there.

So perceive things that you may be offended by personally or things that are more serious, you still have to apply the same thing, go to your brother alone and get it out in the open. And, because, you know what? They know what the next step is, and sometimes it has to come out, "I don't want to have to go to the ministry with this. I *hope* that you hear what I'm saying now and this is over. That's my hope. Because this is so awkward but I've got to deal with it because it's my responsibility." And, candidly, if someone reviles, is angry at you, you'll know. You'll know if they've received it and happy that you came and talked to them. I've seen that happen. Not as often as I'd like, but I've seen it happen where situations, somebody would come to a screeching halt because they realize, "This is ... this is ... I've got to quit. It's got to stop." And I don't want to have greater *shame* brought forth. Because, you see, if it goes to the ministry there's going to be greater shame to bear. And then if it has to go to the whole Church that's even more, and it becomes harder then to repent and get right, be right.

So if there are things you don't understand, ask! Ask what it is you can do and how you do it and how you can work to gain a brother. Don't you want to see a brother saved if you have the ability to do so? I'm crying out in Sabbath sermons because I want different ones, brothers and sisters, spiritually, to repent, to not be letting down and pulling back and drifting away. I don't like to see that in the body. I don't like to see people go by the wayside. I don't like to see people waste time. I don't like to see people become lukewarm. I don't like to... So I cry out. This is my opportunity to do that within a body. Sometimes we have a responsibility to do it individually, but we better do it. Because too many times there are people engaged in certain things, and because it won't go to the ministry, because we don't want to address it, because, because...

I've heard people make comment they wouldn't go and talk to someone because they didn't want, it was too awkward, and they didn't want to lose a friendship. What does that mean if they leave the Church?! What does that mean if that leads to them leaving the Body of Christ, the Church of God?! Then you've more than lost a friendship, they're losing out! That's horrible! So, again, there are times your desire should be to see people saved, to see people helped, to see people conquer and overcome whatever it is, weakness, battle they might have, because you don't want to see a time come when it has to go out to the Church, "So and so' has been disfellowshipped."

I don't like doing that. I hate for that to happen. And yet *it's still going on!* Several since the Feast of Tabernacles. It just doesn't... And I know there are more coming. I already know it. And it's because of why I'm crying out today of different ones that are letting down because I know what happens. And if they start letting down and getting more involved in the world they become weaker and weaker, and they don't know it but they're becoming weaker and weaker and their focus and vision isn't about the hunger and desire for God's way of life with all of their being and *being* there are Christ's return, *being* there to witness the most awesome event in *all human history*. There's not an event going to be more awesome than that, when Jesus Christ and 144,000 come out of the heavens and come to this earth. And to witness that? Just to witness it, let alone to be in the Church of God and witness it?! Incredible! And yet I know there are some not going to be there because they're pulling back and they're letting down spiritually. Horrible! So I'm crying out.

And so again here, **with two or three, that every word may be established. And if he'll neglect to hear them tell it to the Church.** See, it comes to a point in time sometimes where someone is suspended or someone is disfellowshipped. And if they fail to hear that, if they can't respond to that, they're gone. If someone can't be shaken to the core of their being through a suspension or a disfellowshippment and come to a realization, "Look what I've done! I can't have fellowship in the body! Look what I have done!" If a person can't be *shocked* to the core of their being by that event happening to their life and then seek to change and draw closer to God, they're gone. It's over with. Because that's the last resort.

And so sometimes individuals are suspended for a month or two months to shake them up on a spiritual plane. And that isn't to go out to the entire Church. Maybe to a local area only. But you

know what we've had situations happen that I've had to correct? People get on the phone and they call across the country to their friend, or they get on Skype, "Oh, did you hear about 'so and so'? They've been suspended." Why do that to another brother or sister when it's something that's happened and be contained. It's like a family, locally, contained locally, to give them an opportunity to indeed have a month or two months or whatever it is to reflect on what they've done, to come to that point and to work to get their life right, and then to come back. Because we have some coming back now. Okay? And that's the most enjoyable thing I have when I can tell someone, "You've learned the things that need to be learned. You've been shaken and that's good, that's healthy. That's hard to come to this point." And then to be received by the brethren.

I can show you examples of what happened in here, in 1 Corinthians there as it goes through and talks about these things - I think chapter 2 and 3, in through there, whatever it is, 3, I think it is, and on. Maybe even gets to chapter 5. But anyway, when it talks about some of that, of what happened back then when a man took his father's wife and they were living together and everybody knew what that meant and how they were living. So it wasn't his mother but it was... whatever. They were older. Both supposed to be in the Church of God and they both - Paul told them, "Put them both out of the Church." He says, "I've judged this as though I were there! I don't have to be there physically. I've had in the mouth... All I have to have is in the mouth of two other witnesses who know that's happening and the whole Church knows about it - and who's gone to their brother alone? Who went to their brother alone and said, 'This isn't to take place in God's Church?'" Well, nobody did. Now, he didn't put it in those terms, but that's exactly what he said, to put them out of the Church. "I'm not there but I'm telling you that's what you're supposed to do. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. You allow that and you're allowing things into your life that you don't realize how dangerous spiritually that is for you."

So he gave some very strong correction back there tying it in with the Days of Unleavened Bread and what the Days of Unleavened Bread are all alike, all about. And so during that process and through what he went through then there came a time, I believe it was in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians then, where he talked about that individual, the man coming back, not the woman. And he made comment here about how you're "to let go and to receive them with gladness and happiness, that they have learned from being shaken to the core of their being how wrong that was and they have humbled themselves." A horrible thing to have to go through, but humility is a beautiful thing and he humbled himself. And Paul was then chastening them again and correcting them again and telling them how important it was to make sure that they're received with open arms, "He's your brother... and to be glad and rejoice that he's back." Because he knew the Corinthians, so he was dealing with some other matters there.

And so lessons for us to learn from, okay? So, always learning and ever learning how to do it better and how to love one another.

**Verse 17—And if he neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the Church. But if he fails to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an gentile and a tax collector.** You can see how loved they were,  
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okay? A gentile, a non-believer. They're not to have any part anymore. So that's how... And sometimes... I hate it when that happens. I think of all the ones who left in 2012, several in the ministry, several high up in the ministry, and through that period of time and can't have fellowship with them anymore, can't walk to God's house side by side, can't counsel blended... you know, counsel blending sweet and times we spent together. All gone. All gone. What a horrible thing to come to in life!

Notice what else it says; **Verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**. If you make that decision within the Church, within the ministry of the Church, God Almighty says it's bound in heaven. You know why? Because the Church, the ministry learns to follow God faithfully, learns to implement certain things faithfully in the Body, in the relationships within the Body and the relationships that people are able to have in the Church. And so if it comes to a point even in a matter like this of disfellowshippment, that's not a small thing. To make a conclusion, "You have already cut yourself off from the Body of Christ. You have already cut yourself off from the flow of God's spirit. You are not a part of the Body any longer."

And so God says, "You better live by that. Everyone better recognize that." Because you know what happens sometimes? I think of some ministers, 2012, out west, told a couple of people, "These individuals that you are friends with, close friends with, have been disfellowshipped," like, the whole Church was told, "No more relationship." The comment comes back from an ordained minister, "*No one* is going to tell me who I can have or not have fellowship with." Bye-bye. You did it to yourself. You're gone too. It's where it led. What a *horrible thing* to not understand what God has said here and the power that God gives to something, to say "This is bound in heaven. Get the point. This is not a small thing." Anyway, that's another sermon in itself. And this goes into many other areas of life too, like I've talked about in times past - something simple like make-up. Bound on earth, bound in heaven. Better live by it. It's a decision made for the sake of unity in the body, and if people work against that they're working against government and they don't comprehend. It's not a matter that it has to be something that is black and white in here, it's a matter that if it's stated as a matter of how this is how we function as a body and things change. Different administrations, things change.

Luke 17. I'm going to take a little more time because I want to get through this and do it justice, because I'm *really* looking forward to next Sabbath's sermon with greater eagerness and anticipation as a follow-up to the ministerial meetings we had. And I'm just going to say right now, some may not receive it well. Some may leave the Church over it. I don't know. Do we know where God's Church is? Do we know how God works? God continually gives things from time to time to prove, to show, to reveal. Hopefully we're all together.

**Luke 17:3—Take heed to yourselves: If your brother sin, not "take a false step," they sin against you rebuke him. There's a time to go to someone and say, "That's just wrong. We don't... You can't talk like that in the Church. You can't do something like that. We don't do that (whatever it is)." ...and if he repent, forgive him.** Some sin, if he repent forgive him. "I'm sorry.

I'm wrong." **And if he trespass, sin against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, I'm sorry.** Like my father-in-law used to say, "Give me another chance." Now, the one thing I like to hear when somebody... just puts it all out there. "I'm wrong. I'm sorry, and I'm wrong." We should go that far in being able to acknowledge certain things if something like that happens.

So, but what does it say? If that happens, never hold it against them. It doesn't matter if it happens several times that day. And are we like that sometimes? Have you ever done something and you turn right around and you do it again and you feel bad about it? Somebody said something to you and you're not... 5, 10 minutes later you say something stupid again! You say something offensive again. I've done that! And not too long ago! We all do that. Could I... Am I able to watch every word perfectly? I'm a human being. You're a human being. And if you think you don't sin and things don't come out of your mouth sometimes that aren't said the nicest way, the kindest way, then you're smoking something that you shouldn't be. Okay? You're feeling good about things that you shouldn't be feeling good about. Anyway, a little bit of a joke there.

But seriously, we need to all understand we're not perfect, and everything that comes out of us is not perfect. We all make mistakes. And because of whatever it is that's in us, the stresses of life, whatever it is we might be feeling, and especially the more you're feeling it at a particular time, you're more likely ten minutes later to turn right around and do something again and say, "Oh, *man!* How thick is this thing? What does it take to get through sometimes?" And you repent again, say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong." It's some of the hardest things for people to say, human beings to say, "I'm sorry," and, "I was wrong." It really is. Think about it! Those are some of the *hardest things* for a human being, and some of the most *needful* things to be able to do. It really is. We ought to be able to do that well and do it quickly. But you know, we don't always do it quickly because we're still steaming inside a little bit over something. That's the way we are. Our rotten human nature! Incredible, what we can do as human beings. But we have to be able to see that and hate it and loathe it and cry out to God to cleanse it, to heal us.

**And if he trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, I repent. You shall forgive him.** The point being is you don't keep count. It's not a matter of the count. It's not a pharisaical thing. It's a matter that there *really* is *no* number of times in a day. And you just keep doing what you need to do and keep saying it. And in time, if you can all make it through it, together, whatever it is, as human beings, if there is somebody you've had a situation with...

Even at work! You know, these things work in a physical world. I've heard of so many people, even on a job, and I'll tell you what, when you go and talk to someone in the world and try to talk something out and be honest and truthful with them, they're not used to that as a whole. They're not used to those things as a whole. But you'll be amazed how often those things can produce good fruit just because you have the guts to go to them and talk to them and discuss it and to let

them know that you want there to be a friendship there, a good working relationship, whatever it might be. Sometimes you'd be dumbfounded how things work.

Oh, I wish there were more time to go into some of these. I already mentioned them in 1<sup>st</sup> John. I'm just going to sum it up in 1<sup>st</sup> John. I talked about it last Sabbath. So much of it comes down to these are things that have to do with mercy and God's love. They really go together. You can't separate them from each other in life, because they go hand in hand. And this attitude of being merciful, forgiving, this attitude of how God's love works, you know, it makes it very clear in 1<sup>st</sup> John that if we aren't willing to love each other in the way God shows us - and today has been a part of that, as a part of even going to someone alone - if we don't do what we're supposed to do we're failing to love our brother. We're failing to love in the way God says this is how you practice it.

That's what 1<sup>st</sup> John talks about. If you practice God's way, to do the things God says to do it, and if we don't God calls it what it is. He says a failure to love someone, to apply things and practice things the way God says is murder. And He says that, "you know no murder has eternal life abiding in him."

And so we have to understand by that what God is saying to us, that to fail to do the things we need to do means we quench God's spirit. We can hurt the flow of God's spirit by not seeking to make relationships right, by holding things against others. And candidly, I've had to deal with too many things in the past several months, before and after the Feast, about situations in people's lives where they haven't been getting along and where there's been conflict. And sometimes conflict after conflict because they've been failing to love each other the way God says to love. And what has happened is in those cases, is they're quenching God's spirit and they've become weaker spiritually to where it's really harder to see self. Don't let that happen to you. Don't quench the power of God's spirit in your life. We live in a time where you can't afford to do that. But on the contrary, embrace the Body of Christ. Learn to love one another *far* more. Because we can. We can grow to a higher level of genuine love with God's kind of love toward one another in the Body of Christ.