

Welcome, everybody, to this seventh day Sabbath.

The purpose of this sermon is to consider a human reaction which is caused by pride. This reaction is we will hide ourselves, the true self, hide what we really are. This is a natural thing that we do. It's something that's built in human nature.

This hiding of ourselves is a form of self-protection. Now, when I'm referring to the word "self," hiding "self," I'm not talking about running off and hiding one's body, so to speak. But it's actually talking about hiding our self, what we really are. It's about the way we think and it's all about the image that we have within our minds, what we think we are like and what we want to project out to others. And that's the key - what we want and like and desire to project out to others so that we don't really reveal what we really are, what we really think.

Now, people go through life doing this. We all have self-image or a self-image, what we think we want to project out to others, what we like others to think about us. So we project out what we want others to think of us.

The majority of people in the world or of the world are motivated to have others like them, because that's just natural, because it's something that's within us. So we're the same. We're no different than the people of the world. It's natural to want others to like us, and therefore, because of this, we have this natural inclination not to be open and honest because if we're open and honest people will see what we're really like. This means we're not always open and honest. We by nature hide our true being, our natural character, what we really think.

Now, we're called to be different. We're called to change, to think differently. Therefore, this hiding of one's image or this one's self has to change. We have to work on it. We will all hide our true motives and intents almost every day. That's something we do, but we're called to change. We're called to not be like this. Now, people in the world, people of the world who aren't called (that's who I'm really referring to) hide their true motives and intents. That's just natural. They don't want to reveal who they really are because they know their weaknesses in part. They don't know their spiritual weaknesses but they do know other weaknesses they may have, and therefore, they go about generally trying to cover them up. You don't want to reveal who you really are because that could cause troubles in your life, within your marriage, within relationships, within your work environment, whatever it is. Therefore, people continue to have motives and intents that are covered up.

If we are found out, or if it is revealed and someone challenges what we think this image of ourselves is we tend to move into justification. We justify, which is a form of hiding. We defend

self. We have been called not to defend self but to expose it, to repent of our hiding, our covering up of our self.

The title of today's sermon is *I Hid Myself*. We all know where that came from. This comes from the very beginning in the garden when Adam hid himself and so did Eve. They hid themselves. They hid themselves from God.

We by nature will hide our thinking, our true thinking. We have thoughts. Now, we can be standing in front of somebody and they can be talking to us and we can be having these thoughts. They're not always in tune with the person speaking because we're developing a different process of thinking - we disagree or agree, one, or the other. There is no middle ground here. There may be times when we think about, "Well, maybe this is not right," or maybe we'll say, "Well, I don't think that way," or we may turn around and go, "Well, no, they're right but maybe I need to look into it." But generally we think while someone is speaking and we're either in unity and harmony with that thinking or we're not.

Now, generally what will happen when it comes to people in the world, they will not reveal their true thinking to another person. Because what do they do? They're hiding themselves. They're hiding what they really think because they don't want to cause an argument, or they don't want a disagreement, or they want to be still liked by the boss or maybe somebody close to them, or maybe someone else they don't even know that's speaking. Well, they don't want to cause any dissention or any issues in that relationship, so what do they do? They hide their thinking.

Now, there is a time to show wisdom and not to reveal one's thinking towards somebody or about a matter because it's just wise not to give in to those debates, but generally what happens in life is that we go about our life; we may be in total disagreement with things, and we hide it. We hide ourselves. We don't reveal who we are. Now, this can come about, simple thing, when we are called by God to have a relationship with Him and to improve our relationship with others, which is the last six commandments, because unless we're keeping them we're not really improving our relationships at all. And over a lifetime we will continue to try to improve these relationships by keeping the spirit of the law. The first four commandments and the last six commandments, which is about this physical relationship, we can improve in these things. And how do we do that? By listening to God and taking on board what He says about relationships and how we should maintain them and how we should develop them. Well, that's all done through the way we think and it's all about not hiding ourselves, not hiding who we really are.

Now, this can be difficult in lots of ways for people because once they're called there's a tendency that takes over within us that in the beginning we're called by God to start to "see" the truth, to start to "see" things that we think, "Wow! This is exciting! Isn't this incredible?" We tend to go out and try to tell other people, "Well, can't you see this? Have you heard this? Isn't this incredible?" They may or may not agree for a little bit, but in the end they'll isolate us and say, "Well, you're just a kook," or "You're just running off; you're joining a cult," and they don't think the same as we

do, which is a great thing, because only by the power of God's holy spirit can we think differently on a spiritual level. It's the only way. It can't be done any other way. What happens by nature is we then start to pull back because we realize we're affecting others in this relationship. It may be within a marriage. It may be our own children. It may be relatives. It may be friends. It may be a work environment. What we tend to do is to pull back, which is okay, but there does come a point where we can't continue to pull back, in other words, hide ourselves. We have to live a particular way towards others which is about revealing who we really are, this change of thinking.

The first big challenge in that is about the Sabbath. That is the big change of thinking that takes place. We can't hide ourselves in that because we have to go forward and we've got to say to people, "Well, no. I'm not going to be there on this day," or "I'm not going to be working on this day." "No, I'm going to be listening to a sermon on this day." Some may not have to face all those things but the majority of us have to do that, where we've got to reveal ourselves, reveal this change of thinking. We can no longer hide ourselves because hiding ourselves is like protecting self. We don't like others to think badly of us. Well, the Sabbath is a great thing because we can't hide with that. We have to turn around and say, "No, I'm not doing 'this.' I'm not doing 'that.' No." And they say, "Why?" "I'm a Sabbath keeper. I keep God's Sabbath." This is exposing one's self. This is not hiding, this is revealing.

Now, in all of this wisdom and balance has to be shown. We can't afford to be stupid in all of this. There comes a time when we need to say something, and there is a time we need to pull back. That's a judgment call. That's how we learn. That's how we grow, because it's like putting our hand on the fire. We put it on, "Oh, I'm not doing that again!" Well, that's the same in life and it's a lifetime experience where there are times when we think, "Hmmm, maybe I should have said something then." There are other times when we think, "Mmm, no, we shouldn't have said something."

I remember in a particular environment not long ago when I was sitting at a table and somebody started to sprout off about what they believed. They didn't know anything about me, in the sense of my calling or anything I actually believe on a spiritual level. Anyway, they went on to say that they believed - and they were very adamant about it and I could see how convinced they were and very adamant about it - that they believed that they had an immortal soul and that when the person died they were going to go off to heaven, and all this stuff. I sat there thinking should I or shouldn't I say something? Should I reveal my thinking about this? In other words, do I hide at this point of time or do I expose myself at this point of time?

I came to the conclusion, after he went on for five or ten minutes, that there was no point whatsoever because unless God is really calling that person, and unless they're asking me a question rather than telling me all this stuff, if they're asking a question I would then give them an answer, because it's time to reveal who I really am in the sense of a calling from God and what I believe, what God says about a matter, but in this environment where they're just simply telling me all this stuff there is no point. They can't hear me spiritually and there is absolutely no

advantage in it. I relied on God to show me if there was an opportunity here to say something, and at the time I believe that I was inspired to say absolutely nothing because there was no point. The person wasn't being called and the person wasn't asking a question. They were telling me about what they believed and virtually implying that I should be believing this too, and how stupid was I not to listen to this person. But anyway, I listened and I said nothing and went on with life because there is no point at that particular time. God willing, maybe at some point of time I'll have the opportunity to correct that thinking... or I know that God will do it at some point in time. Whether or not I'm involved or not, that's a different story.

So this hiding of one's self is something that there is a time to be wise, not hiding self, but be wise with the knowledge that God has revealed to us, because there is a lot of knowledge in God's Church, massive amounts of knowledge. That's wonderful. That's great! But the key to this knowledge is the understanding that goes into it because we can know about a particular thing, but understanding it is totally different. This understanding is when we "see" the knowledge and then we understand why it's there, what it's all about, which is about a calling, and it's about us changing, repenting, thinking differently. Therefore, to understand it we have to go, "Ah, I have to apply this in my life." So we can know about the Sabbath, for example. Fantastic! There are other people that know about the Sabbath that don't have God's spirit, but we have God's spirit; therefore, we have the power - not only of knowledge, spiritual knowledge, but also of spiritual understanding because we can only understand something by the power of God's holy spirit to truly understand it.

Now, when we understand the Sabbath we then know we have to apply it into our life, therefore, we do think differently. There's a process that we all go through to come to this knowledge and understanding and then the application of it is true wisdom. In other words, living something that God has revealed the knowledge of and the understanding of and we implement it into our life, that is wisdom. We're living it. We're actually doing it. Our mind is starting to be transformed. We're starting to think differently. Now, in all of this there is a process that takes time and it takes effort from our part because we know something, "Oh, wonderful. Sabbath! Isn't that exciting and wonderful to know! Ah, I understand what it's all about." But then applying it is the wisdom. We then begin to live it. Our mind changes. It's transformed. Well, that's the purpose of a calling. The transformation of a mind is to think differently, to think like God. We understand why the Sabbath exists. We understand it's about us and spiritual food. How exciting is all that?

But going back to this point of I hid myself, which is in Genesis 3, and you can be turning there. Genesis 3:1, we're going to start it. What we do as far as our image is that we desire others to think good of us. Now, that's our natural motivation. That's just natural. Everybody has got it. We've got it. There are still aspects in our life that this applies to and as we spiritually mature it starts to change, because we go from this point of acting out a role, maybe, or trying to protect our image because we desire others to see and believe that we're better than we really are and that we behave a particular way. There are all different motivations behind it, but it's all based

on pride because we're protecting this image. We come to the point where with the power of God's holy spirit we understand and we see that it makes no difference and we don't really care what others think of us.

Now, this is an incredible statement that we can make. If we have God's holy spirit we only care about what God thinks of us. That's really the key to this whole topic, about why a person would hide self, why Adam and Eve hid themselves. They knew there was a problem in their life and we'll get into that. We know they were worried about it because they were projecting an image to this point. They were, "Well, I've damaged this image; therefore, I need to hide myself." Well, we can do this still even with God's spirit. It's with us, but we make other choices that go back to our natural carnal mind and things overpower us, and because we want to be liked, in particular because of an image or because other people have an image that they've projected. It's generally to do with money. It's to do with wealth. It's like going into the room and seeing the two millionaires standing over there and everyone else over here and the natural tendency of humans is to gravitate towards those people with money, because of pride, because we want to get something back from them because we think they're important. We'll gravitate to them and try to project an image to them where they might favor us because we want to get something back.

If we don't understand that and we don't "see" that, well, that's something that we're going to have to come to realize, is that it's a natural tendency within all of us. Now, as we go into this topic we need to also be aware that people of the world without God's holy spirit aren't going to really agree or see what we're talking about because they can't "see" themselves. They can't "see" their selfishness. They can't "see" their pride because they haven't been called to it. It's not really something that we should worry about in any shape or form because their day will come. What we need to do is look at ourselves. Does this topic apply to me? Do I hide myself? Now, I know from my own nature that I have at different times in different circumstances hid myself because of an image or wanting others to think a particular way about me. Then I realized that's wrong. That is really wrong. I need to have all my motivations done, motivated by the power of God's holy spirit, and I need to choose those things.

Now, there are other times when I realize that I have done the right thing in the sense of used God's holy spirit and stood, and people have thought of me as being crazy and mad and all those other things they do because I have not protected my image, my own pride, my image, but I've projected out God's thinking. Often it's about the Sabbath or about tithing, where I've stood and said, "Well, no, I'm not doing that, because it's something that is in me. I believe this and I'm going to live it." Well, that's projecting something out differently towards others. It's a different image we're projecting. Now, they may like it or they may hate it. The majority of times people don't like it. There's a few now and again that have come back and said, "I really am thankful that you have stood for something you believe, and it's been a credit to the person rather than seen as a cuckoo person."

We, by nature, have an image. It's just natural. We all have it. We still have it. We've been in God's Church thirty years and we still have an image. We have to be careful that we don't let that image change our behavior to please others or to get credit from others. Our total motivation has to be that we desire at all times to please God. All our decision making has to be about pleasing God. We by nature do not want to be seen as different or unusual; therefore, we have a tendency to hide what we really think. As we've been through, there's a time to say things and a time not to. It requires wisdom. It requires knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

For example, if a person doesn't understand and they're just telling you something, what is the point of it? Don't answer a fool according to his folly. No point. But there's a time to answer when we believe the question is being asked with a level of sincerity. But if there's a question asked that's based on sarcasm or you already know their attitude, and it's obvious, why bother? Why bother? They're not really interested so why bother even answering?

Well, let's have a look at this first hiding of one's self as far as a human is concerned. Let's look at **Genesis 3:1**. That was a rather long introduction. It wasn't meant to be that long, but that's the way it goes. **Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Eternal God/LORD God had made. And He said to the woman...** So here we have Satan who was an angelic being, and this is not a snake, per se, but this is a living being because it's a spirit being that is influencing somebody, just like he can do that now, but he's more cunning than any beast of the field, or any animal of the field, or anything that God has made because he was a spirit being. He's been around a long time. He had a lot of knowledge, but his understanding is now polluted.

"...which the LORD God had made," because God had made all these things physical. We're no match to a spirit being like Satan, no match at all. **And he said to the woman**, so there's this influence now that's taking place, **Has God indeed...** This is a question. He's making a statement or projecting something that is a question because this is a question: **Has God indeed said?** So, "Has God done this really?" **You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?** This is the question, which implies a level of doubt. "Are you sure? Can you, do you remember that happening?" Or, "You're not really free to have free will and choice; you're really quite governed and controlled really."

And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. Now, this is interesting because she says, "we" implying it's Adam and Eve. It's not "I may," it's "we" because it's something that they're in together. They both had this knowledge of it. When you go back to **Genesis 2:15** it says that God put Adam in there and that God commanded the man, in verse 16, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat." Well, Eve hadn't been created from Adam at this point. This all goes back to government in the end. Here is Satan undermining God, really, undermining God.

But the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it lest you die. And Satan, the serpent, said to the woman, You shall not surely die. So this is a direct lie. It's a lie towards her and towards Adam, really. It's about, "Well, you won't die. This is just something that's been said to keep control of you. **For God knows in the day that you shall eat of it your eye shall be open and you will be like God,** which is this ability of freedom to make right choices, to know what's right and wrong. Knowing good and evil, you'll know it. You'll be able to decide for yourself. You won't have somebody over you telling you what to do. You'll have your own authority. You'll be able to now make decisions by yourself. You will know and decide what's right and wrong by yourself. You don't need other people telling you what's right and wrong. You'll be able to do it."

Well, this is exactly the same today. This same principle applies today. People make up their own minds what is right and wrong. We see it through every media broadcast. Through almost every program there's bias, there's prejudice, there's someone's thinking. If you watch any type of show where there is panels of people ("talking heads" is what you would call them), they sit there and they all have an opinion. Everybody's got an opinion about something. "This person should have done 'that.'" "This person should have done 'this.'" "I believe 'this,'" and "I believe 'that.'" They leave God completely out of the question and they don't hide themselves at all. Not at that point. They reveal, because they're already filled with pride and they have the confidence that they're right in their own eyes, therefore, why hide? Because, "I'm right and you're a pack of idiots! You don't know what you're talking about. I'm the authority. I know. I know what's right and wrong. Listen to me!" That's the attitude that's there.

Verse 6—So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was pleasant for the eyes, and the tree desirable to make one wise, in other words, it was going to lift her up to make her better than what she thought she was. Her image! It was going to improve her image. It was going to be good for her, better, wiser, "make one wise," **she took its fruit and ate.** So she did it first. **She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.** So he had a choice to make. He could have said, "No," but this all goes back to this whole business about doing things to please others. When leaving God out of the picture, that's what we will do by nature. We will do things to please others, to be liked by others, to be accepted by others, rejecting the whole concept or the thought process of doing things to please God.

That's what a calling is. We've been called to reject our selfishness, to reject our selfishness and to make choices to please God. Now, we might within different things, in the truth God has supplied in the Church, we might make decisions, "Oh, no," and overrule those things. Well, that is just basically spiritual suicide and its stupidity. It's actually a revelation of one's pride because they're doing the same things. It's something we see that we think, "Oh, no, I don't agree with that from God's apostle. I think you can do 'this,'" or "I think you can do 'that.'" That's just pride. That's all it is, just straightforward, absolute pride and it's all to do with an image. It's all to do with the way we think. We're now deciding what we think is right and wrong. We think we know

better. What we're really saying here is just like Adam and Eve. They thought they knew better than God. "No, this will make us wise. This will improve our image. This will improve who we are."

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings, like aprons. They covered themselves up because there is a change of thinking going on here.

And they heard the sound of the Eternal God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God (the Eternal) among the trees of the garden. Now, they've done this because they've hid themselves because of their human reasoning because this is what happens because we start to think it through and think, "Now, hang on a minute. If I do 'this' and do 'that' and if I go up and maybe if I say this to this person they'll like me more, and I could go up and do 'this' or 'that' or say this or act in a particular way." Well, it's no different. This is exactly what's taking place. Sin is involved. It's human reasoning working through things, and Adam and Eve here had gone and hid themselves from the Eternal Creator who sees all things. So this is definitely human reasoning.

Well, this is something for us to learn. We, too, have to remember at all times that God sees and knows everything. Now, this can escape us because we get into various temptations and various trials and we lose sight that God sees. We lose sight that God sees. We think we can hide from God. This is exactly what Adam and Eve did. Well, this is what we have, this same tendency. Now, we shouldn't judge Adam and Eve too harshly. This is the way we are by nature. We tend to hide ourselves amongst the trees. We try to cover ourselves up. Because? We don't want to be revealed. We don't want to be seen as we really are, which is all to do with this human reasoning where you think your way around things.

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? God already knew where he was. "Where have you been?" "What have you done?" Because it's the same type of thing. God knows. He's already seen it. He already understands and He knows what they've done and why they've done it. He knows all that. Nothing can be hid from God.

So he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, this is Adam, and I was afraid because I was naked; in other words, there's a change of thinking that's taken place here. He realizes he's done something wrong and now he realizes that the way that God thinks about him will have changed. That's what he thinks. Because he thinks, "Oh, hang on a minute. I've done something I was told not to do, therefore, who I've done it against—God—He's going to think differently about me," and I hid myself, which is a natural thing that we do.

And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat? Then the man said, And the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. In other words, this is still justifying. This is still defending self. This is refusing to take personal responsibility. This is hiding one's self.

In other words, when we turn around and justify, when we turn around and blame something else, or someone else, because there's a tendency of human nature that we blame situations. "Oh, well..." and make all these excuses for things. Often (not always), often that is just simply hiding one's self because we're trying to protect the image we have.

The person may think we're punctual. All of a sudden we turn up late. Well, we tend to go into this massive explanation rather than a straightforward, open, and honest one. We will tell them how this happened, the train broke down, then got caught in the rain, and then I couldn't run in the rain, I didn't have an umbrella, and all that, when really it would be best to be just simply open and honest and say, "Look, train broke down and I'm running late." Bang. Simple. But we tend to want to protect this image and go on and on and on and really blow it out of proportion and even exaggerate if that is an advantage to one's image. We will exaggerate. We will not be truthful and open about it. We will hide ourselves. We will hide because we're really worried about what the other person thinks about us.

Well, this is what's taking place here. Adam was really worried about what God thought. God already knew. God knew all those things, but Adam had forgotten that and now he's turning around and he's saying, "Well, I hid myself because of 'this' and things aren't what I did." He's not really admitting that he did it. He's saying, "No, no, it was Eve. She gave it to me and that's why I did it. You gave me Eve."

So we can see that we have this tendency by nature and there are many examples in the Bible where people have tried to hide themselves. It's a foolish thing to do, but human nature as it is that's exactly what we will do.

We'll have a look now at Jeremiah 23:13. This really is cutting into a process or a flow which is to do with the shepherds of Israel, which is referring to the ministry. Here we see issues within the ministry and what they have done. We're going to cut into part of this and just go through it because all of this really is about how people hide themselves. People forget that God sees everything. God knows everything. God sees everything, but we can only ever maintain this in our mind if we have God's holy spirit, because by nature we will forget this, we will forget God. It's just natural thing that people do, but God sees every thought. God knows everything about everything. So when we set out and start to be in any way deceptive or deceiving, which is hiding ones self - lying, for example, is hiding one's self because we don't want to be exposed - the self doesn't want to be revealed. So what do we do? We exaggerate or we lie about a situation because we're defending the image that we have by nature. Now, it requires God's spirit to see this and the depth of it within each and every one of us.

Jeremiah 23:13—And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria, people that had God's holy spirit had then lost it and started to deceive people within God's Church. They prophesied by Baal. When it says, "prophesied by Baal," these ministers had lost God's spirit and now were using their own human reasoning. It's not from God. It's not of the truth. They're talking lies. They're

talking from their own thinking which is the reasoning that takes place, this human reasoning of working out what is right and wrong in their own eyes. Now, the day that we start to work things out, what we think is right and wrong in our own eyes, our judgment on a matter, something that has been placed into God's Church, for example, like the truth, well, when we do that we're doing exactly this: "They prophesied by Baal," which is their own reasoning, their own thinking, which is a false religion or false concepts or false doctrine, which is to do with false religion.

And caused My people, God speaking, **Cause My people Israel to err**, which is to go astray. Now, this is exactly what has already happened in God's Church during the time of the Apostasy where people went astray because "the prophets," the ministry, caused God's people, Israel, The Church of God, spiritual Israel, "to err," to go astray by preaching lies, taking things from their own reasoning and their own understanding. For example, it was "The Sabbath was done away and you could worship God at any time." Well, that's human reasoning. That's human logic. "You no longer have to tithe. You don't have to do any of the tithing laws. And you could eat pork if you wanted to." Well, that's all human reasoning and it's all sin. All of that is sin because it affected spiritual Israel because spiritual Israel had gone to sleep, which is the Church, and no longer was relying on God's spirit to guide their life. Human reasoning had taken over and pride had lifted itself up and everyone had an image about what they thought was right in their own eyes.

Verse 14—Also, I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: they committed adultery and walk in lies. So this is being spiritually unfaithful, to commit adultery physically, we understand that, but there is a component of committing adultery spiritually, which is this unfaithful to the truth because we're having a relationship outside of the one that God commanded and that God desires, which is a spiritual relationship with Him. The only way to have a spiritual relationship with God is to walk in the truth. They committed adultery and walk in lies. This is that deception. They're lying to themselves as well, because when we look at it we may hide ourselves from God - well, we think we can, but we can't, but we try to, we think we can hide our thinking - we're walking in a lie. We're deceived. We're deluded. There's self-deception taking place and we'll walk in these falsehoods, things that aren't true because we allow our thinking to dominate. We don't remember our calling. We don't remember that God sees everything and God knows everything and God is working with us to transform our thinking.

Continuing on in **verse 14—They also strengthen the hands of evildoers.** So they allow for sin. They allow it to continue. They tolerate it because when we tolerate sin in our life we're strengthening the hands of evil in our own thinking because we don't deal with it. We allow for it; we tolerate it. We don't repent of it. So that is actually strengthening the hands of sin, which is the same type of thing. "They strengthen the hands of the evildoers," pointing to people that are doing the wrong thing, people that are breaking the Sabbath. Well, they talk about it, they encourage them, and they speak for them rather than against them. They are strengthening the hands of evildoers. **So that no one turns back from his wickedness.** There is no repentance involved here. In other words, they're being encouraged to go in a different direction.

So that's what was actually taking place. Some (not everybody) turned to that direction in the sense of encouraging evildoers. There were many in God's Church that knew that these things were not right and tried to hold on to the truth but had lost God's spirit at that point in time.

All of them are like Sodom to Me. What's it saying when it's saying they're all like Sodom? We know what Sodom is. It's referring to sin. It's Sodom. They need to be destroyed because of sin. They're under the death penalty because of this sin and they're going to have to pay it. **And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.** This is referring to the ministry. They were willingly teaching falsehood.

Verse 15—Therefore, thus says the Eternal of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, which is referring to poison. Now, when we don't have God's holy spirit there is no spiritual strength within us at all. Without God's spirit we are nothing. We're back to our natural carnal mind and it's all going to be done based on pride and image; in other words, speaking lies and falsehood. It's all going to be done for the wrong motive. **And make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out into all the land.** Now, this "profaneness" is hypocrisy. Great hypocrisy! Saying one thing and doing another. Well, this is hiding one's self. Hypocrisy is hiding one's self. "I hid myself." That's being a hypocrite because we're not open and honest. So what's a hypocrite really? Well, they're an actor. An actor is somebody that takes on a role and projects an image out to others to see. And people say, "Wow! Look at that!" If you look at modern day movies, often, it's about building one's self up. There are hundreds of different super heroes, and I'll use "Thor" as an example, not to isolate that one person, but just for example, where they have this enormous power and it's projected and people are drawn to this power and want to be liked by this power. It's false, but really that person's a hypocrite because he's an actor. I'm not saying that on a bad way, but that's what his role is. He gets paid to be an actor. He gets paid to be a hypocrite, to act out a role that's not real.

Well, we have that same potential on a spiritual level, that we can act out a role. We can be hypocrites by saying and looking like we're doing one thing but doing something different later on. This can take place, for example, within the Body of Christ, of those at times that fall into the trap of hypocrisy, turning up for a Sabbath, or staying home for a Sabbath, and sitting down and listening to a sermon, then as soon as they get home they get into arguments within families, living a lie. That's being a hypocrite, saying one thing and doing another.

Now, this can apply to many things in life where we project an image but then we go out and live something different the other six days of the week. Well, that's a hypocrite. That means we are not really being open and honest. We're hiding ourselves. And to think that we get to the thinking that we aren't seen by God, well, we're deluded. We're absolutely deluded. We limit God in so many ways within our life just by nature, by natural things, because that's what man does. He turns to his own understanding. He relies on himself. He's self-reliant rather than turning to God who's all powerful and can do anything in the interest of His creation if it's for their spiritual

good. Because we tend to think on a physical level, and therefore, we think that things are good for us, but God knows that they're not. We don't see it though because we don't "see" it always on a spiritual level.

Verse 16—Thus says the LORD of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless. Now, that's because they're spiritually empty, because it's not the truth. The only thing that is of value within our thinking is God's holy spirit because the natural mind is the natural mind. It's actually quite worthless in itself. It's empty. It's empty of God's spirit. But when we have God's spirit connected with our spirit and we start to see spiritual things and get this knowledge, and have understanding, and use this understanding and apply it to our life, we then are applying this wisdom in our life and it's not spiritually empty. It's not worthless; it's our future. Because all of this, when you look at it, is about a plan of salvation. Here we are as physical human beings who by nature work out what's right and wrong for ourselves. We do. We project an image. We live an image. We build ourselves up, and it's called self-confidence. People that have self-confidence become bolder because they know they're right and they're getting favor from others and others are telling them that they're good and they're all these different things, and it builds up their pride and they get their strength from themselves or from others rather than their strength from God. Because our real strength is God's spirit living and dwelling in us.

Here it's saying don't listen to these false ministry, these people that are talking garbage and talking lies and are just trying to divert you from the truth. They make you worthless - spiritually empty. There is no truth. Now, we understand that truth comes into the Church through an apostle. There's only one true Church. Scripture clearly says there's one truth, there's one baptism, there's one faith, one God. All of these things we know, that there is only one truth. The truth has entered the Church. There's only one true Church, therefore, it's all pretty straightforward. If we have God's spirit we can see it. Well, anything outside of God's Church in man's world of communication and knowledge and information, much of it is worthless. There are some things that are of value as far as the physics of things and mathematical equations and all that, but anything to do with spiritual things, it's all worthless. Everything outside of God's Church that people say is spiritual is not.

Often I see programs and I get a bit upset when people, they build a house and they say, this environment is very spiritual. I feel like jumping through the TV. They have no understanding of what "spiritual" really means because without God's holy spirit there is nothing spiritual within a human. Nothing, other than the spirit of man. But it's not spirit of mind. It's not the holy spirit, the spirit of God, God's holy spirit living and dwelling in a person. That's spiritual! Spiritual is in God's Church! It's the truth. That's spiritual!

So here it is saying that these people were preaching to others. "They make you worthless." So when you look at this, this is a warning for us not to go off and listen to worthless things that aren't really spiritual at all. Why would we want to go outside of God's Church to start to read

materials or listen to other things because they're just going to make you worthless? They're going to make me worthless listening to them. It's going to do damage. The truth is in God's Church. That's what we should expose ourselves to, to have it flood our minds so that we can live the truth.

Continuing on, **verse 16—They speak a vision of their own heart**, which is their own ideas. It's the way they see it. Now, this has caused a lot of problems within the churches because there are still people out there that are speaking these things and they say they're of God but they're speaking from their own mind. It's their own ideas. It's what they think God is saying. When the reality is the only way that we can know what God is saying is by the power of God's holy spirit. It's the only way.

Not from the mouth of the Eternal. So all of these things that are being said out there, well, they're not of God. They're not accurate in the sense on a spiritual level. Yes, there are some things, like the Sabbath day, where people may keep it, but they don't really keep it because it's about the spirit of a matter. Without God's holy spirit it's just a physical act. It's just a physical act. It requires God's holy spirit to keep the Sabbath correctly.

Verse 17—They continually say to those who despise Me, this is God saying that people that despise God, **The Eternal has said, You shall have peace.** It's what people are saying. They're going to have "Peace, peace," and "Come here and join this group and you'll have peace on a spiritual level. Well, that's all a lie. It's not possible. It's not true. **And to everyone who walks according to the imaginations of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.** That's what they'll say. "This is the place." "This is where you need to come for spiritual food." That's all a lie because what they're doing is hiding something. They're hiding from God. They're hiding their true motive. Their true motive isn't about obedience to God; their true motive is about pride and selfishness because that's natural. That's the only thing it can be.

Verse 18—For who has stood in the counsel of the Eternal, and has perceived and heard His word? That's a great question that God is asking. Well, "Who has stood in the counsel of the Eternal?" In other words, who has listened to God? "And perceived and heard His word?" On a spiritual level! Well, they're not able to at the moment because they're not called to it or if it's the church that's scattered they're unable to hear because God is not awakening them at this point of time.

Who has marked His word and heard it? Well, we understand that Israel didn't do it, didn't have God's spirit. They never did it. They didn't mark things in their mind, which is what we're talking about today. We should mark in our mind that we cannot hide from God. We cannot hide from God! We cannot hide one thought, one word, or one action from God. We might think we are but we're not. We are fully exposed on a spiritual level before God.

Now, that is all said with the encouragement to realize that we need to be more focused on our spiritual lives than our physical life.

Verse 19—Behold, a whirlwind of the Eternal has gone forth in fury—a violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not be turned back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. Well, this is referring to there are laws and those laws are the fact that judgments do take place. There is a penalty for everything that we do that is wrong. Wrong thinking earns a penalty, and it really hurts us, but we don't see it. If we're not very careful we don't realize that sin hurts us. When repented of it means we begin to think differently about the topic or the subject or whatever it is that we've done. Repentance is just not saying, "Oh, I'm sorry because I failed." This is about stopping and thinking and going to God and acknowledging He is right and we were wrong and that we don't want to be that way and that we need to change our thinking, whatever that weakness within our thinking is.

In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. So these laws that are in place, there's a cause and effect. There's a sow and you reap. These things are automatic and God has set them up for our spiritual benefit, and that we will learn over time that you can't hide anything from God and there's a penalty for sin. We understand the deeper meaning of that in the sense of a spiritual level where the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of God of Jesus Christ for us, and Christ's sacrifice for us, pays the way for our forgiveness. Sin can be forgiven if we are called, if we repent, if we are baptized and receive God's holy spirit, but we have to go through that whole process, which is the process of a calling to the point where we do get baptized and we are immersed so that all our sins up until that point in time can be forgiven. Prior to that sin is not forgiven; it's still there. The acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not being made. It can be done verbally, but the baptism is what covers that sin then we rise up to walk as a new person and that new person by the power of God's holy spirit (that's why hands are laid on a person), so that God will give them the power to think differently because we can't think differently without God's spirit.

Continuing on, **verse 21—I have not sent these prophets, yet they run. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.** In other words, they're not of God. God's not with them. They don't have God's holy spirit. It's not from God. Now, we understand how blessed we are that we understand there is one true Church and God has given us an apostle to reveal truth to the Church. This is incredible that we understand these things and we can read these things and realize that this applies to everything outside of God's Church. "I," Yahweh Elohim, is the Creator of the universe with a mind that we can't comprehend. We can begin to comprehend it with God's spirit. We can't really comprehend the magnificence of God and how God is pure. We can just see a little bit, but we don't really see it all. "I have not sent these prophets (I've not sent this ministry) yet they run," yet they carry on as if they're sent from God. "I have not spoken to them." They don't have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in them to inspire them to speak the truth in

love. They just don't. "Yet they prophecy," yet they carry on and say all of this as if they are of God. Fortunately (only with God's holy spirit living and dwelling in us) can we see this scripture that we can see falsehood, and we can see what's happened to God's Church and we can see where God is working. Without God's holy spirit we cannot see where God's working. God's working only in one place, in His true Church.

Verse 22—But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words... Wouldn't this be fantastic? It's available, but they can't hear it. ...then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doing, because if the truth is being preached, if it's revealed to a person, people will repent. They won't hide themselves any longer. They'll actually be more open and honest to God because this is what this is really all about. We can go over this topic lots of different ways, but the truth is this hiding of one's self is about a spiritual relationship with God. It's the way we think towards God and about God. Now, we do it by nature with people, but this is really about a relationship with God.

Continuing on in **verse 23—Am I a God near at hand, says the Eternal, and not a God afar off?** That's a question. Well, the answer is He is near at hand and He's not afar off, because he knows everything. Our mind can't handle that. We really can't handle it that God knows the hairs on our head. We do not fully grasp the power of God. We limit God to a human level. We really do. By nature that's what we do. God knows every aspect of us. He does, but He gives us an opportunity to see what choices we will make. So God gives us opportunity in life to grow spiritually. With His help we can do it, but God wants to see what we will choose. We're independent. We're free-willed. God doesn't control us; He gives us this opportunity. He says, "Well, I'm near at hand. I'm here. I'm willing to listen; if you will just call out to Me, I will listen." As the new book says, "If you will listen, I will listen." If we will listen to God, He will listen to us. He's not afar off.

Can anyone hide himself in the secret places? The answer is no. There is no hiding anything from God. That's something within God's Church that we can understand, we can grasp, and we can fight more of ourselves based on this knowledge. Now, the world doesn't believe this. The world believes they can hide things from God in secret places.

I often think about things called nightclubs. Now, why are they called "nightclubs?" Because it's at night when they think that people can't see. It's darker. When you go inside - I have been in them when I was younger - they're dark and you normally can't see much at all because it's about sin and it's about not revealing one's self. So if they had a "day club" for example, and you went inside and it was called a day club (it probably exists; I don't know), what would happen? You'd probably go inside and it'd be dark because you want to cover it up. You don't want it all to be seen. It's got to be dark. Even in the daytime a day club would be dark inside because this is something that's natural. Hiding one's self in secret places is natural. Now, we do this in the mind. Not only do we do this on physical levels, we do this in our minds, because we think that our thinking is not seen by others. But that's not the point. The point is it's seen by God.

Verse 24—Can anyone hide himself in secret places? Shall I not see him? Which is the question, God says, **says the Eternal.** Won't God see it? This is an encouragement to us, brethren, to be open and honest and not to think that we can be hypocrites or put on an image or cover anything up. And by anything, I mean anything. We all might think we get away with things for a while. And true, people do. In God's Church people do get away with things. People don't always keep the Sabbath the way they should. People don't always give tithes and offerings the way they should and they think that they're getting away with that, and they may be on a physical level, but on a spiritual level you cannot get away with anything! "Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him?" says the Eternal.

Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Eternal. In other words, doesn't God control everything? Doesn't God know everything about everything? Is anything too hard for God? The answer is no. So we need to be careful not to do an Adam and Eve and hide ourselves to protect an image that we naturally have.

We're going to just go over a couple of scriptures just to highlight some of these facts about human nature. We'll look at Luke 16:14. This is an example of the Pharisees, which we know Christ condemned for their attitudes, their motives, and intents.

Luke 16:14— Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money... Now, this cuts to the chase, really. This is about motive and intent. So their thinking, everything they do is about "lovers of money." Now, this is something that's in the world because everything is about money. No matter what happens, it's about money. Here in Australia everything is about money because the government's run out of money (as it has in many countries around the world), and so they just look for new ways to get money because they're not going to change their lifestyle. They're not going to cut back. The people have to cut back. So the average worker, by law when anyone works for somebody, has to pay tax automatically. It's taken out by the employer and he takes it out and gives it to the government on the person's behalf. There is no way to escape it and then hidden in all of that there is, of course, what's called a GST, which is a 10% tax on every purchase other than a few food products. But generally, it's on every single thing. Everyone pays tax. So anybody on a pension or unemployment just pays 10% tax anyway, but everyone forgets about it because it's hidden in the price. So when you see a price here, it might be a hundred dollars, well, 10% of that is automatically going to the government, and therefore, if you are doing it tough, you're still paying 10% taxes. It's just a law that's here. Everything is designed about money.

Now, there is a council, would you believe, up in a far north of Australia that turned around and said that basically they needed to raise more money in the council, and therefore, they brought out a new tax, and it's basically if you have a veranda where there is air you have to pay a tax for the air that you basically were breathing off that veranda. Someone got a letter and it was up for about, like, 30,000 dollars. I think it was 20 or 30,000 dollars because he had a veranda around the hotel. So he's saying, well, he's being taxed by the council for air, the air you breathe. Who

would have thought that would ever happen? Well, it's happened in Australia. I don't know if it's happened anywhere else but it's happening here. He's going to try and fight it and I'd be surprised if it got through, but that just goes to show you that everything revolves around money. Life evolves about money.

Well, here it says the Pharisees were lovers of money. That's their real motivation. This is about a lifestyle of thinking, a way of thinking about get.

...also heard all these things, and they derided him. So they pulled him down.

Verse 15—And he said to them, You are those who justify yourselves, which is putting yourself in a good light, is really what it's talking about. So to justify yourself it's when somebody says something we don't like about our image, so they say, "Oh, you did 'this,'" or "You did 'that.'" Well, we tend to automatically go into a justification mode which is to defend one's self, to place one's self into a better light than we really are. Even though we're guilty of it we'll still step forward and try to nullify the effect on our personality, so to speak.

So here it is, Christ said to them, **You are those who justify yourselves before men**, which is this appearance. It's a hypocrite. **...but God knows your hearts.** God knows your motive and intent, although you can project this image. For example, I'll give one now. When it comes to tithes and offerings a person can pay tithe, but God knows their heart because paying tithes is a requirement of God because it shows your motive and intent, but we have to be very careful that there's not an ill will behind it, in other words, begrudgingly. So a person can give tithes, be faithful in that, but deep, deep down resent it because they don't understand what they're really doing as far as the principle of tithing and why they tithe and what it's really all about. It's about the spirit of the matter. They don't see it, but they know that they have to do it because that's what reflects a relationship with God, but their motive behind it is wrong. It's the wrong motive.

Well, God knows your heart. God knows why we're doing what we're doing and what our true motive is. Is it to be seen by God's apostle? Or is it to be seen by the other members? What is it? What's the real motivation? The motivation has to be because we love God. That's the motivation. We keep the Sabbath because we love God. We tithe (first and second) because we love God because God knows our heart. God knows why we're doing what we're doing is another way to say it. God knows everything, but God knows why we do what we do. In all of this is that we cannot hide ourselves. We think we can. We can't. It's only a matter of time before God will reveal it. Now, God has allowed certain things to go on in people's lives for long periods of time when it has been known by others that the person may not be doing the right thing, but God gives time for repentance. God knows the heart and God waits and God works with the person, and with God's spirit being available, if the person would only repent, if they would change their motivation. God knows your hearts.

For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. So what is it that's highly esteemed in the sight of men? Well, this, generally, is all about money. Everything is about money. People look to people with money. They look to authorities with money. "And don't you know that I am the CEO and General Manager." That's what people are drawn to. I've lived that myself in previous businesses where people gravitate to people with titles. Nobody talks to a person, then somebody points out, "Oh, do you know he's the CEO of 'that,'" or "Do you know he lives down in 'such and such' a place, and he's got a big mansion, and he's a millionaire?" Well, instantly there's a gravitation. It's natural because that's within our nature. We place ourselves in good light. We want to be seen to be somebody because we're trying to get something back.

Verse 16—The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone presses into it. Well, this is about everyone that is called has to fight against themselves. We have to suffer violence because we're going to be violent with ourselves. We have to fight against ourselves, about this hiding of ourselves and thinking that we're not seen. God sees everything. God sees everything. So we, brethren, have to continue to fight against ourselves. We have to not justify ourselves, defend ourselves, but be open and honest before God knowing that every thought, word, and action God sees. Well, we have to work on it. We have to work on it and when we make mistakes we have the gift of access to God's very throne, the access to mercy, forgiveness of sin. We're not to give up even though we might continue to hide ourselves on and off. We just got to keep revealing ourselves to God and admitting that we do this. That's what we do by nature.

We'll look at one of the Proverbs which gives us a bit of direction about the way we really are as people, and then what we should be like once we are called. **Proverbs 11:9—The hypocrite...** Now, this is someone who acts out something, who's not genuine, who's not sincere. **The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor,** because he pulls him down. He has this image of himself and the best way to lift himself up in his eyes is to pull somebody else down because it justifies self and who he is and what he is like. So the tendency of a hypocrite, somebody who is not sincere, is that they will speak badly of others. Now, it should be a warning to us the moment we open our mouth and start to pull down anybody about anything we are being a hypocrite because we're hiding ourselves. What we're doing is hiding ourselves, our real self, but we're actually now pulling others down to reduce their view within others, to reduce the view of others of them because we speak badly of them. "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor." He pulls him down because he's lifting himself up because of his pride. He's hiding himself. He's elevating himself. "Look at me; I'm nothing like that person. Look at that person over there, all the things they did. I'm not like that." Well, this is hiding. This is hiding one's self. So the moment we start to talk about somebody else and pull them down we should have a warning bell go off in our mind saying, "I am hiding myself. I am a hypocrite!" Because we've probably done much worse than that in our minds or much worse than that even in actions than what we're accusing others of.

...but through knowledge, this is about spiritual knowledge, **the righteous**, because we can only be righteous if we have God's holy spirit. We can only have spiritual knowledge if we have God's holy spirit. We can only have spiritual understanding if we have God's holy spirit. Well, because of this, **but through this knowledge**, that is available to us in God's true Church, **the righteous**, we're only righteous if we have God's spirit, **will be delivered**. Why? Well, the first thing is we have this knowledge of God and the way that God thinks. We have the knowledge of our self! Isn't this incredible? This is one of the greatest blessings that any human could come to understand. We understand the purpose of life, but we have the knowledge of our self, what we're really, really, really like. We have this knowledge because God reveals our self to ourselves. We "see" it. We know what we're like. We know that by nature we are hypocrites. We are! We know by nature we hide our self. We hide it. We defend it. We know by nature we will argue and defend our image. Now, we know this. This world doesn't know it. They don't see it. They don't understand on a spiritual level. It's not possible. We can.

"Through this knowledge" of God, what we have been given, and the understanding that comes with that knowledge (through the power of God's spirit), "the righteous," those that are members of the Body of Christ who have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in them, "will be delivered." Because? We will know what we're doing and that it's sin, and therefore, we will be delivered because of repentance.

I find this proverb magnificent to understand on a spiritual level because we are righteous if we have God's spirit living and dwelling in us. But we do sin, you know, we fail, but we can be delivered because of this repentance because we know what we're like. We know we have a tendency to hide ourselves on many levels. The one thing we really know, we know that we cannot hide anything from God. Now, that is an incredible thing to come to understand and to perceive on a spiritual level and to really believe it because if we really, really, really believe it we will change the way we think about many things in life. We will not be acting out roles. We won't be robbing God. We won't be being foolish and falling into sin because we know God sees and knows everything about us, even though we often will forget this principle, but it's something that we've got to bring to ourselves. I cannot hide myself; that's what I try to remember. I can't hide myself. I can't hide my thinking. I can't! God sees it. I might be able to hide it from others, but I cannot hide anything from the Creator of the universe. So therefore, I've got to work on myself more diligently to always remember this. And the moment that I start to think wrongly about anything, remember that God knows my thinking and it's time to wake up and change the way I think, which is repentance. It's time to repent and to be more like God, to use God's spirit to guide my life in my decisions, in everything that I say and do.

There is one section of scripture that clearly reveals how we are to think. It was highlighted early in the Church by God because there is a tendency within our natures to think that we can get away with things. In other words, God doesn't know about it and that's found in Acts 5:1. We understand this story. We've been through it before, but it really goes back to a principle about

hiding things, which is I hid myself. I don't want to expose myself. I don't want to be seen. I want to be seen as something different. I know I've done something wrong, but I'm going to cover it up towards humans, forgetting that you can't cover anything up from God.

Although people do things and try to get away with things and think they do, the truth is, the reality is we can get away with nothing. We can think we're deceiving others in God's Church or God's apostle, or ministry, or doesn't matter who it is really, deception is deception. A lie is a lie. Well, you can't get away with it. We can't get away with it. We might think we are, but in the end the spirit of the matter will come out and God will reveal it in His time, as He has done over time. He reveals things and often it goes on for years.

There have been many examples of this within God's Church. Things have gone on for a long time and people have not known about it and all of a sudden it all comes out and the thinking was it just happened. No, it's been going on for a long time and these things are not covered up. God knows and God reveals it when He believes its best on a spiritual level that it's revealed because He helps others or there's a purpose in it. There's a reason why these things happen.

Acts 5:1—But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. So they've got something. Now, they had an opportunity here to sell it. They don't have to give all of it, but this was a time when people were, members of the Body, were actually selling property and selling things and giving over portions or the whole thing over to the Church for the purpose of preaching the gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God, which was the main focus that was going on at that time. This points to the fact that we have all these things that are in our possession. What we do with them, God's gives us that freedom. It's personal choice. There's no right and wrong. If somebody has something, they want to sell it, they can sell it. They can give a percentage to the Church or they don't have to give a percentage to the Church. Certain things you don't have to. When it comes to tithing on income, that's different. There's a law that should be followed, but it's the spirit of the law that is key to it. It's not just following the law but the spirit of it, why we do what we do.

Well, here these two have made a decision. They've sold a property. **And he kept back part of the proceeds.** So they decided whatever that amount is they want to keep it back. ...**his wife also being aware of it**, so they've agreed to it, **brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.** Now, there is nothing wrong at this point in time in the sense of what they're doing, selling a part and giving it, but the problem is their intent. Their intent is one of deception. They wanted to look good, which is hiding ones true self. **But Peter said to, Ananias, Why has Satan filled your heart, your thinking, your thoughts.** In other words, this thinking that you have, that you're lying about, you're lying to God about it, it's delusional. You can't hide anything from God, but to think that you could, you're really off track when you think you can get away with it. But this is about the appearance. This is about being a hypocrite.

So, Ananias, Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the holy spirit, because they're lying to God. They know this is wrong - know it's wrong but I'm going to do it anyway - and what's the motive behind doing all this? Well, it's about deception, deceit to gain favor, to be seen as something, to be seen as better. So in other words, "Wow! Look at this! Look at Ananias and Sapphira! Aren't they fantastic? Aren't they wonderful members of the Body of Christ, the fact that they sold that possession and gave it all?" That's the impression they're trying to give. But they're not, they're only giving part. ...**and keep back part of the land for yourself?** There was nothing wrong in doing that, but it's now the lie they're trying to do by pretending they're giving it all. **While it remained, it was not your own?** So it was yours, you could do what you want with it. **After it was sold, was it not in your control?** So there was nothing wrong with selling it all. You can do what you want. You can give ten percent, give twenty, give thirty, you can give it all if you want to, but when you give what you give it has to be open and honest. You can't go lying about it.

Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. Now, this is really the key to it all. Whenever we think that we're getting away with something or covering something up or being deceptive - it doesn't matter what environment it is - we might think we're deceiving men. That's true, it can happen, but the truth of it is this statement, "You have not lied," you've not been deceptive "to men," to me, God's apostle at that time there, "but to God." We're acting out something that is wrong. It's wrong to think that way. It's just crazy thinking, but that's what we're capable of. It was in their control. They could have done what they liked, but they tried to deceive God's apostle. They tried to deceive God. They've not joined the two together, which is insane thinking, really, because you can't deceive God. It doesn't matter whom you're talking to - whether it's within God's Church or out of God's Church we cannot deceive God. You might be able to deceive others, other people, but you can't deceive God.

We, brethren, have to be on guard all the time to be open and honest about everything and not be worried about protecting our image. If for some reason our image is challenged we should not go out and try to defend it vigorously with any level of pride. That's wrong. That is sin and that's not what it's about. Our life is one of accepting things in humility. It's true, yep, I know I'm selfish. I know that. I often do things that are selfish and I know that I hurt myself and I know that I hurt others because of that selfish behavior. Often I'll sit there and think about it and I'll justify why I did it knowing that it's stupid, that it's absolutely stupid to be justifying my own selfishness, but I do it because I'm human too. But I know deep down that I can't justify sin before God. God knows everything. God knows why I did what I did. It's easier for me to admit it and just go before God and say, "God, I've done it again. My pride gets in the way. My image of what I think people need to see gets in the way and I'm sorry for that. I really don't want to be like that. I want to be more like God, which is pure." That's not going to happen until I'm changed at some point in time all being well based on some of my choices and God's will for me.

Verse 5—Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. In other words, he died. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. Now, what did they hear? You can't deceive God's apostle. You can't deceive God. You can't deceive God. God knows everything, and therefore, there would be a great fear. You want to be very open and honest. You don't want to go hiding yourself. Everything you do, you need to be honest about it. So if you want to sell a property and keep all the money, sell a property and keep all the money. If you want to give half, give half, but be honest that it's half. Be honest that it's all of it. Don't lie about it. Don't lie to God. Don't lie to God's apostle. Don't lie to anybody because God knows it.

Verse 6—And the young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later, so we're looking now at a period of time. His wife doesn't know what's happened. She probably still thinks that everything's gone well, and therefore, he's gone in there and they've protected their image, they've made this image, how wonderful they are and part of the Church and they're now looked up to because they've sold this possession and given it all to God's Church. How wonderful are they? That's the image that's going on in her head. **Three hours later when she came in, not knowing what had happened,** so she still thinks that what they agreed to is all in place, **And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, Yes, for so much.** So this is a lie. Her intent was deception, to hide the truth, to hide self, her real being, who she really was.

Then Peter said to her, **How is it that you have agreed together, the both of you, to test the spirit of the Eternal?** Because that's what people are doing. This is, "Do you really think that God doesn't see everything? Do you really believe that? Is that what you're doing, you're now testing God that He is weak and He can't see these things that you've talked about? It's quite insane thinking really when you think about it because God makes it very clear that He knows all and sees all. So this was willful and deliberate act. This is sin. This is deception. This is hiding one's self. Just like Adam and Eve did, they hid themselves. They don't want to be revealed for what's really happened or what they really like.

Continuing on... **Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.** And immediately she fell down at his feet, at Peter's feet, and breathed her last. And the young men came and found her dead, and carried her out, and buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the Church and upon all who heard these things. Now, there should be a fear that we should have, brethren, and that fear, really, is a godly one, and that fear is we cannot try to hide ourselves. We cannot try to defend our own image, the one we've built up. We cannot hide anything in our thoughts, words, or actions from the Creator of the universe. He sees everything. He sees everything. Jesus Christ sees everything about us. He's the one working with us in God's Church. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Do we really think that we can deceive Jesus Christ and God the Father, spirit beings with all power? Do we really think we can? Well, I know that we know we can't. But we do forget this. We forget this principle and we do tend to act out roles or in a way try to cover things up, or not be really

open and honest about things because we're protecting the image of what we think we need to project out to others. When the truth is the only being that we should be really worried about is how we live our life towards God. Are we open and honest with God? Are we trying to hide something from God? Well, we and we alone individually have to answer that question.

We'll conclude by turning to **Luke 18:9**. This is a parable about the Pharisees and tax collectors, really. It's really talking about how we trust in ourselves because of the image we have, and we believe in ourselves, in our own thinking because we're working out what's right and wrong in our own eyes. We've done it most of our life unless we're called early or brought up in the Church. But until we have God's spirit we have to come to "see" that that's what we've always done. We've worked out what's right and wrong in our own eyes, or what our parents thought were right and wrong, but now it's about working out what's right and wrong based on the power of God's holy spirit, what God says is right and wrong. That's what's right and wrong. Everything else is what we perceive based on who we are or who we think we are.

Luke 18:9—Also he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves, which is they trusted in their own thinking, the way they thought about a matter. Now, we all do this, whether we admit it or not. But we all do this, we all trust in what we think is right or wrong, or the way things should be done or the way things should be spoken or the way things should be managed or whatever happens. Even in a family environment or with relationships we have this tendency to believe that we're right in our own eyes. It's just natural.

Continuing on, **verse 9...that they were righteous, and despised others**. Well, this is what happens with this type of thinking. Where we have pride we lift ourselves up and we tend to lift ourselves up, and the way we do it is we pull others down or we look down on others as less than us, which is all to do with the carnal mind. It's natural. That's the way we are naturally. We've been called to think differently. We've been called not to trust in ourselves and not to look down on others. We should look at ourselves and what we are. We should look at the self within us, our motivations, our thinking, the way we think. Is it in line with God, the way God thinks? We know we can't hide anything from God so we should be on guard more often (and we should be on guard all the time, really), about the way we think towards others and the way we think towards God, knowing that God sees all and knows all.

Verse 10—Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, who really thought they were better than others. That was his superior attitude, which is his image, the act of the hypocrite. He's acting out a role. **...and the other a tax collector.** Now, the tax collectors were looked down on as being inferior. The Pharisee by nature, he would have thought he's much better; he's got a relationship with God. The tax collector, he's a low level; he's a nothing. He'd be looked down on by society compared to the Pharisee and his robes and all the things he did and the image he portrayed to others, which is all about hiding his true self because he loved money, he wanted money; his motivation was greed and selfishness. The tax collector, well, he probably knew that he was down the social ladder a fair bit.

Verse 11—The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. That reveals a lot. He prayed with himself. So his motivation is selfishness. It has nothing to do with God at all. It's all a big image. He doesn't believe what God says at all. He's acting out a role. He's got a pretty good job here, he earns pretty good money, and he just wants more, the more he can get, and he wants his image that he's important, he's successful, he is somebody, he is close to God. That's his thinking. He says, **God, I thank You that I am not like other men.** I'm superior. I'm not an **extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.** "I'm not like that poor, little, lowly thing down there. You know, he's a tax collector. Can't you see who I am?" You can see there's an attitude here of superiority. He is superior and the true person is not being revealed in any shape or form.

Continuing on, which is the Pharisee implying in this parable, **I fast twice of a Sabbath. I give tithes of all that I possess.** So here he is saying, "Well, I'm a Sabbath keeper and I fast twice, you know, between Sabbaths, and I give tithes of all. I go down to the minor little seed. There's 10 seeds, I'll pull one out. I do all that. So I'm righteous, God; I'm actually obeying you."

But the difference is, **verse 13—And the tax collector, standing afar off, because he's not lifted up, would not as so much as raise his eyes to heaven,** he knew his condition. That's the principle. ...**but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner!** Now, this is really about humility. Pride versus humility. One is pride, which is about image and projecting it. The other is humility, which is admitting who we really are compared to God because humility really is only available by the power of God's holy spirit and we only become humble if God reveals who we are to ourselves and we acknowledge it. When we acknowledge it, that we're sinners, that's the beginning of humility because we're in repentance. When you look at it, does a proud person repent? The answer is, no, they're too proud-filled. A humble person is a person who repents because they see who they are compared to God and that they know what they're like. They're nothing like God. You know, we're not like God, really. Compared to God and His purity, we're natural and human and we have God's spirit and we do some things right, but the majority of the time, the reality is we are looking after ourselves. It's just natural. It's habit. It's a habit. That's what we do, we look after ourselves. We defend ourselves. We justify ourselves.

Humility is when we're in a state of repentance and we can acknowledge that we're wrong. We acknowledge we're sinners.

Verse 14—Jesus Christ is talking about this in this parable and teaching it: I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, which is really sin is forgiven. It wasn't here, per se, because he's not called to do it but he's **justified rather than the other.** So there's a big comparison, pride versus humility. ...**for everyone who exalts himself,** everyone who lifts themselves up and hides themselves, **will be abased,** they'll be pulled down at some point in time and have to admit who they really are. **And he who humbles himself,** which is all about something in the mind, it's about being lower in the mind and knowing who we really are and not hiding one's self, **will be exalted.** On a spiritual level they'll be lifted up. Because? They know God sees everything and they know who they really are. We are all sinners. We all need to repent, but that's the purpose

of life, to be transformed, to have this transformation take place. It does take time and it's a battle within the thinking.

I'll conclude this sermon by simply summarizing. We have been called not to hide, not to hide anything from God or to think that we can hide anything from God, but to be open and honest with ourselves first of all about who we really are, and then to go to God. The only real concern we should have in life is about our relationship with God and the way God sees us because God sees everything, and we should be concerned about any time we hide ourselves, any time we lift ourselves up, to think that we can get away with anything. The truth is, the facts are we cannot hide from God. It's absolutely impossible. So why try? Why not just be open and honest with God about our true spiritual condition?