

Last Sabbath we ended by reviewing world news that covered the previous couple of weeks, all of which reflects the state of volatility of things going on in this world and the conditions of this world, and especially as we see a continual escalation of Thunders, something we are to observe and watch and be aware of. That's why this sermon series came about because of reflecting on some of those things in chapter 7 of the new book.

So, we're going to continue now with *Part 3 of On Guard and Ready*.

Now, this is something we need to be constantly aware of, because to be on guard means it needs to be constant. And so, we can from time to time have different sermons in a different kind of context focusing on that because it's something, a state, in essence, that we need to be in, something we need to keep focused upon and be reminded of. Because it's natural, human nature to let down.

That's one thing I always appreciated about Herbert Armstrong and all of his writings that he did because he did really an incredible job as far as sending out what were called co-worker letters, member, and co-worker letters, also keeping the ministry posted of things that were going on. But he always had a sense of urgency, and I mean always. That's a state that a person needs to have, a sense of urgency, a sense of understanding what the world is like and what we've been called to, and not to let down spiritually.

So, let's pick up here in Philippians 2, because although we ended last Sabbath by covering some world news I want to pick up some of the context, the flow of the sermon by reviewing the last verses that we focused upon before going into that portion about the news.

Philippians 2:2 where Paul said, **Fulfil my joy, that you be likeminded**. Later on we're going to go into some more things about Paul and some of the things that he experienced and a little bit about his life too, because it helps bring some of these things home more, in that respect, of what he was saying, why he was saying them. But again, always about the Church.

He desired that, that which made him fulfilled, that which made him excited was to see brethren of the same mind. That's something we should all want within the Body. That's something we should want for one another, to be likeminded. The word literally means, "of the same thinking," which is incredible. You pause and think about that one, "the same thinking." It has to do with a way of life, it has to do with our calling, it has to do with the truth that's given to us. It's how God leads, guides, and directs us.

...having the same love. So again here, we understand what that's about. We understand that this is a matter of something that has to come from God. We don't have it by nature. On the contrary, our nature is one of a selfish love. *Philia* is not God's love, and it has to go beyond that. It has to go beyond *philia*, obviously, to that which is a matter of being in agreement with

God, that kind of thinking that leads to concern and care for others to the degree that we're supposed to as time continues, as we grow.

This has to do, in essence here, as it says, **being of one accord**. That's not the right translation of that at all. I'm amazed sometimes going through some of these scriptures and looking at various things it's incredible how often things just are not translated very well at all. It's kind of frustrating, but understandable, because they didn't grasp what was being said and they would literally change some things to go along with a vision that they had or a thought that they had in a very carnal way about God, about Christ, about their "Jesus" and so forth.

But the word is saying here, **having the same love**, literally, **in living together** or **with living**. It's the only place this word is ever used in scripture, in this one location here. So, well said, "in love in living together." Having that same love and living together because we are a family. We need to see that. We need to grasp that. That's our calling. We need to grasp what God has called us to. He's called us to a family. It's all about creating a family, His Family.

Then as it goes on to say here ...**in one mind**. One mind, in one thinking. So, he keeps stressing this. The same thinking, in that thinking, in one thinking, as it says here. **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory**. So we see this thing again of strife. So, that's why picking this up again here because that's what leads to division, that's what leads to problems within the Church when it has to do with what we're being taught. We must come into unity and oneness with what God teaches us.

Whether it be something as far as administration of the Church, as I've mentioned so many times with Herbert Armstrong, as he did, using him as an example in those things, or whether it be something of a new doctrine in the sense of doctrinal understanding as far as Pentecost, as an example, no longer on a Monday, but when that was changed, when it was understood that it was on a Sunday. All those kinds of things that happen.

It's easier for us to think about the bigger things in the sense of what comes as far as scripture is concerned. It's harder for us to think about the things having to do with administration, what God has given the responsibility of to His Church to administer so that we all have a unity and oneness about us in what we do.

And so we're tried in that over and over and over again in the Church. The Church has continually been tried in that one way or another. That's how God knows where we are. So, there are things He allows to come along to test us, to try us, to see where our thinking is. Sometimes we don't fully know where our thinking is until we're tried in a particular matter and put to the test in it.

2008, Trumpets, no longer Trumpets but understanding it's Pentecost when Christ returns. On and on it goes. So that reveals, when those things happen, thinking. The Apostasy revealed a lot of thinking within in the Church, of where people were. I've mentioned many a time the two elders that I brought together. I really don't think they knew where they were fully in their

thinking. It helped to illuminate that, to bring it to the surface so that if they'd been alert and on guard and ready they would have seen what they were doing. But they couldn't see it. They didn't grasp what they were doing. They'd gotten too weak by that point in time.

And so, it revealed, in essence, their thinking was totally wrong. They've suffered for it ever since. All who turn away from God suffer. You truly do, when you're cut off from God, when you're cut off from God's spirit, and when you're cut off from God's spirit and God's Church and those things begin to hit you, you're back in the world, you're, well, as Paul brought it out, as it's been brought out in scripture as well in other places, you're given over to Satan. He has full reign. Because God isn't reigning in one's life anymore.

Whether God reigns in our life is a choice. It's our choice. Whether God reigns in our life is our continuing choice. He's made it possible, He's shown us the way, He's given us His truth, He continues to feed us and continues to feed us and nurture us, but we have to choose that all along the way. It's awesome, the process.

It's incredible. It's exciting. It's inspiring to see how God works in our lives. But we have the choices. The responsibility is no others.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory. So, this strife comes in many ways, but it always has to do with what he just admonished, the thinking. Where is one's thinking. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory" - this has to do with esteeming self, esteeming one's own thinking. It's everything in context here. It's in the context of his desire that we be of the same thinking, that we be of one thinking, as he said then and stressing that even more so, and then to understand these things are a matter of context of what's being said.

So, "nothing be done with vainglory," in other words, lifting up self and how we think and especially when it comes to what God's giving us. Because then we're tested. Do we agree with what God is showing us, how God's leading us, how God allows us to be led? Because He didn't inspire, He didn't move, necessarily (maybe He did, allowed it for whatever purpose, which we know if we look at it), but He didn't make in the sense of bring Herbert Armstrong to a time like He did with Pentecost and other things. Because that was a matter of time in God's time.

But He gave more freedom in it in the sense of a simple issue like make-up. Very physical. Incredible. Then thousands left over it each time it was changed. Back and forth. I think it only happened two or three times under him toward the end. Two. Maybe three. Anyway, whatever it was. So it tests us. Where are we? Where is our thinking?

...but in lowliness of mind. All a part of this context, humility. That's what this means. It has to be done in humility. We have to understand our place. God calls us to change our thinking. We have to think differently. That's why I love the word "repent" in the Greek language in the New Testament. It literally means "to think differently." We can't continue to think the way we do as carnal, selfish, human beings. The selfish part of our thinking has to be changed. God's love, God's thinking helps us to change and become in unity and oneness with Him, to be

transformed in the mind. That's awesome! This is all a matter of context, what he's saying. It's not difficult.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, esteeming self or one's own thinking to where we end up having strife because we disagree (choices). **...but in lowliness of mind** (humility), understanding we need to have instruction, guidance, and direction, and correction in our lives continually. It's just a part of life.

...let each esteem others better than themselves. Again, we went through this and discussed this in the last sermon. I don't want to repeat all that. So, basically having to do with how far are we willing to give up our desire, our own will, our own way in order to have peace with others in areas where we can? It's a matter of giving. We don't always have to have our way, even in the smaller things of life.

Do not look everyone on their own things, in other words, "the way I see it," "the way I believe it has to be or is," **but everyone also on the things of others.** To consider, to think... A lot of conversation is based on this, our ability to have open, wide, in that respect, thought, thinking, conversations just on a physical plane. Not having to do with a right or wrong but just in conversing.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Joshua the Christ. All a matter of context. That same mind, that same thinking. So again, Paul plainly stated that in order for us to have this mind of Christ working in us that nothing was to be done through strife, nothing is a matter of vain glory. If we don't seek to be right in the mind in our thinking, with right thinking toward one another, this is what's going to happen. We're going to have strife. We're going to have contention, which is what strife is about, contention, not getting along, not in agreement between one another or even toward or with the ministry.

Now, another great lesson from the story of Gideon. I'm amazed sometimes by going through some of these stories here, but it's exciting seeing the things that are in this matter of Gideon and what he went through in his life and what can be learned from that.

But again here, one of the stories has to do with how God allowed the Midianites to oppress them, to oppress the Israelites because of what they had been doing, and to understand in the use of the word "Midianites" that it means "strife."

So again, a lot of things that happen in scripture in the Old Testament, especially when God named something... Just like another series is coming up. Some of the names, some of the places have incredible meaning. When God gives a place and name or when He inspired those names to be given they mean a lot. They truly do. They are exciting, especially when you see how God uses them in other places in scripture as well.

And so here is one about the Midianites and to understand what it meant especially for them and what it means for us. Because there is a duality there, something that that happened to

them physically that God has plainly shown us over and over and over again in PKG, is that this story of Gideon is very much for us as a Church. That should never escape us, truly.

So they had strife come upon them. God allowed that strife to come upon them because of the Midianites and what they were doing, and the others that came with them as well, the Amalekites and some of the east, as it talks about. So, strife was allowed among them.

But strife should never be here. Strife should never be in the Church of God. That's what Paul is pleading about. That's what Paul is talking about and how that can be avoided by being of this one mind, by being of this one thinking, by being of the same thinking. There's only one way that's accomplished when we grasp and comprehend that. So it should never exist in God's Church, meaning that we shouldn't have this toward what God teaches us and what God leads us to have in order to have unity and oneness within the Body, within the Church. We're still going through some things that have happened in our past over the past year.

We need to get the point spiritually. It's not about a physical thing. A lot of people could never get past the make-up part, the physical part. They could not grasp that it was spiritual, what was happening. They couldn't see that in their lives. Their choices, and not just their choices, necessarily, but how they thought about what they were choosing or what they wanted, especially if it wasn't in agreement with the directive, the guidance that was being given to us to be of one mind and how to have that unity.

That's a spiritual thing, and so we live in very physical lives, very physical bodies with very physical things around us, even something like that, and we can be tried in it to the point that thousands left the Church over it. Was that spiritual? To be cut off from God's spirit, to leave the Body of Christ, to be put out of the Body of Christ, thousands? Mind-boggling that that happened over something so physical, but it did. And people's feelings about it? They were strong, exceedingly strong. Some so strong in something so physical it carried beyond the Apostasy. Amazing. There were people who judged after the Apostasy in some of those areas, making them spiritual in their thinking when it no longer was in any fashion or form.

Again here, I think of, again, how they were given strife by the Midianites afflicting them, yet very early on the Israelites rebelled over and over against God. That's why we went through some of the things we did concerning the ten times that Israel rebelled as they were coming out of Egypt going to the promised land. Well, at the time they should have been going in the promised land is when they came up to the tenth one and did what they did and God said, "No, you're going to be out here for forty years total." Incredible.

And the sixth time, I'm just going to read it again. **Exodus 17:1**. This was after leaving the wilderness. Exodus 17 talked about this portion here. I'm just going to read this again, what we went through. But after leaving the wilderness of Sin the Israelites came to Rephidim and once again began complaining because there was no water to drink. So if you remember back, I'm just going back through this since we just had it recently here and bringing it back to mind.

So, they began murmuring. Well, this is what happens in strife. Murmuring starts. Murmuring has to do with not being in agreement, of believing something different than what they should be doing or thinking or how they should be, in that respect, behaving. They were complaining against Moses saying, **Why is it that you have brought us up out of Egypt to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?**

Over and over and over again. Pretty tough. Pretty thick up here between the ears. We all are. That's our human nature. That describes human nature. Only God's spirit can get through that. But we have to yield our self to that. We have to desire God's spirit to be in us. So much of that is to be in agreement with God, to be in unity and oneness with God. That comes to us through the Church. That's our training ground, it really is, very powerfully so.

It was here that Moses asked God to intervene for he said even the children of Israel were ready to stone him. Incredible that they would go that far that they're ready to stone him. Anger, resentment, bitterness. I've seen this over and over again in God's Church when people don't agree. Bitterness, anger, anger sometimes that people live for the rest of their life. Hatred toward certain people that they hate, hate, hate. They don't even understand that hatred, where it comes from. Because they have help with it. Once they're separated that hatred can be stirred up very powerfully so. It's an ugly, ugly thing.

This is where God told Moses to take the rod and strike the rock of Horeb and water began then, and water came out. So, we know that story. I love this again here, where it says, "And he called the place Massah," which means "tempted; to tempt," and "Meribah," "a place of dispute, quarrel, contention, strife." So, Midianites - strife. This location here in this Exodus 17:1, again the location where the rock was struck when they rebelled, because where is there water? And so God provided water, and so one of the names of the location had to do with strife, had to do with contention because of their attitude, because of their thinking, because their thinking was wrong.

We're going to go through a few Proverbs and look at this word because though they had strife over and over again, as that example there when they rebelled and the place was even referred to as a place of strife and contention, it should never exist in God's Church. Never. Never. Never. But it's all I've ever known. It's all I've ever known in God's Church.

I understand deeply so Paul's desire to see everyone of the same mind, of the same thinking, an agreement with God and God's way of life and how God functions in our life, to understand that spiritual process. Because in that is peace. In that is joy. In that is true family and true living, if you will.

But I've never known that in God's Church. Now, within the Body, yes, but not the whole Body. And that's our desire, that we see the whole Body. Now, the reality is we know we can't have that. You can't have that. They can't have it in the Millennium, and they can't have it in the Great White Throne. They can have it far better because of the world; it's going to be totally

changed. One Church. One government. Justice, true justice. True government from God through His Son and the 144,000. Powerful.

But human beings will always be human beings. The reality is there will always be a measure of strife because of disagreement, because of contention, because of thinking differently, of lifting ourselves up as human beings do, instead of being humble as God says one has to be in order to be of the same mind. We have to humble our thinking, what we want, the way we think it should be.

God tells us how it should be. That's the difference. God tells us how it is to be to have unity and oneness of spirit. We can't individually decide that; it has to come from God, it has to come from God's spirit.

And so until we're in the Family - see, that's what we want so much - so we see that, and we recognize we won't have it totally, fully, the way we desire with all of our being until we're in Elohim. Then we have it. Then we are of one mind forever and ever and ever. Awesome! I long for that because as I said, I've never known it. Not even in God's Church. We have to understand that. Now, it shouldn't be that way, but it is. But that reflects and reveals why so many are not a part of the Body. That reflects and reveals why through time over the past 2,000 years the vast majority have left God's Church, been cut off from God's Church. Because of a human nature.

Those things need to be deeply embedded in our thinking because then it helps us to be stirred up to say, "I long for Elohim. I long for God's Family. I long to be out of this physical thing." Now, I'm not in a hurry right at the moment, but I long for it in the sense that I do not want a second time around in it. That is a major horror story to me. And so, that's where our thinking needs to be.

Proverbs 16:28. It shows the kind of mind that this is that resists oneness of mind, one thinking. **Proverbs 16:28— A froward man/person...** some translate this as "perverse." It's from a word that means "to overturn." What do you mean "to overturn?" Perfect. Perfect word. They want something different. Human nature wants something different. That's why there is strife and contention, because it's in the mind that "I want something different." "I want to go back to Egypt! You brought us out here to die! We don't have any water. It's not as nice as it was when I didn't have to think about water. We had water and we were around the pots, and we had food in those pots...instead of this manna!"

1001 ways to cook manna. I'm sorry, I really can't understand that. I mean, that, in today's world, that would go over like a gigantic lead balloon. Can you imagine no more going to the freezer to get ice cream. Not much need of a freezer because it's only going to last a little while, a certain time that God says it's going to last. You have to go out and pick it up, clean it, get it off the brush and whatever things there, this coriander type seed as it says it's like, then work with it like you have to do with seeds to make flour. There you go, and that's what your

primary diet is. No more potato chips. No more cheating. No more candy bars. No more candy, period.

How do you think that would go today in today's world? You think, well, they came out of captivity, they were in Egypt, they didn't have the kind of supermarkets that we have today. Well, they didn't have supermarkets. Hey, how about that? I think, it's a good thing it happened way back when because they wouldn't have made it very far. They wouldn't have made it for forty years.

So, a **perverse person/a froward person**, meaning "to overturn," **sows strife or sends forth strife**. Because that's the thinking here. It's a matter of desire to overturn. That's why there is strife. There can't be peace. There can't be unity. Only in unity can one have peace. Only in one thinking can we have peace. It's a beautiful thing. But if it's not there, this is what it produces, strife, strife, strife, strife.

We can also call it that great word that we've come to know very well. Drama, drama, drama. Drama, drama, drama, drama, drama, drama, drama. I hate drama because it's strife, it's contention, it's not at peace. Everything that's opposite of peace, drama. The world is so full of it.

I shouldn't even go there but some of these stupid, insane things on TV today. Especially when it's supposed to be a live thing like some of these crazy things. I have never even watched one having to do with it, but they bring in all these different people. I think it's, in this case, there's a bachelor and all these women and the guy in the advertisement, "I know that one of them is going to be my wife." Man, you need to get a life, and it's not in this thing.

But it's a drama series so, and people sit at their TV's and "Oh, I wonder. Oh, is it going to be...?" You need to get a life too, and this isn't it. You need to get away from that and just run as fast as you can because it's doing something really horrible to your brain. I don't even know how to describe that, what it's doing to your brain, but it's pretty bad.

A **whisperer**. It means "to murmur." A whisperer. What do people do sometimes when they whisper? They don't want someone to hear and so they whisper. It goes along with this thing of strife. A **whisperer**, meaning having to do with strife again, drama, **separates the closest of friends**. Sad. It gets in the way. It gets in between. That's what happens in the Church if we have strife, if something happens, whispering behind the scenes, behind people's backs, not talking to everyone in the same way. There's something to be held back because you're not willing to say certain things in front of others because it's maybe about them.

Proverbs 17:1—It's better to have a dry piece of bread where it is tranquil, in other words, in peace. So, it's like you're going to the cupboard and there is no fresh bread there. It's all dried out. It says it's a whole lot better to have that, this peace and quiet, in quiet and in peace, **than in a house full with sacrifices**, meaning great feasting, **with strife**.

So, you can have a great feast, plenty of everything, but if there is strife in that environment, drama, drama, drama like some of these TV series, drama, drama, drama, than it's better to not have it. That's an insane world. That's an insane environment to live in.

Proverbs 20. Some of these proverbs, I love them. You can't help but laugh at occasion and chuckle at some of it and wish people in the world could grasp that. But they can't. But we are supposed to be able to and change.

Proverbs 20:3—It is an honor, in other words, a glorious thing or a thing of honor for a man/person to cease from strife. Absolutely! And we in the Church are called to cease from strife, to cease from murmuring, to cease from complaining, to cease from contention, especially when it's toward the Church.

...but the foolish will meddle. It's a word that means "to lay bare; to expose," in the sense of "as to quarrel; as in quarrelling." So, engage in that kind of thing. That's what happens with strife. Words are spoken. It's not always whispering. Sometimes it's very vocal and outspoken and things are said.

Proverbs 22:10—Cast out the scorner (scoffer), "one who belittles what is said or treats with contempt something that is said." So, here is an environment that is rather caustic because there is not a desire to even engage in a normal conversation that people might have, because it's one of disagreement with others. You know, everybody, we don't have to be the same. We all think differently about a lot of things and there is nothing wrong with that. But to be able to talk to each other about different things?

I used to think about the Feast of Tabernacles when people used to travel a long way, perhaps to go to a certain Feast site. Maybe if you lived out in Texas somewhere and you're going to Tucson for the Feast because that's your Feast site or you're going clear across the country somewhere, perhaps, the Poconos, well, and you're going to be in a caravan.

Now, in the past I have not really enjoyed being in caravans because you have to really get along really well to be in a caravan. You have to be open minded to be in a caravan, to know there are going to be obstacles along the way and to be able to have patience and tolerance because we don't all think the same. But to get to that point where you're able to do that.

Because we've been in some caravans. My wife knows exactly what I'm thinking about. One time, we left at dark, five or six vehicles at least going to Tucson from Lubbock. That was our assigned Feast site. So, we got up very early in the morning, 4:30ish, 5, whatever it might have been, but we were on the road about that time. And well, she has what we call a "Short" curse. Her last name was Short. There is something that runs in the genes as far as bathroom problems and situations that just hit you and there is nothing you can do except take care of it. Don't want to get too colorful here.

But anyway, we barely made it out of the city limits of Lubbock in the dark and we needed to pull over. So, we pulled over and asked everyone else to turn off their lights so that it was

totally dark out. And as soon as everything was prepared, right next to the train tracks as well, this train is coming. Trains don't have a light that looks straight down at the tracks. If you've ever seen a train at nighttime the light goes in a circular pattern. It goes off to the side so you can see, so they can see if there is something coming in from the sides as well. So, it's making this circular pattern back and forth. Well, needless to say, that's not a very convenient thing to have at that moment.

But getting to the point of agreeing to be in a caravan, that's the goal, because my experiences has been, I've seen people get into some pretty deep conversations and it's like, "Don't go together in a caravan. Just go and be there together." Because it's better if you don't travel together because if you can't agree on certain things, because somebody wants to go this route because it's the faster way. Another one wants to take another route.

There are a lot of ways to go to Tucson from out in Texas and there might be some place you'd rather go for a little sightseeing along the way, daytime, and it's not going to change a whole lot of time. But there is some thinking, some (probably men) point A to point B and that's what's in the mind. I know some women like that too, though, don't I, here. We won't go there.

But it's like this is when you do it, this is how you do it, and it's going to be this way. Anything else, that's not going to fly. So, it's better to work some of those things out ahead of time, otherwise, you may have some strife. So we have to be able to laugh at ourselves because there are differences and there are in things like this as well.

It's incredible where thinking comes from sometimes. The object is to have peace, the object is to have unity and to be able to have agreement even in very physical things. But how much more when it comes to the Church? How much more when it comes to spiritual things that we be of the same mind. It's different when we are amongst ourselves and working things out in life or in family, different ways of doing things or at a different time and working those things out.

That's the kind of mind that we should have, that Paul was talking about when he was addressing some things in Philippians there. Even on a physical plane, we should strive to do that. But when it comes to the Church there is no messing around with that. There is no changing something that's given that's set.

If something is given as a directive, as a way to be in order to have unity, it's a choice to do it that way or not. It's not like different choices we might have amongst ourselves that we can learn to work out in order to have unity, but within the Church we are to have unity, we are to have peace. God instructs us in that, commands us to do that, to be of that thinking, that mind. And so, hasn't always been, has it?

So again here, **Cast out the scorner**, the scoffer, one who belittles what's said, treats with contempt what is said.

I think over this past year, and that's happened on occasion. Belittles the fact that we all are going to be of a certain way in order to be at the Feast of Tabernacles. It's a choice. Or in certain occasions we're going to have a mask or not. There are exceptions to some of those things in occasion, but when it comes out that it's a matter of disagreement in the sense of having one's own opinion that's better for everybody else than what the directive has been given, we're missing the mark.

And so, that's why these are being repeated. Because that's what was brought to the surface this past year. We need to think about those things and learn about those things and think, "Are there any other areas in life where I have ever done that or am doing that currently?" Because that's the only way, if you're aware of it, can you be on guard against it. We have to be on guard against those things. We have to be on guard when something comes out of our mouth, to think about, not just to be of a habit of freely (what we think is free), to speak, but to think about our words with one another. We don't want to offend each other. We don't want to hurt one another. We do want to be of the same mind, the same spirit.

Unity. That's the same spirit. Unity is the same spirit. Oneness is the same spirit. See, it's a spiritual matter. It isn't just physical.

Cast out the scorner, the scoffer in other words, **and contention**. This word has to do with more like a judgmental contention because it has to do with the way we think. Judgmental. "You're wrong. This is the way it should be done." ...**and contention shall go out; yes, strife and dishonor shall cease**.

So, in the Church that has been the goal, to bring strife, to bring things of dishonor, of disagreement, of contention and so forth to an end so we have unity and oneness. It depends on how far things go as to how they're sometimes dealt with.

Proverbs 26:20. I love the way some of these things are stated, these pithy sayings, or whatever they are, proverbs. But they get to the point. They don't mess around. **Where no wood is the fire goes out**. "Where no wood is." Yes, if you have a fireplace and there's no wood there anymore, yes, the fire is going to go out. **So where there is no murmuring** (whisper), **the strife ceases**. Because that's what strife stirs up. It stirs up that divisiveness where whispering or murmuring begins to take over. And so we have to always be on guard against such things, alert to such things.

So, there are many things having to do with Gideon and the story of Gideon that apply to our lives about being on guard. Much of it, obviously, as we're talking about here, is a matter of that which is spiritual and learning from some of the other examples. The Midianites, strife, and how does that affect us in our thinking in order to be "one man" as it says, "to stand as one." That's what it's about, "one person" (better said), to stand as one person. Awesome! It's beautiful to be able to do that.

So to stand in God's way of life requires that it be that way, as one person, one thinking, one mind, unity, oneness. Beautiful! That's how peace comes.

Well, there's a section here I want to read before I continue on. We have to be on guard to all that's going on in our lives and what's going on in the world as well. So, there are many things we must watch and be alert to that's going on around us in order to keep focused. Because we have a calling and we have to be focused on that calling and understand that it's a matter of battle, it's a matter of war, it's a matter of fighting.

God has called us to battle. That's what our life is like. It's about a battle. It's a spiritual one. It's a fight. It starts from the very beginning when we began to be drawn and called because we have to make choices and decisions, and there are going to be battles with that. There are going to be battles with no longer working on the Sabbath. There are going to be battles with no longer working on Holy Days. There are going to be battles with tithing and on and on it goes because it changes our life, and especially if there's family or other members or other people that it affects. There are going to be battles. There are going to be battles because of an employer or whatever it might be. It's not going to be easy. But it has to do with battles.

And so, we understand that in God's Church, and it begins from the beginning, but this is a story about Gideon that we're to learn from. As we're called we have to learn to look over the battlefield and realize this is a great fight. It's not a small thing. It's awesome, truly.

So we have to be on guard against any spirit of contentiousness toward how God leads us in the Church. Because as long as I've been in the ministry that's all I've ever seen. Sometimes week after week and month after month this battle that's there. Because we're human and we're weak. But we're to change, we're to be transformed, we're to grow. And thank God we're growing as a Body and becoming stronger. Not weaker, because I lived through that period too from Philadelphia to Laodicea where it became weaker and weaker and weaker and weaker until we all just fell asleep spiritually. Horrible! Horrible state!

It can happen to anyone. Anyone who lived in that period of time would have done exactly the same thing. Sometimes we can look at something and say, "Well, I never fell asleep," or "I wouldn't have fallen asleep." Yes, you would have. That's the witness of Laodicea.

So again here, we have to be on guard against any spirit of contentiousness, any spirit of disagreement, any spirit of something that is not in unity and oneness at totality in how God leads His Church, which includes how God administers, has chosen to administer. He's given that freedom to the ministry, especially to apostles to lead, guide, and work with and teach His Church. And if they don't do it right, if something is wrong, God will take care of that. He always has through time. Perfect? No. They're human beings. But led by God's spirit very powerfully so.

So again, this is why we are to be so deeply convicted of God's government in God's Church, to understand that. And I look back and think about certain things that have happened in my life

and I'm very, very thankful I had that grounding that it's about God's government. And so many things that Herbert Armstrong had to go through in letters that came out to us, you couldn't help but see that. It's government. Because he said it was over and over again.

And so it's like, do we get it? Something that comes from God—order, government. Are we yielded to it? Are we submitted to it? Because God's government is what's to govern our lives the way He has chosen to govern, the way He's given to govern. We have to choose to follow it, to yield to it or not. That's always before us.

The majority have left because they couldn't have that. That's why we have to be so deeply convicted of that, of God's government, of how it works in our lives. It's more than just the law. Yes, the law governs our life. That is the word of God, the mind of God that comes to us. That's the beginning part of it, but it gets refined from there. From that point on it becomes very refined in life and it still has to be, and it has to be seen as and recognized as the same spirit because things become a matter of spirit, spiritual matters when they're broken down. Even make-up.

“Well, that's not one of the Ten Commandments!” No, what you're doing is worse. All the thousands who left, it was far, far worse because it was the same thing, it was breaking the Ten Commandments, number one first. Didn't get it.

That's why I always marvel at the first one that was given to Herbert Armstrong as a matter of - and I believe in every way that God inspired that to be that way, to be written that way - but of the 18, the first one attributed to him, that was given to him to give to the Church - government. And yet so few through Philadelphia ever really understood it on a spiritual plane. Then in Laodicea it pretty much went by the wayside because they were trying to get rid of everything about Herbert Armstrong. Anything associated with him, after about three years it was bonfire time.

So when we come to grasp it, strife, contention, disagreement, upholding our own thinking, insisting on our own thinking, our own ideas that are in opposition to, oppose, well, it's ugly. Strife is very ugly in God's Church. Always has been. I've always loathed it, hate it, hate to see it happen. It hurts people and they don't even know it so often.

We have plenty of strife and contention in the world. We should be able to learn from that! All we have to do, just like I talked about, those TV shows. It doesn't mean you go throw your TV out the window, it just means you have to be wise as to what you see out there and learn from it. We're not supposed to separate ourselves 100% from this world. We're to learn. We're to learn.

One of the most major things God is showing the world today, which I am so elated and excited about, is government is corrupt from top to bottom. It's corrupt!

What's happening up in Canada right now turns my stomach. It hurts to watch that take place, to see how oppressive and how vile people can become to have their way, their authority, *their*

authority. “How dare you!” No desire to communicate and discuss things. That’s out the window. It’s beneath them to do something like that.

Now, there are times in life even within government when something comes—in worldly government—that there are times to do that, like supposedly they’re trying to do right now between Russia and the world, sort of, Europe, and there’s a time that’s wise to talk, discuss some things, ratchet it down, “What can we do to ratchet this down?”

So, whether it be on something like trucks and blockades that are even done really quite peacefully, in that regard, but still it’s obstruction and not a good thing in the sense of free flow of everything in the world, but... Anyway, I don’t even want to go there that much.

But all we have to do is look at things in the world. Government, to think they can come in. I love the thing of understanding. If people can understand sanctions and what they try to do in the world, most of it revolves around— I hope you understand what it revolves around—this great big “S” with the two lines running through it. The dollar and the control of the banking system in the world, the SWIFT (is not so swift), if you know what the SWIFT is. The banking system of the world. So, they shut accounts down, they shut down people, they take funds, they lock them down, freeze them out.

I think of what’s happening in Canada. They really would like to freeze all the coins as well, this currency, this crypto. They want to get their hands on that so bad and control that it’s really causing a great big pain for them. Anyway, on and on it goes.

But God is showing the world how corrupt government is. When you can go in and seize a family’s children because you’ve classified them as terrorists. What kind of a world is that? I mean, it’s sick! It’s mind-boggling. Anyway, sick, sick world.

Of course, I have a little bit of experience with that. See, they can do it on a national scale between nations, they can do it within a nation (like they do up north), they can do it to individuals like has happened to us. And even the Church, we’ve had assets frozen, the government’s finger in it. I think that’s about to come to an end. Tomorrow is a big day. Anyway, I may tell you about it next week or the week after that or three weeks up the road, but to me an exciting thing to realize we’re at a certain point here where finally we’re coming down to a wire of dealing with some things of getting “the albatross off our back.” Anyway. But government can be ruthless and hard on people, and when you don’t do things a certain way, those are the kind of tools and things that are used, and there are no laws involved there, it’s just done.

So if somebody decides they’re going to do something, like they are in Canada, what do you do? Well, you take it to court. But what have you lost in the meantime? How long is it going to get back your license? Will you ever get back your license? Will you ever get your truck back? Will you ever get your business back? Well, that certain period of time that it’s kept, will you be

able to do anything about it? And on and on it goes. Horrible. Horrible. Lives ruined and wrecked without care.

“Well, they shouldn’t have done it.” I’m sorry, I am just so sick of the governments of this world. And so, we should be able to watch that in the world and realize, yes, it’s sick. That’s what we have to see in the end of this age. The world really needs to get fed up with all this and sick of this so that they’re more willing to receive what God is bringing, what Christ is bringing. Awesome, a new age. Beautiful. Freedom from oppression, tyranny. On and on it goes. Because man has done this for 6,000 years, oppressed one another, hurt one another, strife, strife, strife, contention, contention, evil.

So, that’s a part of being on guard and watchful and learning from things we see in the world that are painful and how people hurt one another. Hate to see that. Families, children, on and on it goes. Prejudices? Mankind is filled with them. People who don’t think they’re prejudice are nuts, nuttier than a fruitcake. It’s something we all have in our life that we have to conquer and overcome.

And with us, in the Church, it should be one of the first things that we’re able to combat successfully, rather successfully at the very beginning, and then work on it the rest of our life if there be any that ever pop up in any fashion or form. Because it’s a matter of wrong judgment and not being of a right mind with God.

So again, it’s already been stated a couple times in this series, and I’ll state it again. The seventh chapter of the book is entitled “The Seven Thunders - A Prelude to WWII.” I hope we see what’s happening. I hope we recognize the news that’s taking place right now, in Europe especially, is again, another matter of preparation. It’s another matter of something that’s getting louder and louder, but it’s all working to that point in time when God says it’s time to let it go, to let the first Trumpet event take place.

I’ll be real candid with you, this past week I’ve been sobered by thinking it could. What if you wake up tomorrow morning and that event has already taken place? That’s where we are? You think it can’t happen? I think of some country that’s going to (whatever one it is), that does something stupid over the atmosphere of this nation. That’s just a beginning. But again, it’s part of a plot, plan, process in advance, but to make it look like someone that you don’t really know for sure if that was them or where it came from or not, necessarily. You don’t know where it came from because they’re going to know very early on where it came from. But if it came from someone that wasn’t a large nation, that puts kind of a tough situation on everything.

There’s going to be a lot of confusion when all this takes place, those first four that happen almost simultaneously at the same time, same time period very quickly.

I want to read some news articles here in a moment, but I think one that even popped up, Belarus. You think, well, I thought it was going to be North Korea. I’ll be candid with you, I’ve

always felt like it's going to be North Korea that's used as the one that's going to do this and then they can point to North Korea and say, "See, they did this. It wasn't us. It was them." Just to cause confusion, to give time.

And if we don't grasp what's going on over in Europe right now and that there's an individual over there who's getting older in age, who wants and desires a certain thing for his nation. He wants it back, the former Soviet Union, and is working along those lines. I can understand a lot of that. Doesn't mean it's right, obviously, as human beings go to war and fight each other and kill one another. But to understand some of the thinking, we should be able to see some of those things.

To realize he's ratcheting it up. But there are things that people do to test the waters. They did it once. The next time around, how is someone going to be? It's like "Wolf! Wolf!" "Well, you've said wolf so many times people let down, they're not on guard anymore." And same thing in Europe. "Well, there we go again. Look at these, they're having these war games over there again and they're on the border. All this verbiage that's coming out and these threats that are coming out and they're going to go in, possibly, and I know they're coming in, I believe they're coming in. He's made up his mind." And you think, "You don't know diddly. You might feel that for whatever reasons, and there might be some over you, giving you information that want you to think that way and so forth because they want you to take certain action."

But I hope we understand that what's taking place is all part of a process, but when it's time, it's time. And do you think it can't happen next week? I'll tell you what, you don't know! That's where we are. That's how quick things can happen in the world. Where is your life in your relationship toward God? At one? Can we do more? Can we draw closer to God? Are we more alert and on guard than ever before? Do we recognize and believe with all of our being the seriousness of the time we live in?

Don't believe that it can't happen. That would be such a horrifying mistake. We have to be ready. That's what this sermon series is about, to be on guard, to be ready for whenever things do come as much as we can be. I mean it when I said this past week felt very, very sobered to see certain things that could fit into the scenario of what can happen overnight and shock this world to its core.

Well, some day it's going to hit. If it happened this soon it's going to be longer. I don't want it to be longer because there is going to be a timeframe when all this is said and done, that it's going to fit within specific timeframes absolutely. Things are going to happen in a specific time frame just as we've talked about having already gone through seven specific end-time periods of 1260 days plus. All of them having meaning.

God does everything with meaning. When you talk about numbers and so forth, everything is with meaning, and they have to be absolute. God has a plan. He hasn't told us all now, exactly where they fit in. We're still waiting to see. Generally, we learn, it's hindsight. We look back.

We had to look back to understand we went through an apostasy. We didn't grasp it when we were going through it. It took a long time. The majority of the people scattered never could admit and acknowledge, "Yes, we had an apostasy. That's why we are like we are. We're the evidence!" Every scattered Church should have been able to see, "I am the evidence we were in an apostasy! Look what happened to us!" Are we building up the Church again into large numbers, into tens of thousands of people?" Bull. We just splintered more and more and gotten worse and worse. A few come along and it's like, "Look, look!" You think God's calling them to that? Or do you think individuals in the world in a physical plane can join something because, "Well, it makes some good sense, certain things." Just like they do the Presbyterian church or the Seventh Day Adventist or Messianic Jews or whatever it might be that people are inclined to think like.

So again, "The Seven Thunders - A Prelude to WWII." It should be sobering to us as we are getting so closer. We have to be so alert. You don't know when it's coming, what's coming.

Anyway, I'm going to go through some more news articles here today, just a few, because the Thunders should cry out to us how things are accelerating, how much louder it's getting. If we can remember five years ago, four years ago, three years ago, two years ago, even a year ago, things are so much farther down the road now it's not even funny. Louder and louder and quicker together. Labor. Woman in labor. That's what God has given us as a marker, another marker.

News as it progressed over this past week: "**Both US & Russia Evacuate Embassies In Ukraine As Crisis Enters Uncharted Territory.**"¹ Just headlines.

"**Russia Says It Chased US Submarine Out Of Its Territorial Waters.**"² I believe it.

"**US Deploys F-16s To Romania As NATO Mulls Permanent Black Sea Battle Groups**"³ So, it's just sabre-rattling getting louder and louder and more stupid as you go along. Not very bright out there. Really, not very bright in how they're dealing with things in the world.

One thing that keeps hitting me over and over again, I think about WWII and what led up to it and things that people knew in different nations. And you know what? It's the same. We don't want to be involved, it's over there. "We always have to go bail out Europe!" I heard that so much on TV it's not even funny. "We've always been called upon to go bail out Europe." It's like, if you don't grasp that the world has changed so much since then, primarily because of one thing, you, your mind, I feel sorry for you.

Nuclear weapons. Just that one thing alone. Think it's not going to come? It just takes one stupid event, one crazy thing that takes place and this world gets to a point where it's hardly

¹ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/biden-tells-americans-ukraine-leave-now-things-could-go-crazy-quickly>

² <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/russia-says-it-chased-us-submarine-out-its-territorial-waters>

³ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/us-deploys-f-16s-romania-nato-mulls-permanent-battle-groups-black-sea-region>

fit to live in, where if God didn't intervene we would annihilate ourselves and every bit of life on it. Mind-boggling.

I'm just tossing some ones in here: "**Chicken producers warn about fast-spreading bird flu spreading across US**"⁴ ...and in many parts of the world right now.

"**US Advises All Americans To Depart Belarus Immediately.**"⁵

"**Bird Flu Detected in Kentucky and Virginia, No Human Cases So Far.**"⁶ Well, that's wonderful. (Sorry.)

"**Germany Running Out of Natural Gas.**"⁷ I'm shocked. Are you shocked? Now, what does that mean?

"**West megadrought worsens to driest in at least 1,200 years.**"⁸ And you think, well now, what tribe kept really good records? It's trees, its circles and so forth. They have it down to a pretty good science.

Anyway, "A dramatic drying in 2021 — about as dry as 2002 and one of the driest years ever recorded for the region — pushed the 22-year drought past the previous record-holder for megadroughts in the late 1500s and shows no signs of easing in the near future, according to a study Monday in the journal Nature Climate Change."

And this individual, "Williams [it says here] studied soil moisture levels in the West — a box that includes California, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, most of Oregon and Idaho, much of New Mexico, western Colorado, northern Mexico, and the southwest corners of Montana and Texas — using modern measurements and tree rings for estimates that go back to the year 800. That's about as far back as estimates can reliably go with tree rings."

And the individual says, "I was wondering if we'd ever see a year like 2002 again in my life and, in fact, we saw it 20 years later, within the same drought," William's said. "The drought levels in 2002 and 2021 were a statistical tie, though still behind 1580 for the worst single year."

So, anyway, the article goes on and talks about this and how this goes clear back to 800 as far as rings are concerned and that have been measured and studied and the like. Anyway, we're kind of oblivious to those kinds of things, but you know what, there are certain places in the world I wouldn't want to live. One of them is Las Vegas. That water just gets lower and lower and lower and they're not doing anything to change it. And you think, what's wrong with you? A city that large and when things go off in the atmosphere there are so many cities in this

⁴ <https://nypost.com/2022/02/11/chicken-producers-warn-about-fast-spreading-bird-flu-spreading-across-us/>

⁵ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/zelensky-address-nation-ukraine-officials-say-no-full-scale-attack-expected-coming>

⁶ <https://minutenewsflash.com/index.php/2022/02/15/bird-flu-detected-in-kentucky-and-virginia-no-human-cases-so-far/>

⁷ <https://www.rt.com/business/549307-germany-running-out-of-gas/>

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/megadrought-climate-1.6352052>

country that are going to be so hurting, it's really mind-boggling. Then there are many others throughout that region that aren't going to be very good to be living in.

Another one here, just going through different ones, throwing them out. **“U.S. Detects Highly Lethal Bird Flu in Tyson Foods Chickens.”**⁹ Now, isn't that something you want to know. Huh.

“A flock of about 240,000 chickens owned by Tyson Foods Inc in Kentucky tested positive for a highly lethal form of bird flu, government officials and the company said on Monday, widening an outbreak that threatens the U.S. poultry industry.”

Well, you know, if we don't have enough problems already with produce and shelves being full like we're used to (and we're spoiled in this country), and then that happens? And today I think it's something like 100,000 turkeys killed over in Indiana, and different places now they're culling them, killing them all across the board here because it's spreading so fast. It's not just here, it's in different places around the world, different countries. Just like Covid.

“US housing bubble about to burst, leading economist warns.”¹⁰ “The US real estate market could crash this year, leading economist Desmond Lachman predicted in an interview with Nikkei Asia on Tuesday. Adjusted for inflation, house prices in America are now higher than they were 15 years ago, before the last housing bust, he added. Last time the housing bubble burst in the US in 2008, the country was plunged into the so-called Great Recession. The stock market and housing crash were caused by the unprecedented growth of the subprime mortgage market as lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac made home loans accessible to borrowers with low credit scores. By the fall of 2008, high numbers of borrowers were defaulting on subprime mortgages, causing turmoil in the financial markets, the collapse of the stock market, and the Great Recession [they're calling it].”

So, think, well, there are a lot of other articles and stuff out there already about warnings about what's coming. We're in worse shape than we were then, but we play this game. Faith in something, stock market and other things. Incredible.

“Hypersonic-Equipped Russian Fighters Land In Syria Ahead Of Mediterranean Drills.”¹¹ That's all we need, another part of the world where there's really no focus right now hardly at all, and here, why are they moving all those things down there? Well, some day.

“Readers should refocus their attention to Syria, where Russia plans naval drills with hypersonic missiles in the Mediterranean.” And how do we deal with hypersonic missiles? Oh, that's right, we can't. (Sorry.) But the point being is they have weapons and things out there now, Russia and China, that we can't do anything about. Amazing. And why pick that part of the world?

⁹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2022-02-14/u-s-reports-highly-lethal-bird-flu-in-kentucky-chicken-farm>

¹⁰ <https://www.rt.com/business/549524-us-housing-bubble-to-burst/>

¹¹ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/hypersonic-equipped-russian-fighters-land-syria-ahead-mediterranean-drills>

“Reuters, citing Russian RIA and TASS media outlets, said Russian warships, bombers, and hypersonic missile-equipped fighter jets had been repositioned to Syria.” So, here an article comes out in the midst of everything that doesn’t even have to do with the Ukraine, and you think, ah, that’s a sneaky kind of time and they’re sneaky in what they’re doing. But it’s all maneuvering today. What China is doing in different parts of the world, what Russia is doing in different parts of the world, and we’re over here kind of in a lullaby.

That’s why we need to be on guard and not think that things can’t happen quickly.

Another here, and I’m sure you’ve all heard a lot about it already. **“Ukraine crisis: Russian warships in waters off Japan...”** Hmm, what are they doing down there, too? If we don’t grasp that they’re doing things in preparation for something in the future, we don’t get what’s going on. And we need to see it in the light of things that are prophesied that are going to take place. That’s why they’re doing the things they’re doing. It’s coming. It’s just a matter of time. It’s not a matter of a game for them. We call them “war games.” To them, it’s just planning for war, and if any of us don’t believe that we’ve got a problem, we really do.

“Ukraine crisis: Russian warships in waters off Japan are a warning to Tokyo against siding with US, experts say.”¹²

And you think, what boggles my mind is this thing with NATO and some of the la-la land and make-believe world that so many people live in, that this is such a great thing when already there is not unity, but they’re putting out a scenario of great unity. How much have they put into it? How much are different countries there really speaking up in their news over there about what they’re doing to combat Russia? Especially the Germans? Do you hear them being really, really, really, really vocal?

I want to read another article a little farther down here. It shows the foolishness of it, almost to a point where it’s sickly humorous.

Another one here: **“Will there be an end?”** This is all we need, **“Danish Scientists Track New Mutation in ‘Stealth Omicron.’”**¹³ Oh, stealth now, huh, what does that mean? Put the masks back on! Lock down the cities! (I’m sorry.)

Another one here: **“Bank Run? Canada's Top Banks Mysteriously Go Offline.”**¹⁴ Awesome!

“Belarus Threatens To Deploy Nukes Against Any Western Aggression.”¹⁵ This is the one I was talking about. “For the first time throughout the current two-month long standoff between NATO and

¹² <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/ukraine-crisis-russian-warships-in-waters-off-japan-are-a-warning-to-tokyo-against-siding-with-us-experts-say/ar-AATVrwa>

¹³ <https://sputniknews.com/20220215/will-there-be-an-end-danish-scientists-track-new-mutation-in-stealth-omicron-1093058612.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.zerohedge.com/political/bank-run-canadas-top-banks-mysteriously-go-offline>

¹⁵ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/belarus-threatens-deploy-nukes-against-any-western-aggression>

Russia over Ukraine, the specter of nuclear war has been directly raised, with Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday warning that his country stands ready to deploy nuclear weapons if under threat... Citing external threats coming from the West, and at a moment Belarus is hosting many thousands of Russian troops, as well as S-400 missiles and long-range bombers for ongoing joint military drills expected to go to Feb. 20, Lukashenko warned, 'If necessary, if such stupid and mindless steps are taken by our rivals and opponents, we will deploy not only nuclear weapons, but super-nuclear and up-and-coming ones to protect our territory,' according to AFP."

So you think...? All you need is just a few nuclear ones. You don't need the "super." Don't go throw the super thing at me.

"Russia to stage nuclear drills with Ukraine tensions high."¹⁶ That's a great time to have nuclear war games. One day, stupidity, off guard.

Another one just threw out there just to show what things are like when religion becomes a factor. **"Finnish MP,"** I don't know how many of you saw this, **"Criminally Charged After Quoting Bible In Opposition To LGBT Event"**¹⁷ Criminally charged! I think they said she could have up to two years in prison, if I'm not mistaken, and a huge fine. So you think, what happens when someone comes along and quotes other things about this age? People are not going to be very happy even towards you, so you have to be wise, careful what you say, careful what you do.

That's why more and more when I rent places it's COG-PKG. So, if you're looking for the room please ask, "Where is the meeting for the COG-PKG?" And they'll tell you. But don't ask for the Church of God—PKG because it's not under that name. Reason being is people don't like that. They don't like "church." They don't like Church of God name. They don't like to talk about something like that. You're having a meeting in their hotel and all the things start going up. That's the way the world is even in this country. It's gotten worse, a lot worse over the last few years.

So, I'm just throwing that out there for people when you do go to a place where we might be visiting. "I didn't know that was a church?! A church? We have no church meetings here!" "Oh, maybe it's the COG?" oh yeah, "—PKG. Where is that meeting at?" That's why we don't have songs anymore because we have to be wise in what we do and how we do it because of the world and how they think and how it's moving worse and worse and worse.

Here is one: **"Half Ton of Meth, Fentanyl..."** A half a ton. That's, with those items, that kind of stuff, that's pretty heavy. Maybe the thing it's being carried in is heavier, but to have a half ton? **"Seized in RV at Arizona Border Crossing."**¹⁸ All this stuff that just keeps coming in. And you know what's sad, the saddest thing of all? People keep taking it. They just keep taking it. What is wrong with human beings. Different ones, sad stories sometimes you see of different ones

¹⁶ <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/3482516/russia-stage-nuclear-drills-ukraine-tensions-high>

¹⁷ <https://www.zerohedge.com/political/finnish-mp-criminally-charged-after-quoting-bible-opposition-lgbt-event>

¹⁸ <https://www.breitbart.com/border/2022/02/18/half-ton-of-meth-fentanyl-seized-in-rv-at-arizona-border-crossing/>

who have died of fentanyl poisoning or whatever they call it, some of the mixtures they make out there.

And you think, why do people, when they know this is out there, why would you take a chance when there is so much coming across the borders and that's their objective? What is it, over a hundred thousand deaths this past year of overdoses like this, of people who died because of this in this country? That's over twice as many killed by traffic accidents that are killed. I think that's around the 40's, 40,000 or so, and here you have 100,000 and something like this? And it's like, why do people do this? What is wrong with the mind? Well, it shows where we are in this world.

Another article here: "**As VP Harris 'Warns' Putin...**" I shouldn't say anymore and I'm trying not to, yeah, I have a little smile come across my face, a sick one at that, because I know when they heard that she's coming to Germany that... Anyway, probably shouldn't be talking.

"**As VP Harris 'Warns' Putin...**" That poor guy. Seriously, he has got to be a little shaken up this week! "**As VP Harris 'Warns' Putin, US Now Says Up To 190,000 Russian Troops Near Ukraine.**"¹⁹ "Thus the official US estimate of Russian troops allegedly poised to invade Ukraine is now just under 200,000. Included in the estimate are Russian soldiers currently in Belarus participating in scheduled joint war games." Yeah, just what we need, more and more. Putin testing the waters. If he doesn't do it, he knows us, he knows NATO. If you want to destroy NATO do what he did. If you want to bring it to the surface, that it's non-existent anymore, do what he did.

Because basically it's non-existent anymore. There might be some nuclear weapons over there, but as far as military forces, as far as cooperation, as far as unity and oneness, as far as them having confidence we're going to come to their aid, forget it. People aren't stupid. That's why they're going to do what they do and that's why they're turning against the United States already.

It used to be so hard to understand how that was going to happen. Now, today, it's so abundantly clear. Understand 100% why they so dislike this nation and why they're going to turn against it and do what they're going to do. It's the lesser of two evils as far as they're concerned when it's all said and done. Because they have to make choices. What are we going to do? Next door or several thousand miles away? Hmm, it's kind of a no-brainer.

Another one here: "**Powerful Gas Pipeline Explosion Rocks Eastern Ukraine; Biden 'Convinced By Intel' Putin Has Decided To Invade.**"²⁰ Wash my eyes out on that one there. I'm sorry, but sometimes it's hard not to laugh at some of the foolishness of this world, some of the really sad, pathetic things of this world, truly.

¹⁹ <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/kamala-harris-europe-us-now-says-190000-russian-troops-near-ukraine>

²⁰ <https://www.zerohedge.com/markets/stocks-tumble-after-donbas-separatists-announce-evacuation-women-children-russia>

But I hope we're on guard because this shows the state of this world, the state of thinking in this world. If we can see things so clearly how about governments that have certain plans and so forth, what do they see? They're not stupid.

So, let's dig a little deeper into what God says over and over again about this ugly spirit of contentiousness and strife, of something we should be able to see in the world, and understand how ugly it is and be appalled by it. Because it's appalling. But we should be appalled much, much more if ever it comes up in the Body of Christ.

I don't have a whole lot of time for this, but we'll see. Isaiah 58. What is that? Everybody should know. Fasting. It's about fasting. God says, "Why are you fasting like this? Is that the fast that I have chosen? Here is how you're supposed to fast." That's basically it in a nutshell.

Isaiah 58:1— Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show My people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. So, candidly, that's a part of our job. That's what it's been for a long time, but nobody cares to listen. They didn't listen to Herbert Armstrong, and they're not listening now. They didn't listen. They really haven't listened for 6,000 years. Surprise, surprise, surprise.

God says, in essence here that, especially when we understand the spiritual part of this, toward the Church and understanding we are Israel, toward understanding that this is the part that God is working with, this is the part that will listen, can listen, has the ability to listen—not that we always have—but thank God sometimes there is that which cries out and tells us we need to be on guard, we need to be alert, we need to be ready because we're not fully there. We need to grasp and comprehend things that we've done that shouldn't have been done and change those things and strive to be more of one mind, of one thinking, of one person standing together as one.

They seek me daily as delighting in, and I'm just going to read it as it is translated, because, again, there are poor translations that are out there. **They seek Me daily as delighting in,** in other words, as if it was their pleasure to do so. **They seek Me daily delighting to know My ways as,** in other words, **as if they were a nation doing righteousness.** The reality is it isn't. The world, Ephraim and Manasseh especially, but all of it as far as the actual descendants of, literally, of a physical people, that of all people has had more opportunity to have things printed as far as being about God and the like throughout those particular nations. God has seen it to be so, and things have been passed down, just like the snake on a pole that gets passed down. Religion has been passed down through those nations. Incredible how some of those things have happened through time (and not so incredible).

So again, God is saying here **It's as if they were a nation that was doing righteousness.** But the reality is no, they're not, and they're not being true, and they're not being genuine. But this is how they think, showing there is a perversion in their thinking.

And sadly, this has existed within God's Church as well. We have to be careful that we think right, that we're of a right mind even in the matters of fasting. Because the reality is there are some things about fasting that have not been handled properly, correctly so for a long, long time in the sense of the Church grasping and comprehending what's being said in Isaiah here. You've been blessed to come to see those things in a deeper way—thank God for that—because of where we are in time and because of what God's continuing to reveal.

...and that was not forsaking the ordinance of their God. In other words, no thought of the fact that are we doing things the right way. God says that's basically how the nation is. So, when someone comes along like Herbert Armstrong and has this radio thing that's covering the entire United States in massive power, and then TV that came along and started covering this nation in massive power, and then *The Plain Truth* magazine - powerful, powerful, larger than any other magazine being produced in the world, and programs as far as something on a religious plane, as the world would see it, far, far greater than any single religious organization in the world covering this country.

That's what the period of Philadelphia was about, for those who lived in that. Again here **...as it were a nation doing righteousness, and that was not forsaking the ordinance of their God.** They didn't want to know about Christmas and Easter. Finally, one religious leader finally had the guts to stand up and say, yes, Christ was in the grave for three days and three nights. He finally acknowledged—don't know what ever happened to that—but anyway, he finally acknowledged in essence that the Friday death thing and Sunday morning thing was in error.

Now, that took a lot for a religious teacher with that kind of following to say something like that, but he did because the pressure was out there and so many people were learning about these things and people being able to know and some more educated today than ever before. You hear of young people learning about certain things today (that wasn't known) because of the internet. People hear something about Christmas they can go look it up and find out, "Oh, he wasn't born around December like they're saying." "And what's this thing with the rabbits and all these eggs being laid?"

So people wizen up and they recognize what they've been taught. But as a nation it's never happened. What's bad is when these things happen within the Church, when we go through the motions of religion. If only we could grasp and comprehend more fully throughout Philadelphia, and that's not even talking about Laodicea because Laodicea was so much worse then. But throughout even the period of Philadelphia, throughout that period, a lot of people who were going through the motion of various things and deceiving themselves that this is all that's needed.

Going through the motions with others and going to Sabbath services and tithing and going to the Feast of Tabernacles and, "I'm in the Church." That doesn't prove anyone is in the Church. That doesn't mean one is in the Church, to do a routine like that. Then to fast when they're

asked to fast or maybe to fast for certain thing but not understanding what the fast is about. Point being is that all fasts were not for the right motivation, the right motive or reason.

They ask of Me the ordinance of justice, as though they delight or have pleasure in approaching to God. So it's like a perverse thing that there's this approaching unto God, but it's not being done the way God says it should be done. So, in the world we can see that because it's not about the Sabbath, it's not about the Holy Days. But in the Church, to possibly be that kind of mind within the Church? Yeah.

Why have you fasted, and you do not see? It's like thinking here, well, why are we fasting, why would we fast, and God isn't answering? **Why have we afflicted our soul and you do not acknowledge it? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure.** Basically, it's talking about, in essence here, they enjoy, or they're pleased to be seeking their own desires. They seek their own way. In other words, a person can fast because they want something from God. What a horrible thing.

It's one thing to want to be closer to God. It's one thing to have our lives in greater and unity and oneness with God. But in order to get something from God because we humble ourselves in a physical sort of way, that somehow we should get something from God for that? That's not what it's about. That's not what fasting is about. Sometimes that's why it's done. We have to be careful.

Behold, you fast for strife. So, if there is, especially this, what do you mean, "You fast for strife, or debate for contention," as it says here, **for disputation, and debate.** So, there is something here that's wrong in unity and oneness. What is it saying? People will actually fast to get their own way against someone else, that they think they're so right that they will go to the point of fasting to draw closer to God (supposedly), that's what it's about, in order to get their way about a certain thing they believe is right.

Now, have people ever prayed that way in God's Church, that we want something to be a certain way? There have been times that I have received information or email directly, basically of one's desires, someone's desires—doesn't mean it just happened once—of something to be different, that God would show me. Well, that's my prayer every day in essence. If there is anything to be done that's not in unity and oneness I want to see it, I want to know it. But when it's because someone has in their mind that it's to be done this way, that they know, "This way is right, please look at this," because they're convinced they know this is right and that's what their prayers are about, and maybe even their fasting, I don't know. That's not what fasting is about and that's a wrong thing for prayers, how to pray, because we're so right, we know we're so right. Is that what it's all about?

If you know something is sin, that's one thing. But if it's not a matter of sin and it's a matter of guidance and direction and so forth to have unity and oneness and how to achieve and accomplish that in unity and oneness, and the only way that God works in and through the Church, it's a no-brainer.

...and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Sometimes people may have a quarrel or something against someone else and fast because they basically want God to take care of them. Anyway, don't need to go any farther.

You are not to fast today, that's the context of all this. In other words, as you are doing today. **You're not to fast this way**, God is telling them, **to make your voice to be heard on high**. Do we think that somehow because we fast and humble ourselves that God has to hear us in the sense of answering something the way we want it done? That's where all of our prayers—we should understand that with all of our being—especially fasting, should be, “Not my will but Yours be done. Help me to see things in a right way. I know that we're able to deceive ourselves.” We all are! And so, it's a matter of desiring God to help us to see ourselves.

That's what this whole message about fasting is about, that on a spiritual plane it's a matter of wanting to see things properly, of wanting to grasp things properly, of wanting to see things that we can't otherwise see. Because why? Because fasting is a powerful tool in drawing closer to God, not getting our way. Prayers are not about getting our way. Prayers are about a process of perhaps petition and desire that God intervene to help us in something or to help us to see something, but so much of it is about this changing and about this being transformed and about being able to come into unity and oneness with God.

That's something we should continually cry out about: “Help me to see where I'm not in oneness or unity.” Because that's the greatest thing we can have, oneness with God Almighty. And that's what a fast would be about. Because a fast is about what? Well, we read earlier, humility, humility, a willingness to learn from God, a willingness to listen to God, a willingness, a desire where we get away from trying to get our way in anything. It's not about that. It's about God. It's about a relationship with God. It's about thinking to be in unity with God.

And in order for that to happen what has to happen most of the time? Our mind has to change. Something somewhere has to change. To see things that we can't otherwise see. So what's the point of drawing closer to God except to change? To see the things we can't see so that we can repent of them? To think differently in order to be of His thinking, of His mind.

So He said, “That's not the kind of fast, to make your voice to be heard on high.” So, if that's ever in our thinking when we pray, and especially when we fast, that somehow God's going to hear us because we're praying. Well, He hears us if our spirit is right and we're doing it for the right reasons, obviously, but if we're trying to get something that's not according to His will He's not going to give it to us. He's not going to help us.

So what should we want? To know His will, to come into unity with His will. Different approach. Different thinking. That's what God is addressing here.

Is that the fast that I have chosen? Is that a day for a person to afflict their soul? To bow down their head like a reed, and sackcloth and ashes spread out? Is it about the physical process? Because back then in the Old Testament they get in the ashes and I don't know what

all that means, never delved into it at all, but anyway, it's a matter of humbling oneself and totally physical, in essence. But to get our own way, to do all that, to go through a ceremony, to think that if we do all these routines that somehow God's going to give answer to that because we're doing the routine? It's not about routine. It's about the heart. It's about the mind. It's about our thinking toward God, and of humility and wanting His way. The farthest thing should be trying to get our own way.

So, it's like the physical sacrifices. "Is this what I want, that you have these, that you're wealthy enough to bring in oxen and parade them in front of others," who maybe can only bring in a lamb or a sheep or a smaller animal of some sort that He will accept in sacrifice? Fowl of some sort that can be given that's not as expensive. "Is it about a show of that and because you are able to bring something in like that that that pleases Me and somehow I should listen then? And this is what I want to see from you?"

What is it? A broken and a contrite spirit, a mind that's humbled, a mind that desires God, to please God, to honor God, and not a matter of ritual, to somehow think we're getting something or somehow we're deceiving ourselves to thinking this is what religion is about. Because it wasn't about any of those things. So when Christ came along God made it very clear it's the mind that's got to change, and that's what religion is about, true religion and undefiled before God, in that respect.

"Is this what I want, sackcloth and ashes and you bow down your head because you're weak?" Does that give God pleasure? No. But if we get weak we're supposed to learn from that. We're the ones that are supposed to be learning from it. It's not a matter of the process. It's not a matter of the physical part, that somehow God likes to see us without water and food.

Like on the Day of Atonement, "Oh, I just love to see it when My people are without water and food. I feel so much closer to them." That's not what it's about. It's about humility and it's about what they're able to learn through that if they can receive of His holy spirit and realize, "If I get this weak in a day's time from not eating physically, what am I doing spiritually if I'm not praying and close to God and desiring God in my life every day, what's happening?" That's what we're to learn from that.

So He says, **Do you call this a fast, an acceptable day to the Eternal? Is not the the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness?** Sin! That's what it's about. It's about getting rid of sin in our life, if we're guilty of any of this, of this kind of confinement on a spiritual plane toward others or ourselves ...**to undo the heavy burdens**, whatever that means for us on a spiritual plane. Which is a sermon in itself, which hopefully we understand.

To let the oppressed go free. Are we guilty of that, pressing anyone in any fashion or form? That puts things in a different perspective.

...and that you break every yoke? Whatever that is. Whether it's upon yourself, whether it's something you aren't able to see in yourself, that sometimes there are things we have to grow

in ourselves where we realize we carry a burden that we're not supposed to be carrying. We're trying to do things in a physical way rather than in a spiritual one and we think sometimes by certain things that we're able to be closer to God. The reality is He wants to know what's in us, what's in our mind in how we think?

Is it not to deal to the hungry your bread? So, we look at the focus. I think of the Church. It's about the work of God. It's about what we're doing in the world. It's about how we are puny; we are puny in number. Gideon's army was puny in number, but God used them in a very powerful way. They were able to share in something extraordinary. To look out over a field that was so vast beyond them it's not even funny.

Not about numbers. It's about God. It's about the power of God Almighty and what He is going to do and what He gives people the opportunity of sharing in. He hasn't called many to have that opportunity, which is extraordinary in itself to grasp that, the love of God, the mercy of God, the patience of God, but the awesome calling of God, to be a part of something so awesome. Awesome!

And so whether it be, if we look, think on a spiritual plane, physical, that can have it's part as well. If we can't see it physically we're sure not going to grasp it spiritually if we have the ability of doing something that we have to measure ourselves.

...and the broken, or as it is the afflicted into your house? It says, "who are cast out" but that's not the word in Hebrew at all. But **the broken or the afflicted into your house**. So, it's about a desire. Our calling is about a desire for this world, the time that's coming, God's government that's coming to this earth where this world can be properly fed. Today, you can't do it. Today the world's ears are stopped. They can't hear. We still have a job to do, to put it out there, but the point is they can't do it, they can't have it.

Is it not to deal the hungry to the bread, and the broken and afflicted into your house? So, in other words, we look forward to the time that others are going to be able to be a part of something that right now they can't be. So, we look forward to that and we have a part of supporting that now. That's our focus, God's Church, God's work.

So that when you see the naked... Do we see the naked? If we think physically we're missing the mark. This whole world is naked. They don't see their nakedness. They don't see their foolishness. They don't see what they're like, of something that you can see. You have to be careful then how that is judged. It just shows what human nature and human beings are like. We can't help it. The only way we can be clothed is by coming into God's Church and receiving the mercy of God.

So, that's our desire. This is a work of God, creating Elohim, and we're a part of it, our fasting, our prayers, our keeping focused on God's purpose and God's plan and our part in it.

So that when you see the naked you cover them. What can we do? Do we see our part in it? That's what it's about. Do we see our part in this? We're few in number but mighty, mighty,

mighty. And so often we don't see that and grasp that. We are God's people and He's working in an incredible work that one day you're going to be dumbfounded what He did, as so many others who are going to be resurrected through time are going to be able to look back and say, "Wow! Didn't even know that was happening. Didn't even know that's what it was all about!"

And that you do not hide yourself from your own flesh? So, family. We are a family. We have to see that. That's basically what this is about.

So, with that I've gone a little over what I wanted to, but we'll have one more part in this series next week and that will be it for this series.