

Today we are continuing in our current series *Elijah, Elisha, & More*, with this being *Part 6*.

We ended last week in the story of how the captain of the Syrian army, Naaman, went to dip himself in the Jordan seven times in order to be healed of his leprosy. He then returned to Elisha, who had instructed him to do this, and offer him gifts. So, he wanted to go back and offer some gifts for what he had done, but Elisha wouldn't accept them, obviously. Gehazi, his servant, however, went out and caught Naaman and asked for some of the gifts after Naaman had already left from Elisha's presence.

Anyway, in this story that we looked at there are some important things that we were to look at and I want to mention that again this Sabbath. On a spiritual plane, there are so many things that happened in the lives of Elijah and Elisha that we can learn from and apply to ourselves, apply to the Church, and so forth, but it's important to understand here what I made comment about at the very end of the sermon.

Gehazi took to himself to raise his importance to a level of being worthy to receive reward, honor, and/or recognition for something that could or should only be given by God. So, we can understand that on a spiritual plane in the Church because it's happened over and over and over again through time. It happened throughout the time of Herbert Armstrong. It's happened throughout the time of Laodicea, and it's happened throughout this period of time in many respects as well, that oftentimes our human nature is one of wanting to be raised up, wanting to be recognized, wanting to be seen, wanting something out of that which God is giving that we shouldn't be striving to receive.

The fact that we have a calling is so incredibly awesome of itself, riches, power beyond our ability to really comprehend. Yet so often, as is the case the longer individuals tend to be in the Church, the tendency or the trial in some respect, the test is to whether or not we strive to have and maintain a humble spirit, a humble attitude, or whether we want to be raised up or seen as being important or whatever it might be. That's just a human tendency and it's always existed. People who have had the experience in Worldwide know full well what I'm talking about, especially during the time of Laodicea.

So, that's the lesson we're to learn from this, that what he did was exceeding hideous. We can see that on a physical plane, to go out there and take for himself some of that reward that was there, but for us to try to receive something above and beyond what God gives? You know what? What God gives is enough, and it has so much more that is going to be added on top of it. That's why scripture speaks of, in this respect, of our seeking to humble ourselves, being of a humble spirit, and let God raise us up.

Because that's what He's doing. What He is giving us is beyond our comprehension anyway, and what He plans on giving us is far beyond anything we can truly comprehend. Yet we're told about those things, but we don't grasp it because we're not spirit yet. We're not in that world yet and it's so far beyond what

we have here and the opportunities that are there. It's good to wait on God and let Him do that part. We don't have to work at trying to do it. If we try to do it then it works against God's spirit. It works against God's way. That's something to be learned then.

So, let's go on over now to **2 Kings 6:1**; continue on now. **Now, the sons of the prophets...** Now, they were those, again, who were the pupils. During the time of Elijah, he started this process, teaching and so forth, and then Elisha continued this, so, it's just speaking of the pupils. That's what it's talking about when it says the "sons of the prophets." They were learning from the prophet, in this case Elisha, and of prophecies, of things in the past of the prophets themselves as he taught.

It says here, they **said unto Elisha, Looking at this place where we dwell with you, it is too small for us. Let's go to Jordan, and everyone take a roof beam, and let us make a place there where we may live.** So, it's kind of an unusual or different kind of presentation here of what they were saying, but basically, it's about them going there and cutting down on their own each one, to participate in building something larger.

It went on to say here, **Then one said, Please agree to go with your servants.** In other words, "We want you to come and be part of this while we're building," and so forth because this is going to take some time and they wanted him to be in their presence still. They want to learn from him.

So he answered, I'll go. Then he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out, Oh, my Lord, it was borrowed! So, he's concerned because now he's lost something. We wouldn't think of it as being worth that much now because just go down to Home Depot and grab one, but back in that time to have something of that nature it was an expensive item, so, hard to make, hard to come by.

So the man of God... I love how this is expressed because we're going to see this a lot, and next Sabbath as well. When it speaks of the "man of God" here I love this because it's referring to Elisha each time. It starts out telling the story about Elisha and then it starts telling about the man of God. **So the man of God said** (it's Elisha), **Where did it fall?** And you might think about that too, why it's written in this manner, because there are lessons to learn from that as well.

So, he showed him the place. And he cut off a stick and cast it in there, and the iron floated. Therefore he said, Take it up for yourself. So he reached out his hand and took it.

So again here, an awesome thing that happened because iron doesn't float. And it wasn't the stick that did it, it was God that did it. But Elisha did a lot of different things at different times that people could look at in one respect, and perhaps this story might not seem as significant. We're just talking about a piece of metal, an axe head floating to the surface. It might not seem like a big thing, but it was, and it was something spoken of, it was something written about for all to read about later in time.

So again, this wasn't on the same plane as when the Shunammite woman, her son, speaking of her son when he died, and Elisha resurrected him back to life. He was used in resurrecting back to life. We know that God did it. But again here, that's the point of a lot of this, is that whatever takes place in these things that is a matter of the spirit, God's doing it. It's God that does it. That's the focus.

Those are the things we're to keep our eyes upon. Understanding those things, we never take anything to ourselves, not a one of us. God's spirit living and dwelling within us, giving us the ability to see and comprehend things that are true that others don't see, no pride in that whatsoever. It's a matter of humility and it's recognizing the blessing of how God is the one who has called us at this time to open our minds. That's an awesome thing to be part of. On and on it goes then within the Church.

But to us, again looking at this example of this, we see something here about a physical law. We call them miracles or people call them miracles. They are because it's about God's intervention. He caused something to happen that normally couldn't happen. Though this one might be small in some people's minds it isn't.

But there is something good to learn from this as well because some things can seem less important to us when it comes to the truths of God. People can go through the truths and think, "Well, this one doesn't seem to be as important as the others," and the reality is on a certain scale, yeah, some have a greater impact, have a greater impact upon God's people, upon the Church or whatever it might be, or things to do with an overall picture of what God is doing in the first place, but they all work together, and they help us to be pointed to God in every respect, our minds, our thinking, and always be reminded of this.

So again here, I couldn't help but think of some of this when going through this and looking at some of the different truths and thought of Truth #27 because it's not the same as some other truths that might impact us in a different way because different truths can impact us in a different way.

What Elisha did when he went up and placed himself on the body of a young child, who was dead, over and over and over again, then God resurrected him, is an inspiring story. It's an awesome story. Some of the other things that Elijah and Elisha did are awesome stories. Sometimes if we're not careful on a physical and spiritual plane because of our human thinking we may not place as great as importance on something as we really should, and understanding the ability to understand that is still from God.

The axe floating to the surface was still from God and it was something to help encourage them. It was something to help them to understand and see things in a plane that helped them to be reminded of God in a very unique and special way. So it is with #27.

27 (6) All in God's Church during the era of Laodicea were Laodicean...

Seems pretty simple, but the Church lost that a long time ago. There are some who didn't live during that period – not necessarily didn't live during that time, but not in the Church – they weren't in the

Church at that particular time. Maybe some weren't alive at that time going way back. But you look at this period of time and to think what happened within the Church itself that as Laodicea went along this went by the wayside. Eras went by the wayside, the understanding of eras, and when that happened it did something hideous to the mind of people within the Church, primarily concerning Herbert Armstrong and the Philadelphian era. Because if you don't recognize eras, you're not going to recognize the importance of some of the things said in Revelation to the different eras. They're not going to be taken to heart in the same way and they're not going to be learned from in the manner that they should be.

So, when you go to Laodicea and you recognize yes, that era did exist because that was happening during the time after Herbert Armstrong's death until some time after the Apostasy, Laodicea had a tremendous impact upon the Church. "Rich and increased with goods," how people thought in their thinking, ministers and brethren alike within the Church. Many of the ministers, again, raising themselves up and beginning to change certain things, how they viewed them, considering God's apostle as a good teacher, if you will, but not as God's apostle.

You know, when you take that out of the equation you hurt yourself mightily in God's Church, and that's what they were doing. "He was a good teacher." Again, if blood could boil, my blood is boiling. Every time I speak of this that happens. It just stirs up a fury inside of me that would like to lash out at those individuals for what they did. When you begin to take away the reality that no, he was God's apostle, and if you understand that, what scriptures say about that, because everything is built upon the apostles and prophets in God's Church. It's the foundation.

It's the building process of teaching the Church, and if those things are taken out then those truths, are they really truths? "They were good teachings and so forth," but people began to play around with them. Incredible what took place.

I think of the one on tithing. I think of driving down with an individual from Texas one time, pretty well known at that time, and bringing him down here to speak in this area and then back up in Toledo to speak there, and I'd heard certain things going on out there that maybe he had certain ideas about the use of tithes, but some individuals became so proficient at guarding themselves because they knew what they were doing was not a part of our past, it wasn't the thinking of the past.

So, if you want more people to come and join you, you don't want to give yourself away that maybe you're doing something that may not agree with another party because they may just write you off. Sick thinking, but this is what happened.

It took me a long time on the trip back to get out of him the truth about what he thought about tithing. The reality was that it came down to the fact that he believed that yes, there were three tithes, if you will, but that it, even that third tithe had been addressed a long time ago, that it was being administered by the government where it wasn't before and it was a civil thing in the Bible, not a spiritual one.

In other words, second tithe was always about the Feast and being able to go to the Feast. You did it yourself. You saved it yourself. But first tithe, again, we understand that. So, basically, his idea was yes, but it's just one ten percent and you can divide it up ever how you want. So, if you want to give ninety percent of that as first tithe, that's okay, and ten percent is second for the Feast if that's what you're going to save for yourself, or maybe whatever. It took me a long time to get that out of him, the truth. And you think, what a horrible thing.

But again, if you understood that Herbert Armstrong was God's apostle you would hold on to that truth, which was somewhere around 17 or 18. I don't really know off the top of my head here. Toward the end of those that are listed. Pretty basic but something that was beginning to be polluted because this concept of eras had gone by the wayside, the fact that Philadelphia existed, that God raised up an apostle to teach, to lead, to give truth to the Church was going by the wayside. People were losing truth. It was a time of famine.

What an incredible thing, you read about famine in the Old Testament a lot of times that are prophetic about the end-time and it speaks of famine. We were having famine. "Rich and increased with goods" was because people were relying on themselves and not God for what they perceived now as being true. And so, by the time we got to the Apostasy there were so many ideas out there it was no wonder the Church split up into six hundred-plus organizations before it was over with because everybody had these different ideas that they wanted to push. Incredible.

It all goes back to something as simple as this. We lost sight of how God was working with the Church, the fact that there are eras, and what was going to happen in those eras. So, it's much harder for an individual after the time of Herbert Armstrong if you believed that was the era of Philadelphia, and some believed it was still going on, but anyway, another story. But if you had that concept of mind, which began to be lost... I'm just going to read this:

27 (6) All in God's Church during the era of Laodicea were Laodicean (referring to the period after Mr. Armstrong's death in January 1986 up to the Pentecost of 1998). The Church of God formerly believed that at the end there would be two eras coexisting side-by-side...

So I was getting a little ahead of myself. So, again here, that was the concept during Philadelphia, that these two eras were going to continue up until Christ's coming.

Philadelphia and Laodicea. One (Philadelphia) was to go to a place of safety and the other (Laodicea) would have to go through the great tribulation. Yet, one era cannot overlap another, and history has shown that all who lived during the era of Laodicea were Laodiceans. This era became progressively more and more lukewarm and filled with pride.

Because of being “rich and increased with goods.” You’re relying on self, not upon God. That’s what was taking place. Different ideas that people had. This is what it’s talking about “rich and increased with goods,” and says it was a matter of being lukewarm.

After the Apostasy, only a few began to repent of this condition in their lives, and as a result, God began to work in their lives once again. (Rev 3:1-16)

So, an axe floating to the surface? Laodicea? For us, may not seem that important. But the reality is this was exceedingly important to God’s Church during Laodicea, and we couldn’t see it. We couldn’t see it. The ability to repent after the Apostasy, this knowledge was exceedingly important. Because if you understand yes, there was a period of Laodicea, then who fulfilled this, who became lukewarm, and who was spewed out of God’s mouth?

So, there are certain truths that could be addressed or understanding, if you will, that should be plain, but it wasn’t because people didn’t want to acknowledge, “I’m a Laodicean.” Very hard. Very hard to do if you lived during that time period.

28 (7) All of Laodicea was spewed out of God's mouth as prophesied, separated from Christ, and scattered.

So again, what an incredible truth. We understand it. We see it. But if we’re not careful that might not seem as important as some of the others. Every one of these is important to us, to understand what God is doing, to understand what has happened in the past, to understand and receive correction, if you will, in our lives when and if we need it, if and when we need it if something applies to us. Going on it says:

God did this in order to help awaken some of His people out of the spiritual slumber and sleep they had entered.

So, we came to understand what that meant to fall asleep, to slumber and sleep.

God will not accept that which is only lukewarm, spiritually sleepy...

Now, something exceedingly important in this is to understand that we want to know or be certain that we’re convicted of this ourselves, is that we don’t want Laodicea to happen in our lives. Because the reality is all seven eras, the spirit that worked in those eras, still exists in this time period because we’re human beings. So, there are certain aspects of certain eras that can apply to individuals’ lives, and the warnings that are there can apply to individuals’ lives if indeed that is their battle, and the reality is that’s the way it’s always been.

Just one in this particular case, one era, what was said about them would be that which would stand out as being more for that particular period of time, but they’ve all applied to God’s people. That’s why they’re written in such a manner that they’re admonitions that apply to all in God’s Church at any time.

God will not accept that which is only lukewarm, spiritually sleepy, and steeped in pride.

So, just the matter of what we talked about a moment ago, about what Elisha's assistant had done there in going out and trying to receive the wealth to himself, and it's about pride. It's about raising ourselves up in importance in how we want to be seen and whatever.

God will not be around sin and pride is sin. Pride and spiritual sluggishness permeated the Church of God through the mid-'90s, and the entire Church therefore became separated from God, as prophesied in Revelation 3:16. Until this condition is acknowledged and repented of...

Again, a warning to all in God's Church that we want to make sure that we're not allowing that to happen in our lives, that we're not letting down, that God can very clearly see that we are zealous, desirous of His way of life, that we're not slipping, which is easy to do when you're talking about waiting on Christ's return. It's easy to get into this rut or this thinking and just letting life kind of mellow out. You've got to fight all the time. You've got to seek God all the time. You can't allow some of this kind of attitude and mind, a lukewarm spirit to begin to creep in. Because it crept in, in times past, and we have to be careful of that. We have to be on guard against that because it just makes an individual weaker and weaker and weaker.

So, if it's real to us, if we understand the battles that are there before us, we'll fight and we'll continue to fight and we're not going to allow a lukewarm spirit to begin to enter in, that we tolerate certain things that we know we shouldn't tolerate, that we're not fighting certain battles we know in the back of our mind and our thinking we really should be battling with all of our being if they're cutting us off from God.

That's why I hate when people leave the Church or when they come to a point they have to be disfellowshipped and what continues on. I've said it so many times, it's going to continue right up to the coming of Christ. Someone will fulfill that within the environment. I say the environment of God's Church because even now some may be at a point where they are so sluggish, so far into a sleep that they can't come out of it, that they've gone too far the other direction.

This is always what happens because any time someone is separated from the Body of Christ it didn't just happen in the past week. It isn't just something that just all of a sudden came about. It's something that has been going on for a long time, generally for a couple of years or more. Then God says enough is enough, no more. So, whenever God says that? Well, that's why we're told to watch, to be alert and on guard, because we don't know when he returns, when he comes.

That's not a matter of the literal coming. That's a matter of when he comes and deals with an individual. Because when someone is put out he has come, in essence, for them because their opportunity is over in this age as a whole unless someone is brought to repentance. Every once in a while, someone does come to repentance and turns things around. But my experience has been they've been few and far between.

So, important? Just as an axe head. It was a miracle, but after a while, we don't think about it very much. We remember the story of Elisha and the individual, the boy that was resurrected. We might remember that more so and put greater importance upon that if we were looking at something on a spiritual plane as far as truths are concerned. But the reality is, no, this fits into the scheme of things. And if we miss this one, if we miss these last two, and we allow a lukewarm spirit to begin to come into our lives, and we let down and we're not fighting for this way of life this is where we fit and this is what we have to repent of.

So, these are exceedingly important to God's Church. Far more sometimes than we might recognize. So, that's why we're looking at these things. Because we can begin to think, well, that's not as important as Truth # whatever.

Until this condition is acknowledged and repented of God will not work in the lives of such people. Even after that point in time, spiritual sluggishness is a condition that must always be fought against, just as those in Laodicea were admonished to do.

Awesome. Lesson after lesson after lesson of things we need to think about, things we need to keep focused upon as far as our thinking is concerned. In other words, we can never let down. You can never let down.

I think of all the trials people are going through right now. I don't think I've seen a time like this where so many people are addressing some of the things they are in their lives within the Church. It's not an easy time. The kind of sicknesses that are going on? We're getting older and there are going to be more things that can happen to us because of that as well. Sometimes it's just other things that are happening. To me that cries volumes. Be on guard. Fight. Because we're getting closer.

If we can't see that in the world, what's going on? We don't know when exactly, but we should know... Just like right now. We are in a lull in one respect. We were at a point there where I was going through and reading certain news articles, that it's like the woman in labor. This is intense, and then all of a sudden you don't see it in the news very often. Now, it's out there, but it's not like it was and it shows what happens in the human mind and in people's minds because you're looking in the world and you're seeing, well, it's not being built up like it was because it's not as important to them now.

It's like this lull until all of a sudden something hits them again and then they have these feelings that are inside of them. That's what we're talking about, a woman in labor and what they're going through, and it's more intent within the mind of individuals.

There are a lot of people out there that are concerned and worried, but back then, when that war took place right after that last day, and then all of a sudden here it went on for a month or so, two months, and now don't hear much. You just hear people finding fault with different ones over there and what they should be doing and how it's supposed to be organized afterward. Ukraine, I don't hardly hear it

anymore compared to what it was like, you know, and all the people dying over there and the fighting that continues on. Some other countries as well, things that are taking place.

So, it's like this lull. But it's going to pop back up again, and how soon it does is going to help us to see a lot. If it's soon, if something happens soon in some of the areas having to do with the Houthi in Yemen, and then of course, Hezbollah in north, in Beirut area up in Lebanon and wherever they are scattered out up there. Something can spark that off any time, and if that happens and when it happens it's going to be a stronger labor pain. It really is. It's going to shake people up because it's getting closer and closer.

So, we keep watching. But you can't let down during a time like this. Just because we're not being bombarded with these things is not a time to become lax or relaxed, if you will, it's a time to fight. Probably more during those times than even at the others if we understand it.

2 Kings 6:8—Then the king of Syria went to war against Israel and took counsel with his servants, saying that, In such and such place we will encamp. So, in other words, they were making plans, and they were going to talk about how they were going to begin going down into the area there, scouting out first of all, as armies oftentimes do, and setting up encampments and who they might be going after to get more information in the beginning. This has a specific direction it's going in the beginning here.

Saying that, In such and such place we will encamp. In other words, mobilize, prepare to mobilize, prepare to come together. It wasn't the full mobilization yet. **Now, the man of God...** So here we go again: "Now the man of God." It's showing it's God. It's about what God is doing. **Now, the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying...** So, it's what God is doing. He's working with a very carnal physical people for things, candidly, to be recorded so we can learn from it, so we can learn spiritual lessons and be inspired by what God has done through time in working with people, working with Elisha, as an example here.

Now, the man of God sent unto the king of Israel saying, Beware that you not pass such a place, for there the Syrians are coming down. So, the king of Israel sent to the place of which the man of God told him and warned him of and warned them to be on guard. So, in other words, the king of Israel is being told, "There are certain ones that are coming down to a certain area and this is where it is, where the location is," and so he was sending messages out there for them to be alert, to be on guard because they're coming down there, and it's part of the military of Syria coming down.

And so he said, **and warn them to be on guard, not once or twice.** In other words, do it several times. So, the warning was sent out several times, "You need to be doing this and making sure you keep doing this because they are coming and they're going to be in that area."

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sorely troubled because of such reports. Some of these things are sometimes a little hard the way they're written, to understand what's going on, but what's taking place here is that the king of Israel would send out people and warnings in certain areas and they

knew that they were coming and where they were coming, so they knew to be out of certain areas or do whatever they needed to do to be on guard, to be alert, and to pull back. Every time this happened it's like, "How do they know what's going on? Every time I do something they're right there. They're not like they normally would be. We'd go in and do what we want to."

So, he called his servants and said unto them, Will you not show me who it is among us who is for the king of Israel? "Who's letting out this information? Who is it among us that's leaking this information? We need to find out."

So, one of his servants said, No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, is telling the king of Israel the words that you speak in your closed chambers. So, it's like God is giving it to Elisha and he's going and telling the king, so he knows where you're coming down, where you're going to be. No one is leaking this information.

So he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. Then it was told to him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. So, he sent there horses and chariots and a large army, a large part of his army, **and they came down by night and encompassed the city.** They're just out to get him. It's not the entire army by any measure, but they're coming down here with a type of raiding part or whatever and some like they had set up before coming down to prepare.

Verse 15—Then when the servant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, he found an army had encompassed the city both with horses and chariots. So his servant said to him, Look, my master! What shall we do? Then he said, Do not fear, for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.

Now, this is an expression that most of us remember. Reading this story here, this one really sticks in our minds because it's inspiring, it's exciting, it's encouraging to realize what God is saying. And if we understand that, that we're in God's hands, where else could you be? When God works with His people and is dealing with His people to have the confidence to know that our lives are there, where else would we want them but in His hands? That's a promise. That's what He gives to us. He loves us. He nurtures us. He cares for us in ways that make this look a whole lot different on a physical plane.

So Elisha prayed, and said, Eternal, open... Some of this is not quoted properly. It says, "**I pray thee**" and that wasn't even in the scriptures. But anyway, he's doing that as he prays to God anyway. **He said unto the Eternal, Open his eyes that he may see. So, the Eternal opened the eyes of the young man, and he could see the mountain full of horses and chariots and fire surrounding Elisha.** So, all around in the mountains in the area there where he was, all of a sudden, he could see an angelic realm, if you will, a power that was manifested to him.

We don't think about things like that. We have that, plus; always have had, and if we'll grasp that as God's people. There are things that God lets us experience and go through, things that happen in our lives. But there is so much where God's intervened and we don't even know. We don't even know.

There are stories like this to understand what was happening at this particular time and the care that God gives to His people if we understand the kind of love and the kind of purpose God has for His people because there is no greater purpose... That's why the greatest focus of God over the last two thousand years has been people in the Church because those are the ones He's called to work with, to mold and fashion, and it's not a small thing. Whether it be on the job, whether it be on the highway, wherever it is. Sometimes we don't think in that regard, but we need to pray in that regard.

Elisha prayed, again here, and his eyes were opened, and he could see this all surrounding Elisha. Then **verse 18** continuing on, **And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Eternal, saying, Strike these people with blindness. And He struck them with blindness.** Now, it's not like all of a sudden they couldn't see. This is not the kind of blindness. It has to do with where they were, what they were doing. It's like they could still see one another, but they lost it in the mind. They lost the compass. They didn't know where they were. It's like you're walking around, "Where are we supposed to be? What are we supposed to be doing?" That type of thing if you can understand.

So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Then Elisha said to them, This is not the way, neither is this the city. In other words, what you want, what you're looking for. So, in other words, they were befuddled about where they were all of a sudden. They didn't grasp it. They just couldn't grasp it up here in the mind for whatever reason, ever how God does that or did that. We don't grasp, but He did it.

Just as much when He wants to give us something He communicates to us that which we need. If He causes something to happen within the mind that takes away an ability, God can do that. Probably one of the most incredible things of something like that is when God intervened and caused different languages to exist. You think, how could that be? A certain group of people all of a sudden spoke a certain way and others over here spoke another way and they couldn't understand each other. They couldn't communicate. All of a sudden some people were saying, "Parles-tu français?" Probably not. It was like Babylon. It was babble indeed, and the languages were messed up.

So, how God does this, well, He's God. He created the mind, and He can place within the mind that in an instant. So, I don't comprehend that at all. I don't know how that can be one moment and then the next moment something else.

Then Elisha said to them, This is not the way. Neither is this the city, in other words, **the one that you want. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man whom you seek.** So, you think, "He's lying to him." No, he's going to give them the man but in his time. **And he led them to Samaria.**

Now, Samaria here is more, if you will, the capital city then of Israel. When it speaks of Samaria most of the time this is what it's talking about. It's talking about this area. Sometimes it's literally the city, sometimes it's just that region for the king, for the government, for the royalty.

Then it came to pass that when they had come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Eternal, open the eyes of these, they may see. Then the Eternal opened their eyes, and they could see that they were in the midst of Samaria! So, all of a sudden it came back to them. It's like your GPS isn't working and all of a sudden it's working. It tells you where you are. Well, this is what happened in their minds, and all of a sudden they knew that they were in Samaria, and they didn't know until this happened.

What an incredible thing. I think of truths that are given to us. When God puts it in the mind, and you can see it, you can see it. It's not that you're blind and you can't see this world around you. We are blind, people are blind to what's true. They can't see it. And then all of a sudden, you can see it. What an incredible thing, God just places it in your mind, and you know.

Verse 21—So, the king of Israel said to Elisha as he saw them, My father, shall I strike them down? So, in other words, he saw that they were there, and it was like they were all the way up there into the city and his military is there and this wasn't a full military of Syria at all but enough that they could easily destroy them. In other words, they're out there, they were given into the hands of the king in essence. They're in Samaria.

Shall I strike them down? But he answered, You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? In other words, "God has taken them captive for you and this is the same thing. If you had this would you just strike them down then if you've taken them all captive here and they're there?"

Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. In other words, to go back to their king.

So, he prepared great provisions for them; and when they had eaten and did drink, he sent them away and they went to their master. So these bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel. In other words, they didn't come into the region in that specific manner, in small raids in a group like this, but they did come later on here in a very big way. That's going to be explained.

Verse 24—Then it came to pass after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. So, his desire at this point in time was to send the entire army up against Samaria and take control of all Israel.

Now, there was a great famine in Samaria, and they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for eighty pieces of silver. What do you suppose that's for? ...of silver, and a fourth part of a cup of dove dung for five pieces of silver. So, the other was two pounds of silver for a donkey's head and the other was two ounces of silver for a container of dung. That's pretty bad famine. Because they're going to eat

it. They needed nourishment. They had nothing to eat. They were starving. And so, that's how bad this was.

Now, as the king of Israel, Joram/Jehoram (he's called both), Ahab's son, (that's who it's speaking of) **was passing by upon the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, Save/deliver me, my lord, O king!** So, there were people who obviously were starving. She saw him walking up there and recognized him as the king and was crying out to him to be saved because of the famine they were in.

So he said, If the Eternal does not deliver you, "If the Eternal doesn't save you," **what can I do out of the threshing floor or out of the winepress?** "There is nothing there, what can I give?" It's like, "My hands are tied. We're all suffering."

Then the king asked of her, What else is there? It's like, "Do you have something else that you want to say besides asking something that I can't give?" It went on to say here, if you will, **This woman said to me, Give your son...** This is what she is saying in this story here, that there was another woman, said to me, **Give me your son so that we may eat him now, and we will eat my son later.** Pretty bad. There are stories of things that have happened. I think of WWII, and I think of some things that happened in some sieges that took place in Russia and some of the horrifying stories that took place in certain cities there. I can't remember if it was Leningrad or where it was at the time. But anyway, wherever it was, it was some horrifying stories along these lines of how they'd been surrounded and what they began to do because they had no food at all. So, human beings have done things like this.

So we boiled my son, and we did eat him. Then I said unto her on another day, Give your son, that we may eat him; and she has hidden her son. So, in other words, this was her dilemma. Now, we can't even begin to grasp something like this.

When it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes. So, this struck him very deep when he realized how far this had gone and how the people were suffering. Because one thing you can count on, he wasn't suffering like the rest. So, whatever there was to eat that had been saved up, it was for him, for his household, and the rest were suffering far, far, far more than what he was.

This struck him very deep ... **and he rent his clothes, and he passed by upon the wall, and people looked, and he had sackcloth under this upon his flesh.** So again, they saw the king with the attitude of what he was going through.

It says, **Then he said, God do so, and more also to me if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall not be upon him this day!** So, in other words, if Elisha's head isn't cut off by the end of the day then so be it for me too, that it should happen to me. So, he's out after Elisha now. Elisha learned from Elijah what it's like to have someone after you because of Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. So, we know the story of Jezebel and what she was like, but always after Elijah wanting to kill him.

So, **verse 32—Now, Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him...** So, he's out to kill Elisha now. He wants him dead before the day is over. Not just dead but his head taken off. And so, he's sent out a messenger ahead of him and he's following behind.

...yet before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, Look now, that the son of a murderer is sending to take off my head. So, son of Ahab, that's what he's referring to, has sent someone; they're sending out to have my head taken off.

And when you see that his messenger has come shut the door and hold him fast at the door. For the sound of his master's feet is close behind him. What an incredible thing that God gave this in his mind, like everything else, but that's how God worked. It wasn't all of a sudden there was some kind of a voice or sometimes people get these different ideas of what has happened in times past. No, it's just that God gave it to him to know and this is what's taking place.

Then, as he was speaking to them, the messenger came down to him saying, Behold, this evil is of the Eternal; why should I wait for the Eternal any longer? So, this is a message basically coming from the king that the messenger had sent as he went out ahead, and basically, it is as a warning to Elisha of something to follow here. He's saying here, "This evil is of the Eternal, and Elisha, you're His prophet, so why should I wait any longer for the Eternal to," in essence, "to deliver us?"

Because he did in his own physical carnal way to go through a remorse, as it were, that woman and the story there of the child that was boiled. All that struck him even deeper. And so, it finally got to him to such a point where, "We're dying. We're going to continue to die, and this is from God; it's God's fault. Elisha is the closest thing to God that I can get and I'm going to take off his head."

It reminds me of things that Christ went through. You think of all the attitude that's always there, anything that's true and right, and how the human mind reacts. Sometimes people don't grasp and comprehend what they're being stirred up by because there is a spirit world and they work to come after that which they hate with all their being, anything that has to do with God. If they can destroy it they'll try to destroy it. So, all through history, these things have taken place, but they've had a very much a part in this as well.

And so, it's an amazing, truly amazing that when things are not going well, perhaps during a real hardship, if you will, whatever that might be, whether it has to do with that which is financial, that which is physical, that which is a matter of health, some kind of trial, some kind of thing that we are experiencing in our life or that people can experience, an oppressing times perhaps that people have gone through – because we've gone through different things within the Church and we've experienced a lot of different things, people have – but so often it's incredible how people, even with the environment of God's Church have blamed God.

I always use that term “the environment of God’s Church,” because the reality is there have always existed within God’s Church individuals who maybe went through the motions of being baptized and perhaps did so falsely or at some point later on began to turn away because of sin from God and were not right, were not living the way they should, and really were cut off from God but still within the environment of the Church.

That’s why we’ve talked about in times past people who are actually in the temple or out in the courtyard because the reality is they might be in the same area, might be thought of as being the same but that which is true will be a matter of God’s spirit, if they’re in the Body of Christ that God’s spirit is dwelling within them. If not, they’ve been cut off from God’s spirit.

Same sort of thing here. What can oftentimes happen where people can begin to find fault with God. I think of one of the terms that used to irritate me the most, when individuals didn’t agree with something and they would put up a defense as to why they were doing something, whatever that might be, perhaps we have to take our children out of the school during the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s like, “The Church has us do this.” “The Church makes me do this.” Hmm. Okay?

So, it’s not standing up for what you believe; it’s the Church that’s making you do it. That’s just one example that’s probably not a good one, but when people use the excuse of, “Well, the Church makes me do this,” or “The Church tells me I have to do this,” it’s like you don’t really necessarily agree with that but you’re going along with it so, “It must not be that church. I want to look into that a little bit more as to why they would do such horrible things.” It’s like, “The church is bad.” If you’ve been back in time, any amount of time, especially in Worldwide and Laodicea period, it happened a lot. Incredible!

So often when that’s done people don’t realize that when they are finding fault with something that’s being done or they don’t agree with something that’s been given to them they will lash out at someone who disagrees with them, perhaps in the Church, but most of the time it’s directed to the ministry and not just the ministry, but here, whatever. It was toward Herbert Armstrong at a time and then now there are those things that have come in this direction. That’s understandable because they don’t comprehend fully that no, it’s actually against God. But that’s a matter of conviction, what people believe, and it just shows that sometimes people just don’t get it.

But it’s easy to begin finding fault when you become of this spirit, and this is, obviously, how far the king had gone. He was always that way anyway, as a whole. He was not a very positive individual as we’ve seen several times. He’s pretty much a downer on a regular basis, a pretty negative guy. But he would strike out at different times, that this was basically God’s fault. You remember the example, “God’s brought us out here to die,” and always finding fault then with the prophet, whoever the prophet was at any particular time. So, nothing new to God’s Church.

I think at this point here we’re going to take a look at some examples of some things basically of what we need to think upon at times like this where we are in the Church. Like I said, we’re kind of in a lull right

now as far as the world is concerned, as far as that which we're supposed to be watching in the sense of a woman in labor and the analogy that goes along with that on a spiritual plane for what we can see as far as what the world is going through.

I think of what was said there concerning the woman wanting to be delivered. The king basically was at a point where he realized, "I'm not going to wait on God any longer to deliver me." That was what he was basically saying. And basically, he was going to go ahead and strike out now because he was fed up. I've seen these things happen in the Church in times past. Some, a person, will go to a certain point and then they'll strike out, sometimes in incredible anger.

I think how we await for God to deliver us from this present world. I think within every one of us there is that incredible desire to see the world not have to go through the kind of suffering it's going through. I can't comprehend what it's going to be like when there is only one government, one Church, when there's that kind of justice around the earth and every government is done away with, every system is done away with out there.

I think of, you know, we have some teachers here and in different areas as well, different things that go on, but you think, the school systems and how sick and what's being done out there. There is no control over it, and what's happening in government. I think of what it talks about "Lot vexed his righteous soul day by day." It's like, we go through things like that on a spiritual level as well where we're so tired of this world and the way it is, and we so desire an end to it, and we desire Christ to return. But there are some things we need to remember along the way in all that and I think it'd be good to look at some of those (Luke 13) because it's a matter of waiting upon God because it's a matter of God's time.

We are probably more convicted than ever before that things have to happen according to His purpose, His plan, and at times He lets us have a picture of what some of that is (not all of it). There are reasons for that. But He blesses us and helps us to see from time to time as we grow what He's doing, why He's doing something in a certain way, and we learn from that, and we keep pressing forward.

I think of what it means that we seek to fulfill the name of Israel, "to strive," and the example there is to strive, the meaning of it is "to strive with God," but we know what that means. It's not meaning to strive against God but to fight with God because there's a fight going on and there are things that God does to help us. There are things the angelic realm does to help us. God has made the way for us to succeed, but we have to be a part of that, we have to choose to be a part of that, and so we have to strive as well and that's where the real test and trial comes.

So, Luke 13. Just some scriptures here that we really need to focus up on at this particular juncture of time within the Church.

Luke 13:23—Then one of them said (to those whom Christ was speaking), **Lord, will only a few be saved?** The word has to do with being delivered. **Then he answered them, Strive...** "Struggle" is what

this word means, “to contend for a prize.” It’s like being in a race. Sometimes there are the examples given there of a prize fighter, perhaps we can think of an Olympian, and this is kind of how it’s used in that regard, this particular word here “to fight for; to attain to something that’s going to be received as a result of the effort put into it.”

Struggle (or contend for the prize or to fight for is what the word means), **to enter in at the...** It says “**straight gate,**” but it just means a **narrow gate** and the **narrow way, for I tell you that many will seek to enter in and will not be able.** You know, these are some pretty sobering scriptures as we think about them because they apply to a lot of what we went through at the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Again here, to be reminded of some of that, that we look at these things and understand perhaps with an understanding we really didn’t have to this level before as far as God’s Church is concerned about what he was saying here.

So, he said, “Strive to enter the narrow gate.” It’s not the easy way; it’s the hard way. You have to strive. You have to work at it. You have to pour your being into it. You have to fight. “For I tell you that many will seek to enter in and will not be able.” So, there’s going to be a time when there’ll be those because of physical things, not the right reasons, but that’s another part of the story.

Let’s go on and look at another one here, Matthew 7 where it talks about this again.

Matthew 7:13—Enter in at the narrow gate. So again, there are some gates to choose from. As a whole, in this example, people don’t choose the hard one to get through, the busy one to get through. It’s kind of like we could talk about driving. If your way tells you it’s going to take twice as long to get some place you find another way, the easier way, whatever that easier way might be. So, this is basically part of what it’s talking about here.

Enter in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction. It’s about life. Once God calls us, we’re to learn that. We recognize that there is just a certain way we’re to live and it’s narrow and you can’t go to the right or to the left of it. You have to strive to be right on it, to stay right in it, to stay right on that path, if you will because it’s very easy to stray away from it and go some other direction. We learn that over and over again in God’s Church. You have to fight to stay on that center, if you will.

Because it says here, “Wide is the way that leads to destruction.” That’s what it’s all about. It’s about that which is going to be destroyed. Only that which stays on the straight and narrow, which takes a lot of work, takes a lot of thought, takes a lot of planning, it takes a lot of determination, it takes a lot of conviction to do it because it’s a whole lot easier to do the other a far as physical life is concerned.

...and there are many who enter that way. So, what is this all about? It’s about time. It’s not just the past six thousand years; this is going to continue through the Millennium and the Great White Throne. There are many who enter that way. That will be their choice.

Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way... That word “difficult” here in the Greek language carries with it a little bit more meaning. It means “to be afflicted; to suffer affliction.” It’s just hard! As you do it, you’re going to suffer for it.

Now, that seems contrary in many ways to how the mind might think, but the reality is it’s a process of choices that the mind has to make to choose to suffer in order to achieve that which is far, far greater, forever. It’s a matter of weighing it out, which is the most important then to me? What am I the most convicted of? The easy way now? Or do we see something far greater and fight for that because we see it and we’re convicted of it and we want it, we want what God is offering us? That’s what this is about.

So, “narrow is the gate,” hard to get through. It’s a whole lot easier going some other direction in a carnal physical way for a period of time. It blows my mind how many continue to choose that within the Church, continue to go by the wayside, will continue to do so to Christ’s coming.

We can think, “Well, that can’t be because surely when people see a nuclear war and so forth everyone will repent.” Well, you can’t put in the mind a conviction of the truth and this way of life. Either it’s there by that time or it’s not, and if it’s not they’re going to go by the wayside.

...and difficult, in other words, you’re going to be afflicted, you’re going to suffer affliction, **is the way which leads to life**. Isn’t that an incredible thing that it’s designed this way because it’s the only way it works? We had to be made carnal, we had to be made physical for the purpose of when the time comes to make the most important choices we will ever make in our life because either it’s going to be in this life and this life only or it’ll be that which will have everlasting life in time, spirit life. Those are the choices that God places before individuals when He calls them.

There seems to be no choice in that, but the reality is the many choose the other way. Always have, always will. We think it’s going to stop at the Millennium or the Great White Throne. That’s what God’s revealing – no, it’s not. Just better know that now. So, each individual has to decide for themselves. We can’t decide it because of anyone else and what they choose. It has to be because of your own convictions because this determines whether or not God can continue to mold and fashion, transform the mind.

It’s our choice and our conviction, no one else’s, and if we want it then there are certain things we have to do, in the straight way that God shows us to do it. Then we begin to learn more and more about the grace, the mercy, the love, the kindness, the patience, the purpose, the awesomeness of God, and what He has planned for us that really can’t be compared to the physical manure that human beings choose in this life.

Because everyone that chooses something different and leaves God and goes against Christ has just chosen manure. They’d be better off just to go start swimming in it and enjoying it for a short period. It’s kind of like one of these great big old tanks out there when they used to have them, and these tanks go

round and round and the smell is horrible because that's everything that the sewer is going to. From the cities, they collect everything out of every toilet and it'd just be better to go out there and swim in it until you die. Just drink. Just swim from one side to the other because you're going to be tired and you're going to start sucking it into your lungs and after a while, you're just going to die in that stuff.

Now, it'd be nice if we could think that way in the sense of what God is offering us and what's out there in the world, but the reality is people see it like Christmas trees and lights and they're attracted to it and it's easier. Everybody else is doing it so that just makes it a whole lot easier. Then it begins to cause doubt in the mind. If you start losing God's spirit and you begin to think in a different way, you'll lose the ability to see things in what is true and what is right from God. That's a horrible thing when people just begin to lose it.

To me, there is nothing worse when you've seen someone who's been a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God... I think of the Apostasy and what happened at that time when we used to talk about the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, that old science fiction show. It's like all of a sudden, this thing would be in them, and you didn't know who they were. That's exactly what happened on a spiritual plane with so many people we knew, I knew. Conversations one day and the next day I don't know them because something has flipped inside their mind; a choice was made.

You can't understand it. All you can do is work to understand your own mind and what God has given to you and recognize how precious it is and recognize what God is offering us and fight for it. Always fight for it, otherwise, it turns into being lukewarm, Laodicean, and God can't use that because that's going down the other way as well. Kind of playing the fence on both sides is not God's way. It's not the straight and narrow. Incredible.

Because narrow is the gate and difficult, to suffer, to suffer affliction is the way which leads to life, and few... It means what it says, it says what it means. If we're blessed in seven thousand, one hundred years to be a part of the few, how blessed are we to be able to be a part of the few, to be called to go through whatever we have to go through, to make choices in this life now with what God has given to us and we fight, fight for God, we persevere, we keep striving for what is true and what is right?

1 Timothy 6:11. So, being instructed here by Paul. **But you, in essence, every one of God, should flee these things.** So, he's talked about things that people should not have part in. In other words, the way that is broad that people choose. Sometimes when you learn what people have done and what choices they've made to turn away from God, from the Church, it's like, "You've got to be kidding! After everything that's said over and over and over again, why would we do that? Why would anyone do such a thing? To turn from God for what? What are you giving up?" You get to a point where people can't even comprehend what they're really giving up because they can't see it anymore. What a horrible shame.

That's why if there is anyone with sin out here and you're playing around with sin and you're continuing to do it, whatever it is – I don't care what it is. Sometimes it might be a matter of alcohol, drunkenness. You're to learn to fight and conquer that. You are to conquer it! You're to keep fighting until you conquer it! You can't have it in your life. God makes it very clear it can't be a part of the Church. If we continue to do it, we're just constantly going back to it and say, "Well, I'm just weak," whatever, well, give me a break! Where is the fight? Where is the perseverance?

Pornography, whatever it is, whatever kind of garbage that's out there. Some things that just aren't right as far as your thinking is concerned, whatever it is that's wrong, what kind of a fight is going into it? Because these are the things that happen over and over and over again that lead people out of God's Church.

"But you, every one of God, should flee these things." We know what we're supposed to flee – the things that are wrong, the things that aren't right before God, the things of sin. If there is sin, God says to flee them. In other words, we have the ability to flee. He gives us the help to flee. That's why you have to cry out to God for help, for strength to fight whatever battle it is every day of your life, especially when you're in the midst of battles like that. You have to pray every day of your life to fight those things until you know it's conquered. Then you should pray about them from time to time that they never come back, that you never give in to this sick, perverted, disgusting, evil world, to the way of human nature and selfishness.

But you, every one of God, should flee these things and follow after... The word means "pursue; to seek after." That doesn't just happen. That takes work. It takes forethought. It takes planning.

...seek after righteousness/follow after righteousness, godliness. To think about, "Is this how God wants us to be?" What are we to be like? Godliness, that it's of God, the thinking is of God, how we think about one another, how we think about others, how we treat others, how we judge or don't judge (is usually what it should be).

...faith. Faith. It has to do with what we believe. Pursue it.

I think of the 57 Truths. There is the truth. Pursue it! Be reminded of it. Go back to it on occasion. Think about it. Pray about it. Just every once in a while go back out and go to number one, go to number two, whatever it is. If you have difficulty praying about something go get on your knees and pray about the truth. Then go to another truth some other time and pray about it, that God help it to be deeply planted in your mind that you're able to understand it spiritually.

Just like number four overall, government. Oftentimes, we think we have a good hold on it. The reality is until we come across certain tests and trials, we don't really have it conquered yet. There are things to be learned so we have to be reassured in our minds and our thinking, "Yes, I know how God is working

and I'm fighting for that, and I want that, and I want to have that kind of mind." Anyway, those are things to pray about.

That's what it means when it says to pursue, to seek after faith because faith doesn't happen automatically. Faith is a matter of what you're given to believe and how you're fighting to hold on to it and live it. And so, if we're striving to live the truth that God gives to us, that's what faith is about. We do it, we live it because we believe it. God's given us the ability to believe it and that's what we're striving to live. That's what living by faith is. Then because we choose to do that, you know what, God attributes that to us for righteousness. Incredible. We're not righteous, but He attributes that to us for righteousness.

...**love**. Agape. We've been taught over and over again you don't have this of yourself. You don't have God's spirit of yourself. We have God's spirit and the ability to have this in us in how we think toward others, and we grow in this through time, and we seek to grow in it more. That's something you will always be able to grow in in this human body because it's not us. Our love is selfish first and foremost. Then after that, if we're praying about it, seeking God's spirit, seeking God's help, and wanting this to live in us toward others in our thinking, that comes from God. Awesome!

...**patience, meekness**. A teachable spirit which goes along with humility.

Then it says, **Fight the good fight of faith**. What an incredible thing to say. To me, it's a beautiful expression, "Fight the good fight of faith," because He's given us the truth and we have to fight for those things, for what we've been given to believe.

So, not to go through the truths on occasion, not to think about them on occasion is not fighting at all. It isn't fighting at all! Where is the fight? We think we just automatically, because we've gone through them in the past, that they're in our mind just because we saw the axe come up that we're always going to hold on to that and be encouraged by it and recognize that God's always with us? Or does it kind of in time fade away when we see other things take place and we want to see bigger things take place or whatever it is on a spiritual plane that goes through our minds?

So, it's a fight and it's a good fight. There is no better fight in life than this.

When I think about the truths of God and what God has given to us and how we're able to have them? Because there is only one way we have them because it's been established upon the apostles and prophets. That's where they've all come from in times past. Things that the prophets have given that in time God, Christ came and then raised up the Church and gave apostles, and then all of a sudden they began to add much, much more on a spiritual plane that was never, never, never known in the previous four thousand years. People didn't see those things!

Then God gave it to them to give and just more and more building and more construction on a spiritual plane. Then now down to the end where the greatest accumulation of all those things has come together. Powerful! ...and powerfully.

Fight the good fight of faith. We can't have, live faith faithfully, truthfully if we don't grasp what we've been given to believe, if we don't see it clearly and know that we agree with every word written. Because if we have a problem with anything, if we don't see it on a spiritual plane, then indeed, we do have problems.

So, this word "fight" here in verse 12, it's that same word as "to strive" that we looked at in Luke 13, "to struggle; to contend for the prize; to fight for."

I think of running races. I think of doing different things, whether it be in sports or whatever it is. They don't just happen. To bring this body into subjection to certain things, to fight because your mind is crying out? Mine cried out a lot when it was long distance. "Stop, you fool! It feels bad."

I think of one time I said something really dumb. Laura wanted to go out and start exercising when we were in Erie. We weren't exercising like we should be, so I went out there and wanted to start doing it. I went a way and I said, "You know what?" basically paraphrasing this... Now, you think, "How stupid." I really even hate to give you the example because it was so stupid. It was like, "I would rather die than do this on a regular basis." Well, I've come close several times now, but God's had mercy on me and kept me going. "You've got farther to run."

Anyway, I look back at those words now and think, "Dumb. Dumb. Dumb!" So anyway, sometimes we just do stupid things.

So, on a physical plane, spiritual plane. Sometimes on a spiritual plane, we just do stupid things. We don't fight for this like we should. It is a battle. We shouldn't expect anything less. Things don't just change. They don't just happen; you've got to make them happen by the choices you make. Awesome! You have to fight for it.

Verse 12—Fight the good fight of faith, or it's really, **for faith,** so that you can have it, so that it's real in your life. ...**lay hold on everlasting life.** That's what God wants us to do, and He's given us every opportunity more than any other era of the Church. Really. We've been given more to lay hold on this way of life because of the understanding God has given of everything that He's doing.

Lay hold on everlasting life, whereunto you are also called. Even that was lost in God's Church as a whole, that God does the calling. That you can go out here and print a hundred million *Plain Truths* or whatever you want to call them and send them all over the world free of charge, and unless God's calling someone out there to become part of the Church, they're not coming. And if they do, it won't be true, it'll be like a protestant world by what they see physically and carnally, not because God's given it to them in the mind. Incredible.

Whereunto you were also called. And how many have been called? How many have come through the Apostasy? Awesome, what God is doing.

...and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. This is exceedingly important, that it's by what we're living. It's not about the size; it's about what we're living, and the example of that that God is going to use for the future.

So, in closing, we all want to be able to say what Paul said. **2 Timothy 4:7.** I want to be able to say this. I think every one of us should want to be able to say this, but it has to be real because we're doing it. **I have fought a good fight.** That's what counts at the end of the day, "I have fought a good fight." It's a fight.

Again, the word "fought" is the same word, "to strive." It's like one who is preparing themselves to receive first place in a race, whatever it might be, the medal, the reward because it contains that in the meaning of the word. It's like something you're going to receive as a result of the contest that you're in, of the whatever it might be when you talk about sports. It's more along those lines.

And so, that takes work. I think back in high school, especially college, going out to track and all the running you do if you're running track. If it's basketball, you practice basketball. You don't just have a game and then everybody shows up and puts on their nice uniform and goes out there and all of a sudden you know all the plays. That's the thing that'll get people. They don't know the plays and certain things are called by the captain or the one designated to call the play and give the sign for it and "What's that one?" you know. If you don't know what they are and where to go it's like you're lost before you ever get started.

So, we have to know what God is doing. We have to want to be a part of it. We have to exercise on a spiritual plane. Exercise prayer. It's what you live. It's what you fight for. If we're not doing that every day something is wrong. It's not real to us like it should be.

I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. I think everyone wants to say that. Just make sure we're striving to.