

We now have 3 weeks until the Feast of Tabernacles begins. And with that in mind, we started a new series last Sabbath entitled, *Prepare for the Feast*, and this today being *Part 2* of that particular series. This should be the last sermon in the series.

It's preparation for the Feast. We're going through this series so that we can plan ahead in order to be better prepared to receive and to give a much better Feast to everyone who's going to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. It is being observed different... and I hope we understand that process that began last year and why we're doing it, why God has inspired it to be done this way – because this comes from God. It's not my opinion, my ideas, and so forth. These things come from God. There's a way and a reason why God does things the way He does and we learn from that process and we heard in one of the sermons last year – which we will hear in one of the sermons in the beginning of the Feast this year again... of what it means about booths and what that practice was and how we applied some of those things and drew some incorrect conclusions but also received inspiring lessons from some of those things as well. Some people last year felt like you're not observing the entire Feast of Tabernacles because it was not identical to times past. Oh yes we are. It's just differently. And sometimes we get in our heads that some certain things have to be done exactly a certain way and as a matter of fact we're going to go through a scripture today in Hebrews that I think back in times past how we looked at that scripture and used it incorrectly really, in how it was applied. It can be applied in a certain way, but we went too far with it and God is helping us to become more balanced in everything He gives to us; more sound minded with what He's given to us and it's a maturing process. We go through a maturing process in life and whether it be physical from the time we're born to the time we become adults... What is that age for adulthood? 19-20-21 we enter adult life basically somewhere in there, but you don't stop maturing. People hopefully don't stop maturing. There are lessons to be learned that are life long, they truly are; just in the physical life itself and especially in the Church with God's way of life, the things He teaches us and shows us, and gives to us. It's an awesome thing.

And so it is with the Church. We go through a maturing process and the growth and the maturing never stops...even in the family of God it isn't going to stop. We're not going to be given everything – even the 144,000 as soon as we're resurrected – we're not going to know it all, we're not going to be given it all. It's a beginning in the God family. That's when we're actually finally *born* into the God family. We're not yet born again. We're not born yet as spirit beings. That doesn't happen until the change comes. We're only begotten right now and growing, as it were, in the womb of the mother – in the Church – and so we're actually born then whenever that is for different ones here – for some it will be when Jesus Christ returns, for others it will be at some point in the future... which we'll talk about a little more at the Feast.

We're going back a little bit in last week's sermon with a bit of a review. We first covered the importance of preparing spiritually for this, for the Feast that's coming up, by seeking a right spirit of hungering and thirsting for what God is offering us at the Feast – what He's already prepared for us. It comes back to our desire of hungering and thirsting after what God is going to give to us then at that time. We're not going to receive it until then, but most of it has already been prepared and so, so much of it depends upon us – what we're going to receive depends upon us and our spirit and our attitude toward God, our hungering and thirsting after what He's prepared for us. And as I mentioned last Sabbath, there is no other time of the year when God gives us more. To me, it's one of the most

inspiring times – even before the Feast I recognize God pouring out more of His spirit; the anticipation, the excitement that God has – because He lets us share in that anticipation and excitement for what’s coming and especially then during the Feast He pours out more of His spirit upon us, all of us, and to me it’s one of the most exciting times of the year.

No other time of the year like what we’re coming upon here and again, a reminder here of what’s in **Psalms 81:3 - Blow up the trumpet in the new moon**, referring specifically to a high day, which is the Feast of Trumpets. That’s when the count really begins for knowing certain things about how to count time. So much of it revolves around this day and says...**Blow up the Trumpet on the new moon in the time appointed**, appointed times, like we read about in Leviticus 23, and you go through there and you read about all the Holy Days, and the Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath and the appointments that God made for mankind through time so that we can come before Him and learn from Him what He has prepared for us, what He prepares and what He gives to us. So, **in the time appointed on our solemn feast day**. Then going on down in **verse 8** it says - **Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto you:** so God’s desire toward us is that we listen to what He gives to us. He wants us to receive it, He wants us to hear it because He knows that if we’ll receive it, if we have that spirit and that desire for hungering for what He’s giving to us, and if we’ll hear it, and He gives us the ability to hear spiritually, then we’re going to be blessed! We’re going to be able to grow! But if that is weakened, or it isn’t as intense, then we’re not going to be able to receive as much. So the more instruction, the more guidance we can receive from God our Father then the more we’re going to be able to respond in a positive way so that we can be blessed! Because God’s desire is that we be blessed...as any parent would desire for their children, that they listen, so they can be blessed in life; mature and grow in a right way.

So it says, **O Israel, IF you will listen unto me; There shall be no strange god in you; neither shall you worship any strange god. I am the Eternal your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt: open wide your mouth, and I will fill it.** Because that’s His desire – to fill us full, to fill us with His word, His way of life and a part of us are still coming out of Egypt, it’s part of a process.

Next we went on to another vital part of preparing for the Feast and how we need to consider opportunities for fellowship and plan ahead to make the most of the time we’re going to be able to spend together – and we need to think about that. And those of you who’ve been around for a long time, you need to think about this a little bit differently than in times past. It’s not just about being able to come together and be together at the same time but look at it in a different way. As we go through here you’ll understand what I’m saying, in a unique way. To do it differently, to concentrate on, to purpose in your mind and in your heart to do it differently – those of you who’ve never been there before, you don’t know. This’ll be a great experience of and by itself and you can learn from the things I’m talking about here as it is.

It was covered regarding how Atonement is a time of humbling ourselves before God; in large part so that we can enter the Feast of Tabernacles in humility. Everything in God’s plan is so perfect in what it teaches, and so it is spiritually for us as well. It’s not just the physical days and the order of those things, but there’s a purpose for the order of those things and it teaches us much. So Atonement, the desire to be at one with God, that process we go through is so that when we actually enter into; when we enter into the millennial period... whether it be those who are born into God’s family, and those who continue on, and all those who are able to come along then – that we’re able to do it in humility. Look at what happens to this earth before Jesus Christ returns. That’s the only way that mankind can even enter into that period of time, the way tht God has it planned and purposed for what He’s going to do during the

millennium. He's going to humble mankind mightily. That's why people have to go through what they have to go through before this becomes a reality.

And so we can learn from this as we go to the Feast of Tabernacles...to do so with humility and as we go through some of these verses that should just really ring out powerfully to us what that means. Because it's about our relationships toward God and toward one another; how we think about people. So important that our relationships with others be based on humility because it's pride that gets in the way and hurts relationships, it truly is. If we understand this, it's a matter of focusing on the needs of others more than ourselves – humility. A willingness to turn the focus away from self, because that's just natural. It's easy to focus upon ourselves, our needs, our wants. We wake up in the morning – wants, needs. All through the day we like to pamper self. We love ourselves. That's what God says about us. We love ourselves as human beings. That's just natural and so to enter into the Feast of Tabernacles you want to think about it a little differently. You don't want to go there naturally – as you are – you want to think about it differently, how you can go there in humility when it comes to relationships.

It's an opportunity to practice humility. Just as we learned about certain things on the Sabbath when we come together and we learn how to apply certain things during the rest of the week – so do we in this. It's a matter of focusing on the needs of others more than ourselves, a willingness to turn the focus away from self, from selfishness to give, to giving, even to the point of sacrificing. So often in the Bible when it talks about this kind of sacrificing, when God talks about fellowship it's sacrificing our own wants because self doesn't like to sacrifice, it'd rather have its own way; do it's own thing; have it's own kind of meal. Eat at the place it wants to eat at. To give, to think about it in a different way is a unique frame of mind that we need to be in – and not be focused on what *I* can get out of the Feast... what *I* can *do* at the Feast. See? If we're not careful, and this can tend to be, it was in times past especially when we were larger and we had some huge Feast sites. Oftentimes the Feast became a matter of what we're going to get to do at the Feast: and it's good to do things at the Feast, it's good to have different activities you can do at the Feast and be together with others at the Feast, but sometimes if you're not careful you can become so focused upon what you're going to get to do at the Feast that others are forgotten: because we're so intent on what *I* can do at the Feast. But if you bring others into that...what you're desiring to do...if others can be brought into that then there comes the giving – see? You can always bring others into the fellowship and this is what this is all about.

Philippians 2, I want to read this again because the most important area of scripture that we focused upon last Sabbath reveals the right kind of spirit that we need at the Feast of Tabernacles and it's right here in Philippians. I'll read these verses to you because these verses capture the essence of that right spirit that we all need to have as we enter into the Feast of Tabernacles, that we need to practice and to live at the Feast in our relationships toward one another. So **Philippians 2:1 - If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit**, and that's what we want to have. We want to have that on the Sabbaths when we come together – when we have that opportunity. I think a lot of us treasure that a whole lot more than we used to, by far, because we recognize what it's like to be whittled down like we have been. And so those who've been around for a long time treasure fellowship in a way that we didn't used to because we had so much of it taken away from us and we recognize there are a lot of people out here, a lot of people who are scattered who don't even have those opportunities. Some of you here today, right here in Columbia, you don't get this every Sabbath, to be together with a group of people, and fellowship like this because you're so far away, many hours away in some cases that people have driven here. And so it makes a big difference when we do have these opportunities – to treasure them, to be thankful for them indeed.

It says...**if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies**, he says, **Fulfill you my joy, that you be likeminded**, and Paul is teaching and giving instruction of the importance of being like-minded, in the same mind and unity and harmony, and a joy that we can have from drawing closer to God, being more at one with God, but notice what he went on to say... **having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind**. Even toward each other, of a right spirit toward one another – **the same love**, and he went on to say, **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory**; because that's when most problems arise. Most conflicts come out of this, as a result of pride, this thing of strife, when there is contention and disagreement, OR it be a matter of vainglory because it's all about self, it's all about "me" and "loving me" and "everybody else should love me too." **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind**, and you can't fake this. If you start applying it, practicing it in the beginning it may seem a little unnatural because giving and sacrifice to give is not a natural thing for us. The natural thing is inward, selfish, it's just natural. To go against that we have to pray about it and ask God for help to love, to give, to have this kind of a mind. **...but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves**. That means their desires, their wants, in other words to give to them. If someone is taking this to the extreme and saying... "well, wouldn't that be an enabler to help them to be selfish?" No, it's the matter of the spirit and attitude. If everyone has this spirit and this attitude then there's going to be more of a willingness in how we come together and it's the attitude each person has then that counts isn't it? Somebody has to come up with the ideas and somebody has to come up with the places, things to do, and so forth and wherever you might be able to have opportunities for fellowship and you have that desire and that's fine. As long as we desire to include all the fellowship, or as many as we can in those opportunities.

Look not every man on his own things, his own desires, his own interests, **but every man also on the things of others**. This is exactly what this means in the Greek language. **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**: because he was not focused on his own interests at any time. It was always on everyone else. That's unique. He never had a focus on his own needs except the only time that scripture really shows that he had more of a focus, but he had total control of that in the sense of a handle on it – and that was at the very end – very end... when he said, "Father if there be any other way take this cup from me. Nevertheless not my will but yours be done." In other words, his desire was he didn't want to have to suffer but he knew he had to for others. He knew he had to go through it and he knew that there was no other way. So those things are written for us so that we can learn from them – the sacrifice that was involved to give to others and how far that went. A powerful, powerful example there that's for us. So he was never focused on his own interests but always on that of others. It's an awesome thing to understand.

Let's turn over to **Romans 12:1** and begin to pick up where we left off last Sabbath. **I implore you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies**, your lives, **a living sacrifice**, what does that mean? Exactly what we're talking about – Jesus Christ did that from the get-go to the end, a living sacrifice until he literally was at the very last, because his mind was focused on the needs of others, the desires of others, the interests of others – not on his own. Because that's what filled his life, the purpose that God had, the purpose he was going to fulfill and accomplish in all of us. The more we yield to God's purpose in our lives and do those things that God has called us to do as far as family, the Church and so forth, the more fulfilled, the more joy we have as Paul said earlier, "fulfil you my joy that you be like minded," and he went on to explain those things.

To the Romans it says, **that you present your bodies**, your lives, **a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service**. And so we are a part of the Church. God has set us apart for

holy use and purpose and the more we yield ourselves to that purpose the happier we are, the more fulfilled we are, the richer fellowship becomes in everything that we share.

Verse 2 - And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, so there's a process we go through whereby the mind begins to change when we come into God's Church, where we actually can begin to think differently – become more at one with God in our minds, in our thinking, more at one with the word – the word of God – as the word of God grows within us. **...be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.** And so to prove something you have to live it, you have to practice it in order to prove it. That's why the examples that Jesus Christ gave – you go back and you read things in the gospels and you read about the oxen, when you go out and prove them, prove His way of life, prove the way of God. And when it talks about proving the oxen if we understand what that means, you go out and you want to put them to work, you want to see how they perform, how well they do. You get a new John Deere tractor or new oxen, the example in the scriptures and the way they prove those things was to go out and put them to work, to see what they could produce – and that's what God wants us to do with His way of life. You start practicing it, doing it, and that's how you prove it. And then after a while you prove it to yourself: this is good. You prove God's way of life and you understand, you learn from the process and so again here, you have to live it, you have to practice it to prove it, **what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.** We must learn to do things in a different way than what comes natural especially in your fellowship together.

For I say, verse 3 -, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, It's a beautiful verse if we understand what it's saying because it's all about fellowship, it's about others in the body and our relationship with them and even in the world. This is a Greek expression here, **to think soberly;** of two words that means, to, in essence to be “moving forward” or “working toward” a sound mind; “working forward” or “moving toward” or forward with a sound mind. And so that's what God wants us to do. It's a matter of how we have to apply it in our own lives. Not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to, but to grow, to learn with a soundness and a balance that God wants us to have in thinking about one another – and it all has to do with how we think about ourselves – whether we lift ourselves up or whether we'll be able to be of that humble spirit in our relationship to others, and it goes on to explain some of these things as we go on.

...according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. So in other words, we're all in the body at different levels of growth and development and calling and the like. A few verses down here it becomes very specific what is needed or required in order to work toward such sound mindedness that God offers us through a process of our minds being transformed and it says, **verse 9 - let love be without dissimulation.** This is a part of that process, of how you're able to work toward, move forward with soundness of mind that we don't have by nature. It's something we have to grow in – this transformation of how we think in our relationships especially. And so it says here, **Let love be without dissimulation.** That means without hypocrisy, in other words it should be sincere, it should be genuine and sometimes you have to practice some of those things for awhile until they do become genuine. Sometimes it may seem a little unnatural or hard. To give is not easy, there are some things sometimes that are hard. But the more you do it, when it comes to fellowship, when it comes to going out of your way to help others, to include others in your fellowship – that can be tough. To go up to people, to talk to them when you don't know what to talk about, in order to include them into your fellowship because you don't know them. You know it's always easier to visit with, to be with people that are a little more

like what we might be, or might have the same interests that we have and so we have something in common, it's just a little easier. But it's harder when someone's of a different personality or a different background or maybe talking to them is kind of like pulling teeth to get a response. You have to keep at it. You can feel a little awkward sometimes in it, but you don't give up, you keep trying. Oh, you might go away for a little breather and then you come back again. We're all different, we're all unique in God's Church, we really are and sometimes you have to work at some of these things a little more than others and I gave a basic example of something, but you know you carry that into every aspect of fellowship; special activities, things that you do together at the Feast. Well, it begins to take on a different light.

... **Abhor that which is evil**; that's a part of the process; especially in our own example. We should abhor anything that might give a wrong example to someone. You know, so much of our lives could be so different in time as we grow in the Church. If we're not focused upon ourselves, when we're thinking and considering the needs of others – what are their needs. We might be more concerned then about how we dress, about what we wear, about what comes out of our mouth, because we're more concerned about not hurting someone. We don't want to cause someone to stumble because this isn't about us. It's about others if you understand what I'm saying. See? And so much has to do with then how we think about others; that we love and we care for and we don't want to see someone stumble, or someone new get hurt by something we might say, or by letting down in some area – whatever it might be. And that's why it doesn't matter what it is; that's why in times past I've talked about moderation in everything we do. That's one of the highlights or one of the ways of judging a lot of things that should help us a great deal if we think about moderation in what we do and how we do it, whether it be in drink, that it be in moderation so we don't cause someone to stumble, so we don't hurt someone else and especially because we don't know their background and what they might be coming out of or what their battles are. And so if our minds are thinking like that, we won't necessarily think about what it is that we want to do, we'll think about others.

Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. That's so important in our relationships with one another, to cleave to that which is good. That should be a hallmark of what we're all about. **Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love**; and so God says this is what you should work at, because this isn't natural either. **Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love**; it's something you have to pray about, it's something you have to work at. It's easy to be kindly affectioned to certain ones. I can tell you right now if this congregation were multiplied 10 times over, to apply these verses becomes more of a challenge. Because there are those that you're able to converse with more easily, in an easier fashion. **Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned to one to another with brotherly love**; and this is talking about Philadelphia... in other words make sure you're applying it, make sure you're even applying the philia toward one another...**in honour preferring one another**; preferring one another... if we don't prefer one another in the Church, to be with one another, we have to examine ourselves and say what's wrong. If someone is called by God; if they're God's children then we should love each other – that should just be a given – that should just be an automatic thing, but so often it isn't and so again, that comes to with proving something. You have to practice certain things in order for it to become a part of your mind; in order to prove it to yourself, in order for it to become a part of a transformation of your mind. It doesn't happen without practice, without prayer, without thinking about it, without trying to apply these principles. You can't just be yourself, you have to go beyond that in fellowship. We can't just go to the Feast in order to do what I'm talking about here... we can't just go to the Feast and do the Feast like we've done it in times past, it's a thing to grow in, to do better. Now if we've been applying those things and we can grow more – yes! As long as we understand the need for growth and the need to build upon these things.

Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; that means not slothful in diligence or earnestness, in other words, you have to put yourself into it. If you let things happen naturally or in their normal course of events, nothing is going to change, nothing will happen differently. To do what I'm talking about here today takes work, it takes sacrifice, it takes forethought when we're talking about fellowship and being able to grow in these areas of fellowship; **not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;** because we serve God – it's His family, see? And we want to make sure that we include the whole family in fellowship. **Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;** that means being consistent, don't let down in these things.

Verse 13 – Distributing to the necessity, kind of interesting word here, it means “partaking in,” **distributing in** means “partaking in,” that's how you distribute....**to the necessity, the need of the saints,** When you understand words and you know some things are translated in awkward fashion, but when you understand the context of something, this is about fellowship. It's about a transformation of mind that can take place in our thinking, in our relationship to God and to one another in the body, a different way of thinking, a different way of growing and maturing spiritually by being able to apply these things and it's about a relationship with God and a relationship with one another. And so this **distributing to,** has to do with partaking in. In other words, we have the choice to partake in what God is blessing us with – a family. God brings us together in a family. He gives us to each other and how we use that then becomes so important; how we apply that becomes so important; **Distributing to,** in other words partaking in **the necessity, the need of the saints;** so we have to think about that, the needs of others, not just ourselves. ...**given to hospitality.** You have to work at that to accomplish that. Given to hospitality – what does that mean? Just exactly what it says. Sometimes you have to go out of your way to plan certain things for others, to do certain things for others, to be hospitable. That means to include someone else in, to bring them in, to bring others in – hospitable, welcoming others into whatever it is you're doing – to invite others in to participate with you, to share with others because you're bringing them into it, you're making sure to your ability to help others. When we used to be 14,000 at a Feast site, you can't bring all 14,000 people together, but you can do your part in trying to bring others in – especially those sometimes that maybe haven't been included in something, to make sure you're looking around. Has someone not been invited? Is someone left behind, because those things can happen – especially the larger you get. You can't go around and talk to everybody and make sure that they are but you strive to do your best and if you see someone by themselves, if you see someone in a certain situation, you try to include them. You have to work at those kinds of things.

Given to hospitality. Whatever it is you strive to do, **given to hospitality.** That's an interesting word too, **given to hospitality,** it comes from the Greek word meaning to entertain strangers. It's an attitude of mind. They're strangers because we don't know them well. How do you get to know them well? You include them in fellowship. That's how you get to know people. **Bless them who persecute you: bless, and curse not.** So this is more inclusive here obviously even in the world around us as we apply different principles. It's an attitude of mind we should have toward all people, sometimes even within the body. There are battles sometimes we have to fight. **Rejoice with them who do rejoice, and weep with them who do weep.** It's like today, kind of an awkward time for me, I have to shift gears. Thursday was a time of weeping – I think of Ecclesiastes – today is a time of rejoicing, and next week it goes back into a bit of a time of weeping. Sorrowing with others who sorrow, feeling for others who hurt and going through what they're going through and empathizing and feeling those things with them. And then in a time like this weekend here because we have a 50th Anniversary. A time to rejoice, a time to enjoy ourselves together in fellowship, but there are all those different times. God gives us in Ecclesiastes

different times for different things and we must throw ourselves into those occasions – to help others, because of the needs of others. That’s how we should think toward one another.

Be of the same mind one toward another. In other words you’re thinking about other people, we’re not just focused upon ourselves, we’re thinking about others and what they might need and what might help them. **Mind not high things,** I don’t like the way this is stated at all because it’s not a good translation, it says... **but condescend to men of low estate.** That’s a sick word in the way it’s used in today’s English and it doesn’t mean that at all here. If we think of what it means to condescend, that’s about the way the world does it. They’re condescending. So this has different translations in different scriptures here but it means ‘to yield’ to those who are humble, to individuals who are already of a humble spirit. Whatever it might be, whatever that might mean in life, and who aren’t lifted up themselves because the tendency is, people who are lifted up... you know who they draw close to? People who are lifted up like to be together. It’s like two lives filled with pride, they kind of pat each other on the back and they’re lifted up more. We feel better about ourselves the more we lift ourselves up. We can be with people who are lifted up “and the rest of them, they’re not quite in the same place as we are”. Sick, sick world. And that’s what it’s talking about here, it’s talking about attitudes of mind toward one another. And brethren, those of you who are new, give yourselves time if you don’t understand some of the things I’m talking about, because human nature is human nature – these things exist in the Church of God as well. Differences comes out, things that take place, given enough time and given a large enough congregation that you are with every Sabbath and have enough activities with you will have to begin to practice more and more what God gives to you that is right and true in relationships. The more you get to know people, the more you see the good points and the bad points and just like it is in any kind of society, people can have horrible prejudices in those kinds of things. So we have to be on guard against that. That’s why it’s talking about some of these things. **Mind not high things,** don’t be lifted up your self in your own mind nor toward others that are lifted up in mind.

I’ve hated when I have seen it in the Church of God in times past; it’s so repulsive to me. I can’t tell you just how repulsive it is. I don’t have the words to describe it, if anyone wants to be lifted up and want to be with others who are lifted up. I have to hold myself back with patience and love, because we have to give each other time. But even within the Church I have seen it over and over again where people who are lifted up, they gravitate to each other who are lifted up because it’s like they stroke each other’s egos. And what about the rest of the body? Well, they’re just not quite where we are yet. They’re not on the same level we are on. That happened in the ministry; that happened in some of the leadership of different congregations and so forth. It’s a sick, sick thing. None of us should be that way. We have to make sure we’re on guard, we truly do, on a constant basis fighting against our own minds, our own spirit, asking God to help to see ourselves and our weaknesses so we can fight against those weaknesses when it comes to our fellowship with each other.

So again here, **Mind not high things, but yield,** a good way of saying this is, **yield to humility. Be not wise in your own conceits.** Because sometimes some people have battles in those. You know we all are different. When I read this I think about people that have had teacheritis in the past... and it says, **Be not wise in your own conceits.** In your own way you see things. So often we have to humble ourselves to learn from others. You can learn a lot from others. We can all learn from each other. That’s the beauty of life... it really is. I don’t know anyone that can’t learn something from someone else, and if we can’t, we rob ourselves. But sometimes because of the way people judge, we judge people, we put them in this peg, in this hole and we can’t really learn from them because well, they don’t have the same education we do, or they don’t have the same kind of job I have and they just wouldn’t

understand and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah... Haughtiness is such a sick thing. So God says; **Be not wise in your own conceits.**

Recompense to no man evil for evil. If something has been said to you, or about you, don't give it back, don't seek to get vengeance, don't seek to have vengeance, on the contrary – pray for them. Pray for them. Whether it's somebody stumbled within the Church and get upset with you, you have to pray for them. If you don't, something's wrong with you and if it's outside the Church, you know, sometimes that can put you to the test. Do you really love them? Do you ask God for help to love them? ...to have the attitude of Stephen... say, "Father forgive..." like Jesus Christ did, "Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." to really believe that. It's one thing to say that and go through the motions of that and you know, the first time you do it, it may not seem natural and you may have to ask God for help to have it, to say I know that's the right attitude to have, but I don't have it. Help me to have it toward this person. And then the more you do it the more it becomes a part of you because you're proving it. You're putting it to the test and after a while the more you do these things, the more it becomes a part of you because it's the mind of God.

Provide things honest in the sight of all men. To be honest. I cannot stand lying. I cannot stand lies. All of us have to grow in that, we truly do, and if you see what's happened in this world and the way people hurt each other because of this one thing alone, so that's why it says **provide things honest in the sight of all people.** That's the way we should strive to be in our lives – to be honest – to be open, to be ourselves. Not to try to paint something, or try to give this facade of something that we're really not. It's hard for us sometimes as human beings just to open up with each other... just to be ourselves. To me there's no more beautiful thing, when someone is enough at peace with themselves that they can be themselves. If they're not having to fight some kind of battles of their past or whatever it is, or we think we have to put on, or put forward some other image that's really not us because we can't open up. And sometimes it just has to do with just being yourself to the point of not trying to protect yourself...not trying to protect yourself in the sense of how others might think about you because you might slip or you might do something that you normally do anyway, that's really you. Just be yourself. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't watch how we speak, if you're tending to use and you're trying to fight those things – language in a certain way, but you understand what I'm talking about – not trying to put out a facade there of something we're not.

Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Recompense no man evil for evil, provide things honest in the sight of all people and if it be possible, as much as lie in you, live peaceably with all people. That's a beautiful verse. **Live peaceably with everyone.** What does that mean to you? **As much as lie within you...** now if you're just relying on yourself, that's not a good thing. Not going to be a whole lot of peace coming out of us if you respond in kind and by your normal human nature. But it's talking about an attitude of mind. In other words you strive to do all these things already listed as much as you can with God's help, praying to God for help. In other words, you have done, you have prayed about, you have gone before God... but the point is, please understand, that sometimes you're going to have the wrong response from others no matter what you do, so do everything you can do within what God has given you: to live a right way toward others. That doesn't mean that everyone's always going to respond to you – not even in the Church. Does that mean you should stop doing it, does it mean you should stop giving, does that mean you should stop trying? No, you keep trying, you strive to **live peaceably with all...as much as lie within you.** And so much is up to the other party, what they're going to do – at times. And sometimes you can't have peace but you have to keep trying when the opportunity is there. I could give a whole sermon on that one there, what that means, there's a lot involved there because there are all kinds of situations that can happen.

Let's turn over to **Hebrews 13** – there's an interesting verse in Hebrews that would be good for us to consider when we're talking about some of these things in the context of fellowship and thinking about the Feast... and really, thinking about all the time with everyone in the Church. It's quite a statement if we understand it, what we're going to be reading here. Paul is wrapping up what he has just written to the Hebrews and he interjects several thoughts and admonitions in this conclusion of his letter to them; and this is one of those admonitions. **Hebrews 13:16 - But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifice God is well pleased.** Now there is a lot lost here by this statement if we don't understand the context of what Paul has been doing and especially some of the things translated into English here. It's hard to get the full thrust of what's really being said by Paul. So it's good that we look a little more closely at it.

This statement, **but to do good:** to do good, if we understand it then, can't come from us. We should know that first of all. That's the first thing we should focus on. It can't come from us, from our normal way of doing things or treating others, because that is based on selfishness – always, always, always. So **to do good** toward others has to come from God, it truly does. It has to come from a relationship with God, praying to God and these attitudes we've already talked about here in Romans we just read and some of the things we covered last week. It has to come through a genuine spirit of humility again, this attitude of humility of spirit – of placing others needs, desires in life ahead of ours. **But to do good and to communicate, don't forget:** in other words, don't forget to do it. Well, what is he talking about here? The word **communicate**, it's a Greek word for 'fellowship'. So, **to do good in fellowship, don't forget to do it.** In other words we can get wrapped up in our own lives and I think of the Feast of Tabernacles especially, we can run off and do our own things after services with a couple of our friends or whatever it might be and again, that's fine to do... please... there are occasions for that, but don't let that be a rule of thumb without thinking about the sermon and the context of the sermon. Don't let that be your whole life; you're just going to do your own thing with your own friends and not think about the rest of the body, not bring them into that fellowship, because we forgot to, because we omitted it, because we didn't think about it, we didn't pray about it, we didn't exercise it, we didn't prove it, we didn't put it to practice. So again, some beautiful statements here.

So it's basically telling us, don't forget to fellowship. But that doesn't just mean talking to someone. Fellowship is not just going up during Sabbath services and saying, "Hi. How are you? How was your week?" And sometimes it involves that. That's where you get started sometimes and you renew certain friendships and so forth, but in this context it means that we practice fellowship above and beyond our normal, selfish ways, that's what it's talking about here: with friends or what we normally would do, with those who are more readily attracted to us because that's easy... that's just pretty much normal: our friends and those we're attracted to, but instead that we seek to include others into the fellowship, our fellowship. In other words seeking out others in order to accomplish what it's telling us here. This is what God is telling us to do here. It's just not talking about going up and talking to people that you normally talk to, that you'd normally get along with, because that's just selfishness. Do you realize that? If you just spend time with, if you just visit with those that you would like to normally be with because of your personality, that you hit it off easier because it's a little more relaxing, there's no pressure because you don't have to do something different. You don't have to practice and apply something that's a little harder for you to do. That which is natural and comes with a natural flow isn't always the best thing, see? Unless it's something that's become a part of you because of what God is moulded and fashioned within you through time. As a whole we don't have that.

So we're being told here – **don't forget to fellowship**, don't do things the way you normally would do it. But again, seeking out others in order to fulfill this and accomplish it. ...**but to do good and to**

communicate, it says, **don't forget**, don't forget to do it; **for with such sacrifices God is well pleased**.

It's a beautiful verse and really something you need to meditate upon and pray about and ask God for help to understand what it's talking about here: because it takes sacrifice to do something different than what we'd normally do it. It really does. It takes sacrifice because you have to do something that isn't as comfortable, isn't as natural, but when you're done and the more you do it – you know what? The more you enjoy it. The more you enjoy the family and what God gives. Because to really get to know others in the family you have to bring them into the fellowship. It's one thing I encourage all the elders to do, and different ones to do in the areas they're in when they have opportunity – is to make sure – strive to get around to see everyone on the Sabbath. Try to include everyone into your fellowship. I feel bad sometimes when I'm working with this system here before services because I've got to have it done, it's got to be set up... after services to get it online, to make sure it's out there for anyone who might have missed it but after that my desire is to make sure that as much as possible try to have some time with everyone. There is not going to be a whole lot of time because of travelling and so forth. Those of you who meet together regularly, you have to be careful though in certain situations because... this area here might not be the same obviously because you're all crammed together in one little place anyway... but you're going to run into each other several times, but the larger the group it becomes more of a challenge. At a Feast it becomes more of a challenge, it truly does. You have to think about and pray about some of those things and think about other individuals to include them in, to bring them into the fellowship and not to let anyone be on the side anywhere as far as not being included in the fellowship some way or another, to make sure everyone's included – especially new people. Those of you who've been around for a long time it puts more on you to draw them in, to bring them in, to make sure that they are included in being a part of it.

So again, the encouragement God gives us over and over again here, especially in this example, **to do good**, doing it God's way, because it's a sacrifice, because it's not natural, because it's not normal – with our fellowship – he says, **don't forget to do it**. Don't forget to do it because it's easy for human nature to forget it and just to do what's easy, what comes more natural. If we did everything with what comes natural, we wouldn't be here. And we need this way of life and it takes a lot of work because everything about this way of life is about family; it's about relationships. And sometimes those things don't hit you in the same plane, in the same level until sometimes some things happen to us in life. And I was thinking of how sometimes tragedies bring those things to my mind more than ever, especially within the Church, certain things that happen sometimes and I think of what's happened down in Texas and the pain involved with all that and I was thinking... if every parent, if every individual could just see everyone else in a congregation and say, you know, next Sabbath you may not be able to show your love to them. You may not be able to give your love to them. Make the most of the time you have. But we don't tend to think that way as human beings, do we?

And I think of when we were at the Blummer's and as we were leaving made some comments to Jake on the way out and it was about driving a motorcycle because of a parents concern about motorcycles and how dangerous they really are and here, a week later... it's a horrible thing. And then I thought about my children and I thought about other parents and their children and then I think about the body and one another – that we have here. That sometimes we can take for granted as a way of life and people who are here with us and yet there are no guarantees in life, you know? There are no guarantees. Time and chance can happen to all people and to realize that's how fleeting physical life is and how much we cherish the time then we have on earth, but we don't tend to think that way, it's hard for us to think that way all the time. We just don't as human beings. It's just so difficult for us to treasure each other, to love each other, to value each other – and yet that's the way we should be in a fellowship... to really

value each other and the opportunities and the times we get to spend with each other. A desire to make sure that no one is never left aside.

If we can look at our own physical family and extend that into a larger family and seek to have the same desires we would for our own physical family that's close together – and make sure that everyone is a part of that family. How much richer with life is that? It's a beautiful thing, it really is and that's what God wants us to have toward one another. And so we have to work with that. God wants us to think about those things and to recognize life and the value of life. It's in our relationships and it's not about selfishness. You will *never* be fulfilled with selfishness. You might have a little fling for a little bit, you might have a little fun for a little bit when you get your way and do certain things, but it's so much richer when it's mixed with sharing. You can take that with you, it lasts longer. But that's something you have to live and practice regularly in your life, to come to understand that, that the richness in life and the enjoyment of life comes from the sharing. It's not by having our own way and doing something ourselves that we look forward to doing and then when it's done it's not as fulfilling. It really isn't. Whatever it might be... It's always more enjoyable when you're able to share it and if you're able to bring more into that sharing then it becomes even richer and more enjoyable, it really does. That's an awesome thing to understand about God's way of life and His family.

Let's turn over to **I John 1** – I think of people in times past in the Church and even present time; but I think of different ones in times past in congregations that sometimes... because of our lives, because of what we're called out of... we're called out of everything imaginable out here. God gives a smattering of everything imaginable and brings us all together in a family and we have a lot of opportunities to learn from that and grow from that. And I think of how so often in times past I saw people who, maybe because of what they came out of or so forth, that sometimes they were left more by themselves, they weren't included in, they weren't brought in and loved and were looked down upon. I think of certain people that have been so looked down upon in the Church in times past and that's what God is telling us in these verses over and over again; that's what we've read a moment ago back in Romans. That we shouldn't be that way, we should strive to fight against that and not have that a part of our being – that we should ever think that toward anyone – truly. But to be of a different mindset – to think differently: **be transformed**, in our thinking **I John 1:1 - That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life**; this isn't just talking about physically, Jesus Christ, because in part this is what John is using: it's much more than that. ...and in their lives because it goes back a lot farther. It's talking about the word of life. Yes, the word of life was made flesh and yes they were able to be with Christ but they're talking about a way of life that was given to them that they were able to handle and that they're still handling and that they want to share with others now. **(For the life was manifested**, that life, the word, the word of God, the mind of God, the being of God, was now manifested to human beings and to them in life, in Jesus Christ, in the very life of Jesus Christ, the very son of God. And so that life was manifested; they were able to see in a person what God was like – more the mind of God because everything Christ lived and did: he said, "The words I speak unto you, they're not even my own, they're the Father's who sent me." And his mind was always about his Father's work, about what God had given him to do, to fulfill – always outward and thinking of others.

(For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, it's not just the physical life that they saw, they saw the life that was lived, they saw the kind of life that God desires that we live, the kind of thinking that goes along with the actions, the speech, the behaviour, the way he acted around other people. That's why the Pharisees criticized him, condemned him for various things. Here's someone who could communicate with anyone. He wasn't above everyone in his attitude, not at all. People who

were looked down upon in society...Jesus Christ could visit with them, one on one or with a group, in a right way, down to earth, but they saw something different in him – those people did. Saw something unique – the way we should be even in our communities, even around other people – doesn't matter who it is. I think of people so often in society and community who are looked down upon and quite candidly I can communicate with them, get along with them far, far better than those I would like to give some expressions that I just can't use up here. Truly, to describe them perfectly the way they are. When people get lifted up about their importance they don't have time for me and I don't have time for them, if you understand what I'm saying. I would far rather be with those who have a humble spirit, those who are more humble because of life, because of maybe some things that have been thrown upon them in life and that they haven't been able to get out of yet, or that they're struggling with in life and some of the struggles they go through that they don't have the kind of haughtiness that others have. I can relate to them. I can understand them. I can share with them far easier. You can't share with someone filled with pride – not even in a physical way. When they're lifted up with pride and haughtiness what is there to share of life? It's pretty tough. And we have to all ask ourselves – can we do those things with one another. Can we do those things in the world around us and never be lifted up by anything?

I love that show on the Discovery Channel when I see it at times, the guy that does the dirtiest jobs in the world, he goes out and gets involved in some pretty stinky, bad things. I think of a lot of people in life who would never, never condescend, they would never lower themselves to doing those jobs. Can you? Well, most of us can because God has called us, He's humbled us to bring us to where we are, but we should be able to. Not to think ourselves too high that we couldn't do some of those kinds of things or whatever it might take or be with someone who's doing it – to help them out, to get in there just like he does. That attitude of getting in there and helping them out – get your hands dirty. Fill your nostrils with some things that don't smell too good, but there are people in this world who look down upon people because of the jobs they have, because of what they do in life. I feel for them because they rob themselves; they don't understand how they're robbing themselves of life – they really do. I would far rather be there than in many other situations – I truly would be.

Anyway, going on: **(For the life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)** because it was the Father. He poured Himself out, His being, into His son and gave him life. The word became flesh. He gave of His mind to His son. Awesome thing. Something that's very difficult for us to even grasp and I'll just tell you right now that we understand it in varying levels within the Church because of where we are spiritually. This is a profound spiritual thing – it truly is.

Verse 3 - That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: It's incredible: it's about fellowship and relationships. The word of God that makes possible right relationships that can last for Eternity because that's the plan of God – to bring us into Elohim, to bring us into His family and this is where we begin to learn it within the Church of God – where people get along with each other for the right reasons, where they love each other, where they desire each other, they prefer one another. They prefer the family, they desire the family, they cherish the family. Because within the family we strive to live by right principles. We strive to get rid of the things that fill up this world: the pride, the haughtiness, the stuck up noses that are up there by a giant lift in the air, like a giant hook that's got a hold of their noses and they're lifting them off the ground. I hate that in the world, and the world is so filled with that. I so hate that in politics. I so hate it in government because it's everywhere out there, the haughtiness and the pride of everyone that knows what's best for *you*. And they don't. Sad. God's getting ready to show them a powerful lesson in all those things –

that they are nothing and they have to come to understand *they are nothing*. And then with that humble attitude God can begin to work with them.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that we/that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And that's what's beautiful about it. We're able to experience something in the Church of God the world can't. With God's spirit dwelling in you and you're brought into a family, you're able to experience things that come from God – within the family and it comes through in fellowship, that binds us closer together, that makes us stronger. There is that which we receive through sermons in a very powerful way that God gives us through His spirit, but there's also that which binds us together that we're able to learn from each other, that we're able to grow in that comes as spiritually as well, living within one another – truly is. That which is brand new, that was just begotten a half an hour ago has life, that can come through them to you, that you can be benefitted from and that you can benefit them. It's a family. It's a body. It's an awesome thing.

So...**truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** Because God's in us. If God dwells in us, we're able to have a fellowship with God through this process as well, not just in prayer. It's in our relationship with one another as well. **Verse 4 - And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.** God wants us to be filled with happiness and fullness of life that comes through this process, that people don't have in the physical world. They don't have this! ...that you're able to receive on a spiritual plane in your relationships, in your understanding, in your fellowship with each other and how you think about each other and that family that's there, that tie.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: so again here, the admonition is that we live these principles, that we live what we've read in Romans and Philippians and all these scriptures we've been going through in these, that we live this way of life. And so it says, **in Him is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and we're not doing the truth:** we don't practice it. And the same thing is true about fellowship. It's something we have to practice, it's not just visiting with each other, there's more involved. I hope you understand what I'm saying. There's more involved if you're working at it, if you're putting more into it. Now some of you that have been around for a long time tend to practice that more, it's more a part of your life but we can always learn and even grow more in that. To make sure that we're bringing in the whole body into the family, that we're doing our part to help in that. **But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us/is cleansing us** as it is in the Greek, **from all sin.** So, it's part of a process and so much of what we learn is in our relationships because that's where we sin as well, within our relationships.

Let's go on to **I Corinthians 10** – I want to carry this a little farther, another step than what we have thus far, in a very powerful way concerning the importance that God places on our fellowship with one another; just taking it another step here if we understand some of the verses we're going to be going through, putting it all together and what it means. Fellowship must be fully done God's way, not our way of what we might normally think as being fellowship. Fellowship is not just spending time together or visiting with an individual because we can tend to do that primarily with those that it's easier to do. So the more we grow, especially the Feast, the more you have to practice this kind of thing, to make sure we put it into practice.

I Corinthians 10:16 - The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, now I hate how that word is used today because of how the world and Protestantism has used it, regarding the word communion, but it's a word that means fellowship, the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? It's a special relationship that physically and spiritually we're able to have with God through Jesus Christ. We understand that. **The bread that we break is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?** And if we understand the whole principle here of what's being taught it is about Jesus Christ, it is about things we understand when we enter into Passover season, when we take the bread and the wine, but especially if we understand - even this word fellowship, because it's more. He is the head of the Church, the Church of God. It is called the body of Christ; we're all a part of the body of Christ and there's a fellowship that we're able to have. That's why when you go into and read the other scriptures when it goes through I Corinthians 11, you know what it talks about and the admonition there about Passover time. It's about our relationships.

Let's notice, just to carry this a little farther because chapter 10, it's not by a fluke that it flows into chapter 11 and it's all about how we enter the Passover, how we keep the Passover and it starts out talking about some fellowship and some of these things continue on because it's how we live our lives and it's about how we act ourselves and how we live ourselves and it's how we act and live toward one another. And that's why it goes on to say **verse 28 of chapter 11 - but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.** And so if we understand, it's about Jesus Christ, it's about what he went through and suffered for us. Yes, yes, yes! But there's an understanding here of what we've been brought into - the Church of God, the body of Christ. Do we understand the importance of our relationships with one another, the fellowship that God has brought us into in a family? It goes on to say in **verse 31 - For if we would judge/discern ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.** All of the things that Paul has been going through here and talking about over and over again has to do with relationships, fellowships and even relationships with Jesus Christ and the body of Christ, the Church of God and it's a very powerful thing if we understand the whole process. It's about fellowship. It's about the Church. It's about a relationship that God gives us within the Church.

Go to **Hebrews 10**. There is that which we're able to experience once a year in a relationship with Jesus Christ and what he did so that there would be a Church, so that there would be a body of Christ and what God has brought us into in that. **Hebrews 10:15** We're kind of breaking into part of a thought here in the flow... it says, **Whereof the holy spirit also is witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;** beautiful. You know the law was far from done away with. God says it's so much so that He's going to write it in our hearts and our minds - His way of life. **And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.** So we understand the whole process of being able to be forgiven of sin through Jesus Christ, the remission of sin, the forgiveness of sin so that God the Father and Jesus Christ will live in us, dwell in us, a fellowship they're able to have with God the Father and Jesus Christ and with the body, with the Church, just like it talked about in I John that we read.

Verse 18 - Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness; and so we're admonished here. This word boldness means 'the freedom', literally in the Greek language it means you have 'the freedom', 'the liberty', the world doesn't. They don't have this freedom to do these things. They can't come before God. They can't be forgiven of their sin until they're brought to repentance, until they're brought to baptism, and have all their sins forgiven, until

they come into the new covenant, until that's there for them. So God says, we're to have an attitude of mind of a freedom and a liberty that God has given to us, and along with that is a boldness that we can have. You can be bold about that, confident in what you do: **to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus**, what does that mean? It means when you pray. That's where you're entering on a spiritual plane. Every time you pray to God, that you have access to the holiest of holies. It's an awesome thing. The high priest was only able to do that once a year; that's why I love these verses; if you go back and you read all the story and you talk about the high priest that came in on the Day of Atonement only to perform service before the ark that was there and the cherubim that were overshadowing the mercy seat and the incense that's thrown and the smoke that that goes up, that sweet smelling incense, the prayers of God's people, the saints. And this is saying we have a liberty and we should have a freedom to understand in our mind and our being that God's given to us and a boldness and a confidence to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus Christ. You're able to do it because you can be forgiven of your sins, that's what it's telling you. You can do it because you can have your sins forgiven. That's why I mention so often that toward the beginning of my prayers, that's what I pray about, the forgiveness of my sins, because in my mind, my thinking is – I want everything to be heard. And if sin has cut me off in some manner or I have something that needs to be taken care of, I want to make sure that's done away with and gone first because I want my petition to be heard very early on before God. That's why I talk so often about asking for forgiveness of sins very early on in prayer, because you want to have that boldness to know indeed with a confidence and that liberty and freedom you do have – because your sins have been forgiven – that indeed you have an audience there. Because sin cuts us off from the flow of God's spirit.

As it goes on to say...**by a new and a living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh**; Something that's alive, something that's spiritual, something that has life in it that's hard as human beings to grasp and comprehend – that life that's there and living within us. I think of some of the questions I'm asked on some of the interviews, "well how do you know that God's told you this, or shown you this?" It's like, "how did he speak to you." How do you tell people about this relationship that you have with God that's in the mind, that's a part of the mind and they think you're nuts anyway, it's like if I could tell you, if I had it in video tape and there was this burning bush – would you believe that one? You know? You think of the mocking and so forth that would have had to been there for ... anybody hear about what Moses did... "yeah, a bush talked to you and it was all fire and it never burnt up"... and Noah and some of the different examples in the Bible and you know people aren't going to believe no matter what, unless God's in it. Nobody's going to believe you until God starts working with them and then they can start believing. Until God starts drawing people or humbling them to bring them to this point, they can't see it. "Father forgive them because they don't know what they're doing." That's how it is. So we can't hold a standard up and expectation of others that they just can't have. They just can't have it toward you. And so this is a new and a living way that we can understand, that we experience.

Someone was asking me before services about something to be given or something new in understanding in part here. We were discussing it and I made a comment that yes, there's more to come, there are some things going to be given at the Feast – on the Last Great Day... To me it's exciting what we're going to be given at the Feast this year. Johnny and I were talking about some of those things on the way over here from St. Louis this morning, driving over here and you know, it's exciting... it's exciting when God gives us more and reveals more to us and we're always learning and always growing more and more. It's an exciting process we go through. It's a new and a living way. It's a powerful thing that God has given to us and a lot of those things contained in the Feast this year – that every Feast has been that way, but more and more as time has gone on – that God's giving us more and

more because of where we are in time. It's an awesome thing that we have here... **By a new and living way, which he has consecrated... through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;** so we recognize there is a relationship we're able to have with God, a fellowship that we're able to have with God, with one another as well.

And having a high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, we believe it, we know it, we know our prayers are heard, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,** why? Because you're repenting. That's what that means. You have a boldness to go before God because you believe what God has to say, that what you have through Jesus Christ and it's an incredible thing to understand. To know that you can go to God and you have this confidence because of what you've been given to believe, to know that when you pray and you ask God first of all to forgive you of our sin, you don't have to carry it around anymore. That's something I had to grow through in time. It took time to come to a point where I realized that when I left the prayer it was gone, that God wasn't going to use it against me. Sometimes people deal with me as a minister that way. They think I'm going to use certain things against them because of what they have done. No, when it's done, it's done. If you haven't repented before God and you haven't changed in that, then yes, there's going to be some things there that are going to affect judgement. But if you've repented, if you're seeking to put things behind you, it's gone, and nothings used against you again. God doesn't work that way and we shouldn't work that way toward each other. Incredible. But we tend to put human ideas and the way people act sometimes on God; that God is that way. It can take a long time to get things straightened up in your mind the way that God really is, sometimes because of what your relationships have been like in life. God isn't like human beings; thank God.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness/freedom/liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; that we can be forgiven of sin; **And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near, with that true heart,** because it's genuine and true before God; because if it isn't then it doesn't mean much... **in full assurance of faith,** confidence, knowing we are forgiven of our sins, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,** because we continually go before God and ask for forgiveness and when we've done it, it's gone, **and our bodies washed with pure water.** This whole thing describes the process of repentance. Much of our going before the throne of God has to do with seeking forgiveness of our sins, asking God to cleanse us and purify our minds and our thinking, to erase garbage out of our mind, and help us to become more at one with Him, that we be in unity with Him, because we're of the same mind. It's not just a matter of receiving the extra power so that we don't have sin in our life. It's a matter of being of the same mind so that we won't sin. That's the desire we should have to grow in.

Verse 23 - **Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;** going back and forth, holding fast, being steadfast, the way of life that God's given to us, **(for he is faithful who promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works:** I think of how this has been taken by some in the Church, what this could mean, how people might read this. When you read something like this in the English then, and it says... **And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:** that could almost come across as being... well how do you provoke someone to love? Well, to good works we can kind of maybe correct them where they're doing things wrong and tell them what they shouldn't be doing wrong and tell them what they should be doing right. Provoke... maybe it means... What does this mean to provoke someone? Provoke! That's a pretty strong word anyway... and maybe sometimes we read some things like this and we don't think it through – what does it mean? So... **And let us consider one another,** beautiful when you start breaking things down and recognizing how things are used – if you go to a Strong's or something like that to see how certain words are used –

it's perhaps much better to be 'understood' by each other; **Let us consider each other**, one another, that's what it means – each other. We've got to think about each other. It's like during the Feast. You've got to think about each other, you've got to think about others throughout the body. How? Well, again, it means 'we should', each of us individually, in other words, it is upon each of us **To strive to live this way toward each other**, toward one another, **in love and good works**. That's what it's about if you understand. It's about what we're striving to do toward them **in love and good works**, in other words, in this manner we are stirred, moved, **provoked to even greater love and to good works** toward others. It's about others. It's not about how you're telling others to do something, that's not what it means. It's by what you're doing that you stir others to the same thing. It's by your example because of what you're doing – that you provoke, that you encourage, that you stir up by what you're doing toward others because you're considering each other, **toward good works**, see? What good works? We talked about some of those, that we could do toward the Feast to make sure we're including others in that and what that means in our fellowship and to love, because they're seeing an example of love.

What a beautiful thing when people are brought into the body. What a beautiful thing when new people are brought along and they see something about a family. I've seen this a lot in the Church in the last year. People coming from different backgrounds and so forth and they're brought in and they have a family, they have mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers. It's an awesome thing. They're included just like family, even more so than what they've experienced physically in the world. We begin to experience that from one another – that you're loved. That we love you, I love you... and that's something we grow in understanding in time – things that people will do toward you, for you in your life and thinking toward you and so forth than what we receive sometimes in our own physical families in life because it's not out there in the world. The world doesn't know how to do it. People have to be called out of the world to learn this, to learn what we have, to give to each other if we live it and apply it toward each other.

That's so much of what's being talked about here, that it means, again, each of us should strive to live this way toward each other – to love each other **in good works**, and including others to whatever we might do, in other words, in this manner we are stirred, moved, **provoked to even greater love and good works** toward each other. And where it says, **and let us consider one another**, the word consider literally means, 'to look upon', to think about them, consider. You have to look around. You have to look around the room at the Feast of Tabernacles, or here or where ever it might be, you have to look around the fellowship sometimes – see? You have to look beyond what we might normally be looking at. And think about, include others, bring others into your thinking – in this case in order to love them, in order to do good works, to do good things toward them. That's what it's talking about here. The Greek word here for **provoke** does mean exactly what it says in the Greek language; 'to incite' – provoke but not in a negative way. How do you do that? This very thing that's a little bit lost here in the translation and the whole sentence unless we understand the whole sentence from Greek into English, but what is the context and the meaning of it... do we understand what's being said here? How do you incite someone? Again, please understand, it's by what you do. People learn from that, people see by your example and if they begin doing the same thing then they grow in that, they learn how to live that same way toward others and it's something that just grows and grows within the body. The more you practice it toward others, the more others start practicing it and they start doing it toward one another and the body just grows and grows and grows and edifies itself in love. That scripture is so beautiful that talks about that in Ephesians 4...and the body edifies itself in love as we grow – those examples we set, others learn from that. If someone is a babe, give them some time, they begin practicing the same things that have been done toward them towards others, towards one another and it's a beautiful thing. It just multiplies, and that's what it's talking about here. It's exactly what it's talking about when it says to consider one another, to think about each other, to look upon each other, to take each other into

account, to make sure no one is being left out of the family. We each have a responsibility in that and the older we are the more responsibility.

This word is kind of interesting: **Let us consider one another to provoke...** the same word, **provoke**. This word becomes even more meaningful and understandable when you know where the word comes from. It's taken from a word that means 'to sharpen alongside' and is a Greek word. It comes from a word that means 'to sharpen alongside'. You have to bring them alongside; you have to bring them along. Have you heard the expression "Iron sharpens Iron"? That is how we do it to each other. It's not by what we tell someone they should do, it's not by preaching at someone, it's not saying, "No, you shouldn't do that, you should be doing this." It's not that kind of thing at all. It's by example. "Iron sharpens Iron." When filled with God's spirit we sharpen each other, we truly do and our fellowship becomes richer, conversations, things we do. Sometimes it's just about the weather, that's fine! We don't always have to think we're talking about religious things, or always about the sermons. When we do and it becomes a natural flow and we're discussing it, that's fine too, that's good! But sometimes we get wrong concepts here. So it's about just sharing and bringing each other into the sharing and sometimes it has to start up in a very basic way.

So to sharpen... I love the word, '**to provoke**' - 'to sharpen alongside'. **Let us consider one another/Lets consider each other to sharpen alongside unto love and good works.** What a beautiful expression.

Verse 24 - And let us consider one another, the next verse after this, **each other to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much more, as you see the day approaching.** That's the scripture I was talking about earlier that hasn't been fully grasped in the context of where it was given, but it has been used in a specific way in the thinking of most people in the Church in times past. Do you know how that was? Some of you who've been around a while? How was that used? What was your understanding of what that means and what that applies to? To come together on the Sabbath day as a whole. Right? It was about the Sabbath. Well, I'm sorry, this isn't just about the Sabbath day. But that was deeply entrenched in us so I had to give some messages over it to help people to understand a starting, a beginning of that, that that's not what this is all about. But it was so entrenched into our thinking that a lot of people had some difficulties with this. And some people couldn't come through the process because they had such difficulty with this. Because how can you meet in your homes alone, how can you listen on the internet and not be together with some of these organized groups out here... how could you do that because you're **forsaking the assembling of ourselves together!** "Shame on you!" was their attitude. And people didn't understand what this means, what it's talking about.

So, some of you don't know how that was used in the past, you don't know what I'm referring to here, but it was basically used in that fashion. **...not forsaking** literally means 'not leaving behind'. It's exactly what I mentioned in last Sabbath's sermon – make sure that no one is left out of the fellowship! ...in fellowshiping together. Make sure we're bringing everyone into the fellowship, that we're accepting and bringing them together in the fellowship, getting to know each other, loving each other, because if we're not then something is wrong. So **not forsaking** literally means 'not leaving behind' again... it's exactly what I was talking about last Sabbath. **...assembling together** simply means 'coming together' or 'gathering together'. So when do you do that? Our biggest opportunity is on the Sabbath, and during the Holy Days, and the Feast, and on occasion; depending on where people are, they have other opportunities for that as well. Any time you are together you have those opportunities.

The word **exhorting** in the Greek literally means ‘to call near, to invite’... ‘to invite, to beseech, to entreat.’ So, who does that? Well, we have to do that if we’re including others in our fellowship – to invite them in, to bring them in. Just because they’re at the Feast, just because they’re at Sabbath services doesn’t mean that you have invited them into your fellowship. That’s what it’s talking about. That’s what this is discussing. Beautiful what is being discussed here.

...not forsaking the assembling, ‘not leaving behind the assembling of ourselves together.’ A coming together, a gathering together. If we understand that, when you have those opportunities... and he was addressing something here that was literally taking place already in the Church. Some weren’t bringing everybody together in the fellowship. Paul had to address this over and over and over again in the Church because it’s been an ongoing problem in the Church through time – because we’re human beings.

I remember the area we were transferred into before the apostasy took place – in Toledo. And I can’t remember the size of the congregation but there was a good size congregation. Maybe 350-400 people that came together but so many cliques. I was dumbfounded by it. There was a huge youth program there of teens; we called it Y.O.U. at that time and I don’t remember exactly the number but I know there was roughly 60 young people that were in some of the youth programs and some of the parents were making comments about, “we’ve got a problem in the youth program – there are too many cliques.” And I didn’t say it at the time because I was brand new in the area and I was going to work with them through time, I just didn’t know the apostasy was coming and what was happening in the congregation already, but it was like, “Duh! It’s because it’s in your congregation with the parents. The parents have set the example. There are cliques in the parents so the children are doing exactly what the parents are doing and they’re the ones that are tending to be together.” They were coming together every Sabbath but they were not practicing what it says here. They were **forsaking the assembling of themselves together**, and people in the Church have thought that because they came together on the Sabbath they were obeying this, **of not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together and so much more in the manner**. No, they didn’t get it. People didn’t get it that what this is talking about is the entire body. It’s the Church and bringing them into *your* fellowship. What is your fellowship? Well, in the cliques in that area, there were certain ones and as soon as services were over they gravitated to each other. You could just see it happening. People would split up in the congregations and their cliques and they weren’t mixing with each other. Oh, let me tell you some of them would not mix! Some of them, if they mixed... it was like fuel and water and a giant match – and none of it went together. They didn’t get along. Feuds and fighting and that was in 6 months and then the apostasy occurred. People thought they were doing what was right by coming together on the Sabbath and they didn’t realize they were actually breaking this instruction from Paul.

...not leaving behind anyone in the congregation is what it’s talking about. When you come together, making sure that everyone is brought into the congregation, the fellowship, because it’s talking about fellowship, **as the manner of some is**, that’s what’s happened in the Church through time – the cliques – people going off in different groups... **but exhorting one another**, how do you do that? You have to spend time with each other. You have to be able to converse with each other, set a right example, bring them into and talk about this way of life... **and so much more as you see the day approaching**. An awesome thing how God is constantly helping us to mature and grow and understand things in a deeper way spiritually of what He has given to us.

Let’s continue on: **I Peter 1:22** – you can go back to this later... **Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth**, so it’s a process that you can see, that you can understand in your life by what you

see happening in your life, **purifying your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit**, because it takes God's spirit to do these things. You have to look to God for the help to do it, **unto unfeigned love of the brethren**, unfeigned... see? In other words it has to be genuine and real. It can't be something fake but must be genuine because it's really coming from inside of us, because we're praying about it, because we're growing closer to God. **an unfeigned love of the brethren**, and this is just the word 'philadelphia' that God wants us to exercise – that kind of love, but it's beyond that because He's showing that it's to be done to all, and that takes more love, but it's reflected in, it's manifested in something we can see that's on a physical plane of philia if you will. And it goes on to making it very clear; **see that you agape/see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently:**

I Peter 3:8 –another verse. So it has to do with agape. **I Peter 3:8 - Finally, be you all of one mind, having compassion one of another**, and this word in the Greek means 'fellow feeling'. It's a feeling toward each other. We have this, a unique fellow feeling, a fellowship, a way that we think toward each other that's unique to us and everybody has to be a part of that. It can't be just a few, it has to be all inclusive in a body. ...**love as brethren**, says here, **be pitiful**, the word means 'be tender hearted'. Be tender hearted toward each other. You know, sometimes it takes more practice, more exercise to be tender hearted toward someone else when maybe something hasn't gone well in the relationship and sometimes we have to think about that and pray about that and ask God for help to be tender hearted towards someone else when otherwise maybe we have a wrong spirit and a wrong judgement toward them. God says, be tender hearted; especially in feeling empathy, just like what it talks about in Ecclesiastes, what we read about earlier, to rejoice with others when they rejoice; to weep with others when they weep. A feeling toward others – that we're so much attuned to each other and in a care for each other that we feel along with whatever they're going through. To be able to rejoice with them when they rejoice, to be able to mourn when they mourn. Anything less than that, then what are we? Who are we? Where is God?

...**be courteous**: word means, 'friendly of mind', in the Greek, 'friendly of mind' toward each other.

Finally **John 15** – I love this because this really wraps the whole thing up when it talks about fellowship – because it's done in a very powerful way. Everything we've been talking about, everything comes down to this – what Jesus Christ gave – the last things he spoke and gave as instruction to the disciples before he died. And so we read through these things during Passover period – these things in John 15, 16, 17 and 18, those things he instructed on that Passover night. And **verse 10** – we'll read just a few of the verses here. It says - **if you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love**; my agape. ...**you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love**. So it's all about God, obedience to God, His love, the love that comes from God through the power of the holy spirit – that God is the source of that love. **These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you**, dwell in you, live in you, that's what he's saying here, that's what that word is, to abide in you, live in you, dwell in you, **that my joy might abide in you** so when you read the words earlier, or other places where it talks about the holy spirit is going to live in you, dwell in you, abide in you, that's this word 'remain' and that's what he's asking, that's what he's saying here. That he wanted his joy, the fullness of life that he was experiencing to be in us, and that comes through God's spirit abiding in, dwelling in, living in us, **and that your joy might be full**. That's what God wants in us and we're able to have that by living this way of life toward each other, by including each other, bringing each other into that fellowship. **This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you**. And how did he love us? It tells us in Ephesians very clearly... he died for us. He sacrificed, he gave himself as a sacrifice – and that's the greatest of love. To sacrifice self, self's desires, selfishness, to sacrifice that – you have to fight against those things because that's the way we are and that's the battle. And so when

you sacrifice that and you give those things up, because you're sacrificing self, that's the greatest of giving, truly is... for the needs and the welfare of others. There's nothing more beautiful, there really isn't. And that's how your joy becomes greater – your fullness of life actually becomes greater that way – you experience more... you know what you experience more of in those times? God. God is able to dwell in you more fully in times like that. He's able to live His life more fully in you – because that's God; that's the mind of God; that's the way of God and the more we can experience that and live that, you're going to have a greater joy and fullness of life, it just multiplies many times over because that's what it's all about.

I think of that so often. It's in the sharing of life – that's what God gives to us – it's a most beautiful thing – sharing of life with each other.

This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Sacrifice. You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. Beautiful. And so that's what he says to us, that's what he says we must do toward one another and there's no greater beauty than that in life – truly... in this physical life. You know, once we're in God's family we don't have to live that way anymore, if you understand what I'm saying, because that's what we are... we are love. God is love. It's a beautiful thing to understand.

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