

We're going to continue on today with the sermon entitled: *Healing the Mind* with this being *Part 2*. We just started the sermon series last week. We barely got started actually. I thought we'd get a lot farther than what we would be as it was the week of the fast and we were headed into Isaiah 58 to discuss fasting. Let's go back and get a little bit of a preview here today. I'm going to go through this rather rapidly to bring us up to Isaiah 58 that talks about fasting so I want to read just a few of these verses.

Isaiah 52:1 - Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; That's about us, it's about the Church, it's about what leads up to the time of God's government coming to this earth when the first great resurrection is going to take place and so we understand it's a process, a putting on of the strength that God gives to us, the 'beautiful garments' meaning, as we go through this whole subject, it's a matter of getting rid of sin, of putting on; as it talks about in the New Testament in so many places, the white garments, that which is/reflects/pictures that which is forgiven of sin, that which has to do with the virgins as it talks about in different places and the blessing of being forgiven of sin and growing in God's way of life.

Verse 8 – Your watchmen shall lift up their voices; with their voices they shall sing together: for they shall see eye to eye, and as we talked about here the importance of being able to be in unity and oneness and in agreement in matters. And we are all a part of this; we're all a part of being the watchmen in that respect, the work of God. It was during Philadelphia, it was during Laodicea to a degree although so much was lost of having the ability to watch. But God began to revive toward the end of that, the last half of that at least, but now He's brought us to a point where we're able more than ever to be 'eye to eye' in what we see, the unity of spirit that God is giving and it's so important as we go farther into this end-time. And then it talks about God bringing back Zion, as it is in the Hebrew language, 'to restore or to return again'.

Verse 9 – Break forth into joy, sing together you waste places, and as we talked about here in context because of where we're focusing at this time, especially on the family and what God is restoring; that it's been laid waste for 6,000 years and what God is restoring in a very powerful way starting with the Church and as we go into a new age what God is going to do during the Millennium, from the very get go. It says, **for the Eternal has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Eternal has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;** and so again, this expression of 'laying His arm bare' is a matter of people being able to see, understanding being given to people of what God is doing. It's a matter of people being able to come to a point in time where they can see what God is doing. The Church has always been blessed with that because of God's calling. God brings us to a point where we can begin to see and understand what God is doing on the earth and through the different eras God has given a certain amount of understanding for people to 'see' what is taking place, what He's doing, what they're to be doing. And so this goes along with that expression there of 'making bare His holy arm' and it says here what's going to take place in time to all the nations. We're at that juncture in time as we go through the last final period here before Jesus Christ returns – that all nations are going to have the ability to 'see' and understand. And it goes on to say here, **and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.** So that's where we are in time. God is bringing the millennial period, the government of God to the earth and everyone's going to have that opportunity.

Chapter 55:1 - Listen everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and you who have no money; come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. So it's that which God gives freely and yet we still have to come to the water. It's just like prayer or studying or anything else. We have to make the effort to come to God, to desire those things that are freely given, that are offered to us, to drink in of them, to eat of what God offers.

Verse 6 - Seek you the Eternal while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: a matter of choice by each individual to draw close to God, especially while He is near, and the whole expression here being a matter of asking the question, "How do you do that?" The following verse says; **Let the wicked forsake his way.** And so we started talking about a context here of the ability to see ourselves and that's something that God has to show us what's in our heart and what's in our mind. The ability to understand and see things on a spiritual plane has everything to do with our ability to see self first because it's a process of being able to see self, of a desire to change and repent before God and then as we do that and go through that process God blesses us to have an ability to see on a spiritual plane in a far greater way. That's how we grow.

It says **draw near to God, let the wicked forsake his way.** Our human nature is wicked and we have to acknowledge that, we have to understand what our nature is like and if you're not yet convicted of that God'll bring you to that. God'll bring you to the time where you're able to see more fully self. He helps us to see self. He will help you to come to see yourself more clearly because you have to be able to do that. You have to be able to understand *your* individual human nature – that it's *far from* righteous. We are not righteous. God is. Jesus Christ is, but we're not. We're able to drink in of righteousness, of God's way of life and therein is the battle back and forth, fighting our human nature, desiring God's way of life, wanting to draw nearer to God.

That's why we read **verse 8** then where it says - **For My thoughts are not your thoughts,** God makes it very clear we don't think like God, the world doesn't think like God, no one has *ever thought* like God. Those in Traditional Christianity? They think they're in agreement with God, they think they love Jesus Christ; they talk about loving Jesus Christ. They don't love Jesus Christ, because when Jesus Christ starts revealing Himself, when God the Father begins drawing someone and revealing Himself the first reaction of human beings is, when people hear about the truth, they don't want it unless God starts calling someone and dragging them and bringing them to the point of being able to see so that they can come to repentance. But human beings...they think they're in agreement with God, they think they love God and God's way of life, but they don't.

And so He says, **My thoughts aren't your thoughts,** and so ever how long *you* have been in the Church – hopefully our thoughts are becoming more at one with God, we're coming into greater agreement with God; but if we stand back a little bit and acknowledge there's a difference here in what we're discussing. Just like Paul discussed, and we're going to get to that in time here, very basic things we have to understand about our own human nature. Our mind, apart from the spirit of God that's in us, that which is the way we are as physical human beings, because the way we function is by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and so we have this battle going on within us where we have to fight against that and choose to fight against that. But as time goes along we grow, we conquer, we overcome and in time hopefully and prayerfully if we're growing our thoughts are going to become more in unity with God. But apart from God's spirit in us, our human nature, our thoughts are far from God's ways and that's where our battle is because those things are based on selfishness.

Going on to **Isaiah 57:14 - And shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up/take away the stumbling block out of the way of My people.** It's exactly what happens when construction begins in building a road or highway. You have to elevate the road, you have to dig the ditches and you use that to build up something higher and pack it down and this is exactly the expression here of **Cast you up, cast you up,** build it up. It's talking about making a highway and I think about the prophecies and those things that talk about what we're to do, what started with John the Baptist, what has gone through with the Church through time, thru 2,000 years and now more than ever God is blessing us to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ, a second coming of Jesus Christ. And we have a job before us of preparing for the Kingdom of God, preparing for the return of Jesus Christ and so much of this has to do with verses like this; of preparing the way, of what our specific work is, of what God is giving to us. And a primary way of doing so much of that is to take the stumbling block out of the way of My people.

One of the things that God is doing is taking away a big stumbling block; how men think toward women, of how women think toward men – because it's a two way street. We have grown a great deal in God's Church. When God draws us out of the world we begin to make changes there, but we have not made the kind of changes that God wants us to make, where He's bringing us to now, and when we go into the Millennium – greater changes have to be made in our thinking toward one another. And that's a kind of freedom and blessings that God is giving to the Church: take away the stumbling block! We've had stumbling block here for 6,000 years in the family – even in the Church of God!

As I go through this subject matter and I think back of *all* the counselling's I've had in the Church that involve family; and all of them involve family as a whole, because that's where it all starts...whether we talk about individual families or the Family of God, the Church of God. How we get along, how we communicate with each other, how we think toward each other - it all stems back toward the concept, the understanding of what God desires to be in family. And so where we are in time right now, to me, is awesomely, immensely exciting because of what He's giving and we're blessed to begin a process of taking the stumbling block out of the way. And how do you do that? Self! Each one of us individually has to address *our* thinking before God; because I'll just tell you very bluntly, very clearly...every one of us has things to address in this! Every one of us! Every one of us has scars that are still there in our minds. That's why we have to have this healing process take place. And the more those scars are healed the better we become, the stronger we become, the more in unity and oneness with God we become to really grasp in a greater way what God wants us to see anyway – the beauty of family! The God Family! ...and *right* relationships. But where does it start? It starts in the human family and so much of that has to do with the thinking of each and every one of us in our own mind and how we think toward one another - starting with the family, the structure of the family.

Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, I can't tell you how this verse applies more right now than any other time and what it means to us spiritually, **and take the stumbling block out of the way of My people.** This has still been a stumbling block because if we could understand, if we had an opportunity to address this subject, in full, in a greater way, time to heal... because healing doesn't take place overnight, it doesn't take place over a few weeks or a few months. But as we begin to focus on this we individually can begin to make more changes, but the fruit of a lot of that isn't going to be seen immediately. It takes time. It takes time in families. Each one that is in a family, that's a part of a family – it takes time, and if we had enough time... It's going to go on into the millennial period, more in ability as far as insight and understanding and instructions that are going to be given; but it starts with the Church because as it starts with us then we can convey this to others and teach others. And that's exactly what we're going to be a part of and be able to do.

What an incredible thing that God is giving at this point in time because His Kingdom is coming. It's the restoration in a very powerful way of what God wanted from the beginning that Adam and Eve couldn't have, that was taken away because of their choice of sin and every human being that went the way of sin from that time forward. And so we've only had partial healing, good in so many respects within the family, but not to the degree God intends for it to be, and so now we're at that juncture in time where a greater stride forward is going to begin to be taken and God's going to bless us mightily in this. We have an opportunity to begin drinking in of this in a very powerful way, begin making changes in our own thinking, begin to be healed in a greater way than we've ever been able to before. I don't care how long you've been in God's Church, you have the opportunity now to be healed in a far greater way than ever before in your understanding toward family. And your desire then for God's Family is going to become stronger! Your ability to see and be in unity with what God says the Family is all about is going to become greater! Your joy and your happiness in that is going to become greater the more you see. It's an awesome process here what we're going through and what we're addressing.

Verse 15 - For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that's of a contrite, as we talked about last Sabbath, the ability to see shame, to be filled with shame because of our own sins, regret, to have a repentant attitude and spirit, that's what contrite means, that's what it engulfs. **...and humble spirit,** humility is so *rare* in this world, and that which we need to capture more so in our lives within the Church – humility! Being of a humble spirit, not lifted up with pride, not lifted up with haughtiness, but of a teachable spirit that God can mould and fashion us. And so it says here, **to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite ones.** The reason it states it this way is because that's the only way they can be revived! That's the only way *I* can; that's the only way *you* can truly be healed, revived spiritually – because it's all about healing of the mind, spiritually. When we're able to grasp hold of in a greater way *this* spirit of humility, and a contrite spirit – then God can mould and fashion us because the reality is when we don't have those things what we're doing is resisting the moulding and fashioning that God desires to do in our life. We fight against God. I hope you understand that about your nature. You wrestle with God. Those things that are given as physical examples in scripture – very much spiritual for us. We do! And God has much patience with us in wrestling with us – truly does – because it's about this battle that's going on inside of us; and so every time we resist... and *do you see* where you resist? *Do you know* when you resist? Because every one of us does. Every one of us listening today resists God, we truly do.

We wrestle with God and God has much patience with us then in helping us in that process of conquering and overcoming; but the more we can draw closer to God through a humble spirit and a contrite spirit because we want to see self... it's just like drawing closer to the Days of Unleavened Bread here. Some of the greater focus we have at this time of year is to examine self, to see where we stand spiritually. That's something we should do all the time, but we *really* focus on it during the Days of Unleavened Bread, during the Passover season when God says, 'prove your own selves, examine yourselves whether you be in the spirit, to what degree you're in the spirit, how close are you to God? How close are you in your relationship with God? Where are you? And a part of that process is to come to understand where we are still fighting and resisting God. Because that's where we need to focus so that we can seek repentance and seek help and ask God for help to be ashamed of certain areas where we still resist and fight. Because that's our human nature; and it's always with you...as long as you're in this body, you're going to have that. It's going to be a part of a battle to one degree or another; there are going to be certain things still in you and the more that becomes refined, the more you come into

unity and oneness with God and agreement with God and the conviction that God is right. The more you come to love God, and love God's ways.

Verse 18 - I have seen his ways, God knows us inside and out and He says, **and will heal him**: thank God! Thank God His desire is to heal us, thank God because He has a desire for a Family. For us to be a part of that Family is a healing process of things we have to learn and things we have to unlearn. **I will lead him also**, and God leads us, but we have the battle then of to what degree do we follow? To what degree do we latch onto and embrace quickly what God gives to us because there are times in our life where we're tried and tested and we don't latch on immediately because we're still resisting, we have certain doubts, or whatever it is we go through in life. So He says, **I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that's a far off, to him that's near, says the Eternal; and I will heal him.** I love these verses. It's about a healing process; because it's about spiritual healing – not physical. This is all about spiritual healing; the healing of the mind.

Let's continue on today with **Isaiah 58** since we wanted to have that bit of a review, again, to see the flow of what God is discussing, what He is revealing through Isaiah that brings us up to Isaiah 58 in the first place – an attitude of mind that we need to have in order to have and receive a healing of the mind in how we think. **Isaiah 58:1 - Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.** Sometimes that's a difficult thing, but that's what our life is all about. Our whole life is one of God revealing to us what needs to be conquered and overcome. Our whole life is about going through trials and it's not about having life easy; it's about battles, it's about fighting, it's about... do we really desire to be different? Do we want to be something different than what we are or do we kind of like what we are? Do we kind of want to hold on to a part of that? Do we want to kind of hold onto a part of society in the world the way the world is? Is there some of that we'd kind of like to take along with us into a new age? Because it's going to get changed drastically, big times, from top to bottom! And so sometimes we have those battles within ourselves and oftentimes then we hear of sins we have, we see things that are brought out in sermons, or there are things that are brought out in sermons that match us or fit us in our thinking and things we've done and sometimes that stings, sometimes that hurts and sometimes we still have a battle and I've known of people who quit God's Church because the attitude of mind was, "I'm just tired of hearing about all my sins." And I think, "Definitely you're in the wrong place if you don't want to hear about sin because that's what it's all about." It's a fight, it's a desire and a choice to fight against what we are because what we are is everything that's against what God is giving to us, what He's offering us. And what is He offering to us? Family, a family relationship; a true and right and meaningful and joyful, powerful family relationship. And really deep down inside if we can be honest with ourselves, that's what everyone wants – we just don't know how to get it, we don't know how to have it. What does the world want? What would they like to have? We'd like to have peace between nations, but we don't know how to have it. We want to have a United Nations, but we can't have it because we're selfish, we don't know how to have peace. That's why Mr. Armstrong's message was so powerful to world leaders, because they picked up and understood that. He didn't quote scriptures. He talked to them on a practical plane about something that they understood. They wanted to have peace, they wanted certain things to go well and right between nations and they understood what he was saying was true – that mankind doesn't know how to have it so does Mr Armstrong have some understanding here that we can glean from. Amazing what took place, what we've lived through.

God says, **lift up your voice like a trumpet, show My people their sins, yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways**, that's the way Israel has always been through times past and in large part, sometimes we're this way too as far as our human nature; **as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God**: candidly that does reflect the Church in a very big way spiritually at what took place in Philadelphia, what took place into Laodicea, what led to what we finally did and what we became – because of how we saw ourselves and we didn't see ourselves for what we really were, we didn't understand the depth of our human nature – what it was really like. If we'd really seen, if we'd really grasped what we were really like we would never have gone the direction we really did. We'd have been watchful and alert and on guard spiritually the whole time! We would have *fought* the *first moment* that we began to see things going astray and going off base. We fell asleep spiritually. **...yet you seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways**, there were ministers that gave sermons about how long you should pray every day, how long you should have bible studies every day and this ritual, the routine of things in life you should go through and so forth – different programs we had in the Church; needed to be a part of those things but what was really in the heart? What was really in the mind? Reflects what we really were. **...yet they seek me daily and delight to know My ways as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God**. But what was in the midst of all this? I came to find out later on that there was a great deal of politics in the Church. Ministers had it, they'd pass it along to members in the Church, the structure of the Church and then it just got fed down through the Church – things that we should have abhorred and we didn't see it, we didn't understand what it was. And so even as a Church that did righteousness, the reality is we did not have it like we should have. That's why Mr. Armstrong had to come back like he did in the early 80's all the way through until he died – seeking to put the Church back on the right track. He cried out very powerfully so. He was seeking to put the Church back on the right track because of what had happened to us. And yet I remember back at those times of how we in the Church felt pretty good about ourselves. We saw problems, we saw some difficulties; people felt different ways toward Mr. Armstrong; there were those who latched onto what he had to say and were very thankful that he was wanting to put the Church back on the track, that was His desire, and there were those of us who wanted to be a part of that; and there were others who didn't, who didn't get it, who didn't want the same thing he had to offer, or what was coming through him. **...they delight to know My ways as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of Me the ordinance of justice; they take delight in approaching to God**.

And so it goes on to ask the question; **to what purpose have we fasted, they say**, in other words the questions being asked by different ones... **Why have we fasted and you didn't see?** Why didn't you answer us, in other words? **To what purpose have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge?** People had fasts, their own individual fasts, prayers, things that weren't answered at times in people's lives and if we'd known what Isaiah was talking about we'd have been able to more deeply see ourselves. **Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, you fast for strife and debate**, in other words, what is the motive for fasting? Why do we do what we do? Is it truly to draw closer to God? If we really are trying to draw closer to God then do we understand the process of what we have to go through in order to draw... "Do you understand?" God's asking, "if you want to draw closer to Me, do you know what you have to do in order to accomplish that?" Repent of sin; that's how you draw closer to God. It's a very basic thing. It's not to just to get something from God, but we came to a point in the Church where that's why we fasted – to get something. The focus wasn't as much on repenting and drawing closer to God, the focus was on something we could get out of this, what we received from it, a crying out to God, a fasting and praying that God give us more

strength, more help, whatever it might be. But to have that means that we have to repent, but we didn't focus on those kinds of things as a whole.

Behold you fast for strife and debate, in other words to get your way, to be heard, to have your way heard, **and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.** In other words, the attitude of mind is here – fasting isn't a tool to be used as though God owes us something; that if you fast then you're going to have the answer you want, you're going to get what you desire of God. Well, what do you desire of God? What is it you want God to give to you? What is it? What battle? What circumstance? So often in life sometimes our own personal prayers get involved with that. We want something from God, and that's fine – there are things we do desire from God. We do desire Him to intervene for us in various matters of life, but that shouldn't be the primary motive; in other words, why a person would fast and go on to another level beyond prayer then and say, "God, this is what I want by my fasting," it's as though, "if I humble myself before You in fasting then you're going to hear my prayer and you'll give me my desire, my answer." I have seen over and over again in God's Church where so often we have fasted and prayed to God about things we want Him to do for us, that's not what's best for us. It's not really the answer. There are things that God allows us to go through in life. I don't care whether it be a matter of finances, a matter of a job; hard trials in life, difficulties we have in life that we've all gone through. You understand what I'm saying? There are things then we desire from God; we want Him to do something for us, to take away the trial. We want Him to take away the hardship. We don't want to have to go through this. Look at the Bible. I look at Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. Look at things that people have had to go through in life to get where they are, in order to be able to serve God in a greater way, in order to be able to learn things about this world. I won't even get through this sermon if I start off in this direction of things each one of us have had to go through in life. If you've been in the Church for a long length of time and you look back at every battle you've ever had...but can you think back to, especially in the early days, of times you have fasted more, prayed more about certain matters and what it was you were fasting about? What was it you were wanting from God? And how often in those fasts was it better that God not take away that trial? ...that God not take away the test of whatever it was you were going through? I remember one of the longest fasts I had was regarding wanting to be delivered from a certain situation, from a minister because of his hardness and what was taking place and this was while I was *in* the ministry – early stages of it – and I wanted relief, and I wanted God to take certain things away and it wasn't until much later on I realized that because of all those things I was going through it made me what I became, what God was making within me because of those things. If God had taken everything away and the path be made easier for me so that I wouldn't have had to experience some of those trials and difficulties and battles then I wouldn't have grown like I did, I wouldn't have learned some of the things I learned. I thank God that I went through those things, but I had to go through some of that in order to come to see it and understand it.

How often we want things to be different than what they are rather than thanking God that He's there for us to take us through it. That's where the thankfulness and the gratitude should so often be, when we're going through various trials and hardships of life; to thank God that we're able to see what we see. The fact that you know that you're at the end-time: the world doesn't know that! What a horrible thing that they're going to be so shocked and abhorred when things hit them but that's a part of the repentance process isn't it. But how much do we know? How much do we turn everything over to God, candidly?

Verse 5 - Is not this the fast that I have chosen? Not just in fasting but prayers and especially in the early stages of our lives, a process we sometimes we have to go through in order to learn that prayer isn't just about self and just about asking God to take away our trials and we don't want this trial, we don't want this hardship...sometimes it's a matter of asking God for the help to be able to deal with the hardship that's there, that we can learn from it what is good and healthy for us spiritually so we can profit from the trial we're going through, not to take all the trials and the hardships away. And so the same thing is true about fasting. **Is not this the fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul?** It's meant to be hard. It's meant to be difficult because it's a time of facing reality. It's a time of humbling ourselves before God and coming to better understand self. In other words, not just a day to go without food and drink because we think that somehow God owes us something – that it's a greater plane of spirituality that somehow that God then will hear us? That's not what it's about. It's about an *attitude of mind* and how/why we're approaching God and how we do it.

...is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, in other words to become physically weak? ...and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Is it a matter of show that we go through this and we're willing to go through this show that somehow that God's going to hear us then because He sees that we're going through this physical routine? ...that that somehow pleases God? Is it because of the show of what we're willing to do and grovel? God wants to see us grovel before Him?! You know, you think about the ash heap; I really don't understand all that, when it talks about Job and what he was doing and he's out there in this ash... ashes? I don't know. He's out there fasting, no food, no water, throw stuff on themselves of dirt and so forth that they sometimes did – as though somehow this pleases God to see people grovel like this? Is that what God desires? No! It's about *attitude*! It's about *why* we do what we do in these areas and to understand what it is that God desires from us. What is it He desires? A meek and a humble spirit, a contrite spirit. It's about our attitude toward God and so the reason for humbling ourselves before God in the sense of going without food and water is not to be seen, is not to go through an exercise that somehow this is what's pleasing to God. It's what it pictures and what God has given to us to be able to see something on a spiritual plane from all that – what it teaches. Just like eating Unleavened Bread on Passover night, but especially during the Days of Unleavened Bread, what it pictures for us that we're to learn from it. It's not the ritual. We got caught up in ritual things so often in the Church – getting rid of the leavening in our homes – it's still hard for some people I think to go through that part; to do it in a more balanced way. We get our vacuum cleaners and we go in and we take all the socks out of the drawer and vacuum around inside there, get underneath the bed – because when's the last time you had lunch under the bed – you might have a crumb under there you know?! We went to extremes in some of that because we made a physical routine and ritual out of something to the point where it began to lose its meaning. God didn't want that. That's not what He wants! It's like what the Jews do in taking things to extremes. It's not about the physical part of it. It's why the physical part was given so we can benefit from it spiritually, and that's the way it is with fasting here.

And so He says, **isn't this the fast that I've chosen?** Yes, you're to afflict your souls and what are you to learn from it? How easy it is, how quick it is that when you go without physical food what you feel like. It's not a good feeling. Well, *you should feel that way spiritually too, to understand* what you're lacking and what you're *missing out* on when you're not drawing close to God every day and eating and partaking of the food that God desires us to have. You become spiritually weak and you won't be able to *grow* like He wants for us to do. And so that's why it says, 'come to the waters, I'm giving it to you freely, but you have to come, you have to do it because you want it.'

He goes on to say, **will you call this a fast, an acceptable day to the Eternal? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? That you are to loosen the bands of wickedness,** It's about attitude and how you think. Why fast? Why pray? Isn't it about drawing closer to God and so much about drawing closer to God is so that you can see yourself? ...and what the very beginning of the Holy Day season pictures? Ties in really well with what we're talking about here. Coming out of sin, the desire to see sin. You've got to see it to come out of it. Prayer so often has to do with; "God, help me to understand what I can learn with what I'm going through right now." If you're having a difficulty with someone else, a trial in life; it doesn't matter what it is – ask God for the help to see what it is you can learn through what you're going through. Not just to take it away. We want everything to be made easier for us. "Oh woe is me, God. I feel so down. I feel so bad. *Let me get my violin out I feel so bad for self.*" Why? Do we not understand what God's given to us? Do we not understand the opportunity we have to change and grow and be healed and draw closer to Him and become stronger spiritually? Because that's what life should be about when we fight this fight. Is life difficult? Do we have tears? Yes. It should be for others too and not just for ourselves.

That you loosen the bands of wickedness, What are those? Get rid of the sins that bind you, that bind others – sometimes praying for others, interceding for others, a desire for others – but it always starts with self. **...to undo the heavy burdens,** the main power you have to undo any heavy burdens is with self. You can have a petition for someone else, your heart can go out to someone else and you can pray for them, but the primary way that change is going to come about is that *you* change self and that you yield yourself to the process. **...to undo the heavy burdens,** means that we have to come to see certain things in our own mind so that we can make the change in relationships or in family or whatever it is. But what is it most often we want in families? We want someone else to change. We see their fault, we see their weakness, we see where they've got to change, where they can't talk this way, they can't do this, they can't do that! Where do we see what we can change?

That's what fasting is about – **to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free,** so how do we have any power in that? The oppressed... who are the oppressed? God wants us to see who it is we're *oppressing*. Who is it you're *oppressing*? Who is it that you're holding down? Who is it that you're making life harder for, more difficult for? Maybe in your judgement and your attitude toward them...is there someone else that you feel badly toward? Is there someone else that you have something against? Why? What is it? I'm talking about things here that are in a spiritual plane that you can only see to the degree of your relationship, whatever it is, with God right now. We're going to see this is varying degrees here today because of where we are spiritually in our ability for our own minds to be individually healed... because every one of us is oppressing someone. Who are you oppressing? Usually it's the one that's closest to you in life and then it branches out from there. Who is it you're oppressing? Do you realize that your selfishness oppresses other people? That's the way we are as human beings. We oppress, we hurt others by things we say because things maybe aren't going our way and the way we'd like them to and so we take out our inconvenience, our frustration on those who are closest to us. Because someone you're not in communication with – they don't know that you're in that attitude. They don't see you. It's those we're around. It's those with whom we're with; those we're close to that we speak a sharp word to, or say something we should regret because we didn't say it in a loving way, we said it in a selfish way. This is what we're to change. This is what God wants us to change – to see self so we can change and become better and do better.

...to let the oppressed go free, it's past, but what a blessing if the ministry had seen this through the 80's in a very powerful way about themselves – every one of us. If we could have seen and understood

this on a spiritual plane ...**to let the oppressed go free**, meaning: Who is it they're oppressing? Who is it we're oppressing in congregations because we're not living God's way of life to the degree we should be or not applying or serving the congregation as *shepherds* rather than sheriffs? See, there's a difference in mentality between sheriffs and shepherds and something I have longed for the Church to see that we're finally coming to a point in time, in a greater way, that God's letting us see that this was throughout the Church. It's individual human nature to be a sheriff, to control, to be controlling, to want to control things around us, to control others. Because if we can control how everyone treats us and treats others then life's going to be better, because it's going our way, it's going my way. If I don't have anything to find fault with anybody else in, and it's all going the way I think it *should go* then life's going to be better for everybody – certainly going better for me. Isn't that the way we are...our human nature; do we understand that about ourselves? And that's what God wants us to change. He doesn't want us to be that way because we hurt ourselves... because we're hurting others. What's it about? Family, relationships, Family of the Church, sometimes individual families... it's all about relationships. Place where we work? It's about a family – see – relationships.

...**let the oppressed to free**. So, who do we oppress sometimes in judgement, in the way we judge things and the way we judge others? Mate? Children? Parent's? Co-workers? On and on it goes...**and that you break every yolk**. So God is letting us know that the focus should be on ourselves, each one of us individually, of what it is we can change: because something you're going to learn in time...you can't change anybody else. But how often we try... How often people try to change other people... People get married and they're going to change each other. Children grow up and we're going to change them to be a certain way. Well, there's discipline, there's certain things we work with there as human beings but everybody has their own personality, their own way of thinking, and the greatest effect you can have on anyone to change is by your example, by changing yourself. It's the best way to bring about change – by example. And example comes as a result of changing self and yielding ourselves to those things that we need to change in our life.

Going on in **verse 7 – Isn't this to distribute your bread to the hungry**, those that are hungry, and for the Church that takes on a great deal of meaning in a very powerful way. And so often the most powerful way, again, of doing that is by example. What you're able to drink in and eat of in God's way of life, the more you're able to change – then you're going to be able to distribute a whole lot more to others because of that. ...**and that you bring the poor that are cast out of your house?** The word 'bring' here means 'to carry, to pull, to bring in' the poor, 'the afflicted, the distressed, those that are brought low, that are cast out,' the word means 'mistreated'; **that are mistreated in your house?** Brings it really close to home then in our lives. God wants us to understand this is where it begins – family. So someone's being mistreated? If we're mistreating someone by poor behaviour, by things we're not doing that we want to bring them back into... I think back at what I mentioned at the Feast last year, "when you see someone by themselves don't let anyone be alone, bring them in." Because if we let someone be alone, we're going to be guilty of mistreating them in the Family, not including them. Why not include everyone? Why not look around and make sure that everyone is being included; make sure that everyone's being loved; making sure that we're loving everyone –striving to do that. That puts a different light on things when you think that way within a family, within a congregation, whatever it is. That can work in the workplace in different ways as well. So it's a matter of how we think, and this is what it's talking about – someone that needs to be brought in, pulled in. So this is the concept or the kind of thinking we need to have toward one another, toward other people, not about ourselves, but about others – thinking about others.

And it goes on to say, **when you see the naked, that you cover them; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?** So again, it's a matter of an outgoing concern for others, a desire to help others – whatever that takes on, the meaning of it. We understand what naked means spiritually, if someone is weak at a particular time in their life – something's going on in their life, a difficulty or whatever it is...that's not a time to lash out at someone, to hurt someone – it's a time to help, it's a time to give encouragement – whatever it might be. If someone's spiritually weak there are different things that people can do sometimes – sometimes it's just a matter of going to your brother alone, and loving them enough to be willing to go to someone – alone. Not talking to someone else about it, not spreading it around, but going to them alone and saying, "This is hard, but I love you and I feel like this is hurting you and I want to bring it out and I hope you won't think ill of me for doing this but I feel if I don't do this then I'm not fulfilling a responsibility and I've got plenty of my own battles and things that I need to fight and..." Whatever! It's an attitude of mind in how you approach someone, how you go to someone else as well.

And so God says here if we'll do these things it's a matter of how we think toward one another, toward family, working on self first and foremost and then when the need is to go to someone else that we do that, that we carry out the responsibility even within family. It's an inconvenient thing. If certain guidance, direction, correction needs to be there that we're willing to do those things too, the things that aren't comfortable.

Then shall your light break forth in the morning, and your health, spiritual healing, that's what it's about, **shall spring forth speedily:** so the more we work on self, the more God can give us spiritual healing to strengthen us, to help us.

I've gone through these things in the past so I don't want to make the whole sermon out of this. There's so much here in Isaiah 58 and it goes on to say, **then shall your light break forth in the morning,** our ability to see – our light, even our example of things that can be reflected in us more fully toward others, our ability to help others more. If people know that you love them, if they know that it's genuine and you even go to them in a difficult time, they're going to be able to more easily receive that. They might have their own battles and so forth but they're going to more easily be able to receive that – if they understand where it's coming from. If it's coming to them in a judgemental way, they're going to feel that too and even if it's true, people still have to work through things. It's a part of a process. He says, **that your health shall spring forth speedily and your righteousness shall go before you; and the Eternal shall be your rearguard.**

Verse 9 - Then shall you call, and the Eternal shall answer; there are petitions we desire to make before God, there is help that we want in going through various trials and we ask for His guidance and direction, perhaps in making decisions we have before us. We want to do something and that what's best for the Church, what's best for others around us if that's how we're thinking. And so in making certain decisions or having God intervene to help us in certain trials... if we'd first examine self, if we first begin to work on self and make the changes that we need to make, then God says, "*Then I'll answer. Then I'll answer you.*" It's like the example of desiring to be forgiven of sin before God and yet you won't forgive someone else. How can we go to God and ask Him for forgiveness of something if we're holding something against someone else and won't forgive them? God says there's a contradiction here and He says, "I won't forgive you if you're not willing to forgive another person." That's why so often in our relationships we have to be very careful how we think toward others because the reality is you can go before God, even if you begin to see certain sins and have certain battles in your

life and you're asking for forgiveness – that God's not going to grant that. In other words what does it mean if He won't forgive you? He won't dwell in you. He won't give you spiritual help in fighting certain battles in your life. If your attitude is wrong toward someone else, the reason being is because there's still sin there. You haven't really repented of what you need to repent of. And so if we have something against someone else we have to repent of that. God wants us to understand and see that... because it goes up here in the very verses we just read if we understand it spiritually. And so if we're forgiving toward others then God'll be forgiving toward us and if we're not forgiving toward others He just won't dwell in us because it's sin to not forgive someone else – to not be forgiving toward others.

God says again here, **verse 9 – then shall you call, and the Eternal shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am.** God's there to comfort us and help us then in the hardest of times – to take us through, to find fullness and a happiness in life in the hardest of times. I think of a lot of you and I think of different ones that have been here from the get go and some of the battles we've been fighting and some of the things we've gone through for so long a period of time. And going through some of those kinds of battles and the hardships involved in those things, but as hard as they were we had one another, we had a Family, we had blessings, we had a focus that God gave us of being able to share it with one another.

If you take away, it goes on to say here... **if you take away from the midst of you the yoke**, so we have to take that away, the burdens, the things we're causing upon others, **the putting forth of the finger**, I love that expression because it's the way we harshly judge others sometimes. We want someone else to change but we don't see where we need to change – just that attitude alone so often needs to be changed because we see so quickly where someone else needs a change and we're not focussing upon ourselves, making sure... You know we all need to change! It's easy to find fault in one another in life and that can't be our focus.

If you take away from the midst of you the yolk, the putting forth of the finger and the speaking of vanity; being lifted up by things and wanting to be lifted up, wanting to receive praise, wanting to receive recognition of others...God says, "That's not how to live life –humble yourself!" Especially with God's way of life, with God's truth and so forth.

Verse 10 - And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness in the noonday: And the Eternal shall be with you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: so it's a process here, the whole thing about being able to be healed spiritually and drawing closer to God is that first and foremost our focus is on changing self, a desire to see self, to see where our thoughts aren't God's thoughts and to repent of those things, **and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: and you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.** Beautiful verses here because that's *exactly* what God has called us to in a very powerful way and especially because of where we are now in getting ready to enter into the millennial period.

Someone sent me another translation of this verse recently, from the Moffatt translation and I thought I'd read that today. It's interesting how it states it here in the Moffatt translation: **your sons**, and it really should say here as well, it shows even here there are certain phrases I'm learning to change and say in a different way because of how things are even stated sometimes in the Bible, but **your sons**, and

it should say, **and your daughters**, to give full understanding here of what it's talking about, **shall build once more the old/ancient ruins, the old foundations you shall raise again. You shall be called the repairer of the ruins, the restorer of wrecked homes.** I like that because it's not about houses, it's about homes, it's about family and every one of us as human beings, we have scars that we carry with us in life that have to do with family and family relationships.

The healing of the mind is a spiritual matter that concerns spiritual growth, something we should desire with all of our being. It's spiritual growth that's reliant upon humility and a true repentant spirit as I've talked about over and over again here: the ability to see things spiritually has everything to do with being able to see self spiritually first. We have to start with self. We have to be able to see self in order to see spiritually. It's a growing process as a part of the healing process. **John 3:1 - There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know**, now, this is a word we're going to be looking at as we go through some of these scriptures in the New Testament, it's a word that means 'to see' and sometimes, and especially in this case with what Nicodemus is saying, there's something he said; 'we see'. "We see something here." Now they saw it in a very shallow way, not spiritually, but the word is used so often for the Church and for us in our growth as something that is able to be done spiritual, in a spiritual plane. The ability to 'see' spiritually and that's what we should all desire with all of our being – to 'see' spiritually, in order to grow spiritually more and more, to see what God is doing, to be in unity with God. And that 'seeing' that God gives is a spiritual matter. And so this is what's being addressed here and this is how it starts here with John.

And so they went to Him and said, **Rabbi, we see/we know**. We see this, **that you're a teacher come from God**. It didn't change their life. It didn't cause them to repent. It didn't cause them to try to learn from Him. Only Nicodemus, it affected Nicodemus' life and the evidence is here that God gave Nicodemus a great deal because of an attitude here and God worked with him. But the rest of the leaders there, they weren't helped. On the contrary, they wanted to see Christ put to death because of the jealousies and envy that was involved. He went on to say, **for no man can do these miracles that He comes from God, it has to be from God**. So we see. It was a very limited ability to see, it was a very physical thing but not how it's used for us when we receive of God's spirit because our 'seeing' is a matter of something that's spiritual. **Then Jesus answered and said unto him, Truly, truly, I say to you; except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God**. So He's showing him here, "You see something but you *don't* get it. You may see something physically, you may understand something a little bit here that you should be able to see in a greater way, but you just don't see it like you should be able to, or you could be able to. There are certain things you can't see Nicodemus." He cannot see the Kingdom of God. So it's quite a corrective thing here that Jesus Christ was saying and what He was giving to Nicodemus and how He talked to Nicodemus because Nicodemus was outright telling Him here, "We see that you're from God." But he didn't 'see' it, he didn't really get it. He didn't understand the significance of this, of what it was all about yet.

Verse 6 – Jesus said, **that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit**. So when we look at that which is strictly born of the flesh, very physical. Nicodemus was born of flesh, very physical. There was nothing spiritual in his life. He could see something here that he was able to acknowledge by that which is intellectual, but he couldn't go beyond that. He couldn't 'see' Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus Christ is letting him know, "You don't see me for who I am. You don't see the Kingdom of God. You don't see me as the Messiah." He didn't say those things to him directly but that's what's being given here. "You don't really see me Nicodemus. You don't see the Kingdom of God. You

don't see My purpose, what I'm doing here, why these miracles are being done. You don't see it Nicodemus because **that which is born of the spirit is spirit.**" And so we understand we're begotten of God's spirit. We can begin to see something on a spiritual plane that others can't. I get a charge out of this when new people come into the Church because you have to learn this so quick, you learn it quickly, early on, not without causing some damage in the beginning. And every one of us has gone this route. We want to share this with everybody because we think others are going to be just as excited as we are about the Sabbath and about the Holy Days because all of a sudden it's so clear to you and you think if you share with them this same thing that's not taught in the Protestant world, that's in the Bible – that they'll be able to see it. All you have to do is go to Leviticus 23. They'll *surely* be able to see that! It talks about the Holy Days there. It doesn't talk about Christmas and Easter and so you think you're going to be able to sit down with someone, relatives and different friends and they're going to be just as excited as you are and you find out they're not. You find out after a while they're really quite perturbed with you and we go through a process there. The world can't see it. They can't understand what you do.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born again. He said, **The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound thereof, but you can't tell,** in other words you can't see where it comes from and where it goes. There are things you can't see, you can't understand; **so is every one who is born of the spirit.** You just can't see it. So, again, it begins with begettal. The world out here, unless their called of God, unless they have this same spirit *they cannot see what you see.* They *cannot* see the Kingdom of God. They cannot see the truths of God. Just like you see the Church, when you come to see it in the Church. There are people out here that at times go through different battles before they finally '*see' the Church,* meaning they come to see the truth of God, where God's Church is. That's something that God has to give; the ability to hear something and say, "I know this is true. I know this is from God." The ability to *see* those things and so people go through things sometimes. Sometimes they bounce around out here because they start learning certain things about the Sabbath and they bounce around to some of the different organizations out there because when you look up Sabbath and Mr. Armstrong all of these different churches come up and so people have to go through different things, if God's drawing them and to what degree God's drawing them, and what they have to go through in order to learn what they have to learn; and sometimes people get bounced around for a little while because of something they have to learn themselves before they can fully see.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, he said, **How can these things be?** How can you be born twice in other words? How can you be born again? And **Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master/ are you a teacher of Israel,** an educated one of God's ways in the Old Testament and you're to be a teacher of others about God, **and you do not see these things/you do not know these things?** So He's saying here, "You have to be born again to 'see' the Kingdom of God." And He's telling him here very powerfully so, "You're a teacher and you don't 'see' these things?" **Truly, truly, I say unto you, We speak that we do know,** that we 'see'. Jesus is saying here...and it's all of us who are begotten of God's spirit...that which we're able to see and communicate with others – it's because of something God gives to us, the ability to see, the power of His holy spirit because of a begettal and so Jesus is talking to them in this vein here of something that even as we read this the only ones that can understand this process of what's being discussed here is those who have God's spirit. Nicodemus can't. You can't sit down with others and tell them what's being said here. They're not going to get it. Oh, they might get it intellectually to a degree, to a point, but they're not going to 'see' it by any measure because they don't see the truth, they don't see the Church, they don't see what's been given to you, they don't know who

you are – one of God’s begotten children. And so He says, **Truly, truly, I say unto you, We speak the things that we do ‘see’,** speaking of that which is spiritual, **and testify that which we have seen; and you receive not our witness.**

If I have told you earthly things, and you don’t believe, how shall you believe, if I show you heavenly things? Or I tell you of those things that are from heaven, from God, you’re not going to be able to see it. The ability to believe, to see spiritually is dependant upon being begotten of God’s holy spirit. It’s a process that begins in us in a very early stage, understanding human nature, how we get in the way, how that we have to fight against pride. We resist God’s spirit, we sin, therein is the battle.

Let’s go on over to **John 12**. Even within the Church, even though we recognize that we have been given the ability to ‘see’ on a spiritual plane, we begin seeing after we come into the Church and we have hands laid upon us – that doesn’t mean we can *always* ‘see’, or that we see *everything* that God places before us because we don’t! We see things in sermons to varying degrees within the Body depending on where we are in our spiritual growth. We are able to see things in varying levels. That’s why so often you can go back and listen to something... you could go back and listen to this sermon a year later and if you continue to yield to God and grow, you’re going to be able to ‘see’ things that you don’t see today. Isn’t that a marvel, how so often things like this happen in our life? It’s a continuing process. The more we can see through growth and again, this is to varying degrees, our ability to see. But so much of that process then has to do with your ability to conquer and overcome and to what degree you’re doing that...to what degree you’re able to see self and enter into that battle – is to the degree that you’re able to ‘see’ on a spiritual plane. The more your able to see and apply what it says in Isaiah 58 about self, and getting rid of the yolk, the burdens, the binding, the things that we’re the cause of, the pointing of the finger and so forth, the more we’re able to get rid of those things and see, the more we can see those things in our self and fight against those things, the more God’ll give to us to ‘see’ on a spiritual plane because that’s where the healing comes in. The more the healing, the more we ‘see’, the more we grow, the closer we draw to God. That is how we become stronger, with more water. Even in a time of drought, we’re going to grow – that’s how God has blessed us. We’ve been in a time of drought for years and God’s blessed us to grow more than any other time in God’s Church, because of where we are in time, not because of who we are, not because of how great we are – because of where we are. We’re blessed to live in *this* time; that God’s giving more at this time.

John 12:23 - And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall on the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. And so He’s showing a process here of something that He was going to have to go through and even that which we have to go through in a Church before we can begin to grow. We have to die. That’s what you picture when you go under the water; the symbolism of baptism that you’re burying the old man/old woman. You’re burying self, putting self under the watery grave and coming up and seeking to walk in newness of life. It started with Jesus Christ and showing what had to take place.

Verse 25 - He who loves his life shall lose it; so I mentioned that a little bit earlier here. If we love certain things about our life, whatever it is we want to hold onto of this world, of our way of life, of how we think that isn’t in agreement and unity with God – not a good thing, but we do that as human beings. **He who loves his life shall lose it; but he who hates,** it means learns, in essence, to ‘love less’. What does that mean? It means you learn to love God’s way more, the things that God offers – you learn to love it more and the more you love what God offers the less you love self, or the things of self, or the

things of this world – the more we love God. Because the more we love God, and the more things that we love of God the more you're going to tend, just by that process, to put God first in all things more and more and more.

He who loves his life shall lose it; but he who hates, in other words, 'learns to' as it is here, 'love less' **his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.** It's a process of how we live. **If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant shall be: and if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say?** I love this because it all goes into chapter 13 and 14 where so many things God gives and reveals about how God's spirit works in us but again here, He says, **Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour:** We're approaching Passover here, the taking of the Passover; these things are being spoken by Christ. He knows what's about to come upon Him. He knows what point in life He's finally come to and He's sharing certain things with the disciples and He's speaking out for their benefit, of that which is given here.

He says, **Father save me from this hour but for this cause I came into this world.** I don't want to have to go through it; I don't want to have to experience this, but this is why I'm here. Do we wrestle with self like that? Do we wrestle with the mind? Is He showing some things that came into His mind that He had to deal with? Very powerfully so in ways we can't even begin to grasp – being in a physical body, knowing what He's about to go through, knowing what it said in Isaiah and other places about what was going to happen to His body – that people wouldn't even *recognize Him* after He went through it! That's what it says back in Isaiah here. If you go on and read those things back in Isaiah it leads up to Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ had to go through. His visage so marred as it talks about in the old King James there, in essence it shows here that because of the beating He took with the cat-o-nine tails and ripping the skin off of His body and all that He went through, that people couldn't recognize Him with all that took place; for who He was. They knew who He was, but it wasn't someone that was able to be recognized. He knew all the prophecies about what He was going to have to go through. It wasn't going to be a quick death by any measure. To understand you're going to have to be put up on a stake and be there for a long period of time in such agony and pain...that was so real in His mind that we can't even comprehend that. God let Him experience that. He understood that because He had such oneness of mind with God and the mind that He had because it was the mind of His Father and those things that God said about Him, that He would go through – that was so real in His mind – far more than we can understand of things we know are going to happen to us in time. That was so strong in His mind that He went through things because of it being so real that when He was praying to God His perspiration had droplets of blood in it – just because of the knowing. It was so powerful in His mind! I can't comprehend that, to have that kind of knowing and that kind of understanding of something that was getting ready to take place, but He did. And so He had this in His mind, but He yielded Himself to God and those things are written for us because He was going to do whatever God gave Him to do because of that mind that He had – the mind of God – the unity with God.

These things are for our sakes, written for us, but yet He went through them and it was very real to Him in a very powerful way. But *always* God was first. And so He says, **My soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.** Powerful! He was given encouragement because it was so real of what He was getting ready to go through and God gave Him that encouragement in a very powerful way.

Verse 29 – The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him. And Jesus answered and said, This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sakes. Isn't that amazing? It was more for them, for their benefit because He was going to do it no matter what; but there was still comfort there...even as what happened later on as you go through the story flow here.

Verse 31 - Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And for Me, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me. (This He said,) It's about all mankind. **This He said signifying what death He should die. The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abides for ever:** in other words the Messiah. So they understood certain things out of the Old Testament to understand that the Messiah was going to live forever. He was going to have eternal life given to Him, going to be able to continue on forever. And he says, **so what do you say about this, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is the Son of man? Then Jesus answered and said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.** It's like if this is about dying and the certain way that He was to die, then how can that happen to the Messiah, and **Then Jesus answered and said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.** Even this, as the disciples heard Jesus Christ speak of certain things, they heard Him, but it never hit them – still never got to them because their ability to see was very limited still. They hadn't received the holy spirit. Jesus Christ was with them, they were able to believe things He gave to them, things He said – to a point. They didn't see it spiritually. They couldn't see it, just like the story with Nicodemus here, they couldn't really fully see it yet until after they had received the holy spirit and then the things that Christ told them finally came to them and they could 'see' it on a spiritual plane.

So they were able to see it, obviously, far greater than others around them, far greater than what you might say as even Nicodemus, but they still didn't get it on a spiritual plane because even when Christ did die, even as certain things were said, they still didn't get it. They could discuss and talk with Him about certain things because they questioned Him but they still didn't get what was getting ready to happen to Him. So it says, **While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they did not believe on Him:** so again here, not speaking of specifically the disciples at this point here, but they were with Him, all these things were recorded by them of things they witnessed.

That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? That expression we talked about earlier back in Isaiah...this is what it's referring back to; it's referring back to the ability to see God, the ability to see the truth. And Jesus Christ is saying here about this prophecy that what He was saying here...**That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Eternal been revealed?** In other words, no one can believe unless God draw them, unless God gives them the ability to see; and the prophesy back there goes on to show that there's coming a time when all nations, when all people are going to be able to see the arm of the Eternal – be able to see the truth and the ways of God

Verse 39 - Therefore they should not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; even the disciples who heard these things didn't see nor understand. There are certain conversations they could have back and forth with Christ but they didn't see and especially those who weren't being used or being drawn by God as the disciples were, and some of the other

followers of Christ. They definitely didn't see, and so they were continually asking questions to try to trip up or to try to find fault. Regarding them it says, **He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart**, not the disciples, not those who were being drawn that were going to be able to see on the Day of Pentecost, but the rest that were around. **He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.** Hope we understand the process here of what it's talking about because this is the process everyone has to go through in order to see. A matter of conversion, it's a matter of change, it's a matter of the way you think, it's a matter of repentance, and so it's a matter of healing.

Over and over again throughout scriptures it talks about this process of conversion, the process of healing. I think of in the very beginning when they asked Peter what should we do and when he talked about repentance and the importance of being converted and the message that went out from very early stages here. I'll just read that first...

Acts 2:38 - Then Peter said unto them, because they asked, they were pricked in their hearts. He says, **repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...** **Acts 3:19** – he went on to say...he added to that; not just repenting and being baptized – and it says, **Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out**, so again, the ability here of having your sins blotted out, **the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord**; that which is given by God's spirit that they already were imbibing of at that point in time. Again, the message about being repentant, as the word means 'to think differently'. Being converted is the change you make in your life; conversion is a process of changing, not staying the same way we are. It's a matter of repenting and then changing. Repentance by itself doesn't mean a thing. You can repent all day long, but unless you change, unless change is taking place in you and your mind becoming more at one with God and you're coming into agreement, until you finally are *fully* conquered. There are things every one of us should be fighting until we've conquered it. There should be things in your life that you see that you're fighting, that you see yourself in active battle right now, that your desire is to continue to fight and to strive to overcome.

Sometimes when we go through sin and we go through battles of our life and things you are dealing with, perhaps feelings and thoughts about someone, it's about our ability to see our self and why you're fighting the battles you are in the first place. Whatever sin it is in life – it doesn't matter what it is, you can lump them all in here – okay? The goal is not to ask God to take the sin away...that's not enough. If God takes something away, takes away whatever it is in your life from you – where would you be if God just takes away the battle, the struggle, the fight? The desire should be as Isaiah talks about, is understanding that you need to become at one with God. The more you agree with God, the more you're at one with God, *convicted* of what is right, to love more what comes from God, to love less what comes from self, like we just read about here a moment ago – that Jesus Christ said that's the battle you're in. The battle is in coming into unity with God, not to take the trial away, not to take the sin away, the hardship away – otherwise what good is it if your mind hasn't changed. If your mind doesn't change, if you don't come into agreement with God, what good is it taking the trial or the sin away – if you understand what I'm saying here? It's a matter of coming into unity with God, that you're so convicted, you're so at one with God that there is no sin.

It's like sometimes people go through various battles and trials. I've used this in times past in sermons because it's a very basic thing in some ways – smoking. It's a very physical thing and yet it can be a very big struggle spiritually for people and you can multiply this many times over then with all kinds of battles

in life, all kinds of pulls in life, anything to do with relationships and so forth. The desire is to come into greater unity with God in that matter – the problem is that we love it more than we love what is true from God. There are certain things there that we still love... smoking, we still love the cigarette, otherwise you wouldn't do it. And you say, "No, I don't..." I've had people argue with me and say, "No, I don't love smoking! I don't love the cigarette!" Yes, you do. Yes, you do! And you have to come to understand that – that you still love it more! Until your mind changes so much so that you loathe it because you realize what it does – it hurts your relationships. Every sin hurts your relationships. I don't care what sin it is in life – it hurts your relationship with others because it affects your mind, it affects how you're able to function around other people and with other people. So, I'm using something, again, very physical, very basic here to teach something that's on a spiritual plane; that it can be applied to everything in your life. The desire is to be in unity with God, to ask God for help to understand *why* we shouldn't do it; *why* it isn't healthy, just for the body alone. Why you don't eat pork... just because God says, "Thou shalt not smoke the weed." They're all the same, it's all a weed; it just grows big in Kentucky and Tennessee and Carolinas and they roll it up and people smoke it. Some are more addictive than others. But it's an addiction that people have and they love it. It's not just an addiction, there's a love that people have for it and a habit that is sometimes formed. But the more you come into unity with God, the more you come to understand why you should hate it, why it hurts.

Do we grasp how it can make others feel? If we understood that if it's on our clothing and we're around someone else that's in the Church how uncomfortable that makes them? How many times has that every happened to you around someone else in God's Church? How uncomfortable have you felt around an individual knowing they're still having that battle, they still have that battle they're fighting with and so it hurts the relationship because you're not fully comfortable with them, you can't be fully open with them because you're fighting something there because they reek of smoke and they don't know that they reek of smoke. And so you've hurt someone else's ability to love you because of a stupid weed. And you multiply this over and over again with every kind of sin in life until you come to hate what it is that hurts relationships, and how you think toward others. And so the more we come to understand something that is displeasing before God – why it's displeasing before God – because it hurts relationships. Until you come into greater unity with God, the more you come into unity and finally you come to a point in time where you realize you may have to battle against certain things, but to where you don't have to battle it anymore because you're so convicted that God is right and you *so hate the other* that you don't do it anymore.

I've known of people, even with that sin, where God took away the desire. How many times I've had people in the Church tell me, "I've prayed about it and the desire was gone." God didn't heal your mind. He had mercy upon you and He took something away, but so often sometimes those same people then have had a battle in judgement toward others to whom God didn't just take it away and they had to continue fighting it. So who is ahead spiritually? Throwing something out here that we shouldn't even have to throw out – speaking like a fool. But in that respect, who is ahead spiritually? The person who became more deeply convicted and went through the battle to where their mind was healed and changed out of conviction with God that God is right and they so came to loathe and hate the other, how it was hurting their relationship with others that they conquered and overcame it? Or the one who didn't have to fight it anymore because it was just taken away? Do you understand what the difference is? And so God has had mercy on a lot of people and a lot of us at different times in our lives by taking certain things away, but that isn't the real answer. The real answer is becoming at one with God – see? God has the power to take things away from us – battles away from us to help us to grow and He has mercy on us at different times to do that and sometimes those things are done to see what we will do

when He intervenes in our life, how we receive that, because sometimes those things then affect our judgement. You know what we tend to do as human beings if we're not careful? We begin to be lifted up by the fact that God intervened to answer a prayer for us and we begin to look down upon someone else who still has a battle in a certain area that we have been blessed that God has taken something away – see? But if you fight and go through a battle, and you conquer it because you come to be at one with God – you know what your attitude will be toward others who go through the same sin? You will have mercy upon them; you will have compassion upon them; you will feel for them; you will be able to pray more with a right heart and a right spirit for them because you know what it's like to go through that, because you know the battle involved, you know the hardship and you're not lifted up with pride thinking you're better than them. See, it's all about attitude of mind coming before God and what a blessing then to become more at one with God and to fight that battle of Isaiah.

I don't care whether it's prayer, fasting – always go back to Isaiah there because it's about self and conquering self and becoming in unity and oneness with God and agreement with God. And the more you become in agreement with God... every time you repent... you know, I wish I had no sin in my life, but I know that as long as I'm in this physical body I'm going to have sin in my life and I loathe, I hate sin! I hate it! But I still have it! I marvel at scriptures from Paul in Romans 8...now I'm not speaking like the Lone Ranger; I hope you know that *you* have it too – see? We have it until the day we die or our change comes from mortal to immortal because we're composed of that which is physical – we have lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the *pride* of life. Pride being the biggie! Idolatry – spiritual idolatry – that's always there and that's why I marvel after over 25 years that Paul cried out, 'O wretched man that I am, who's going to save me from this body of this death.' Of the way I am and what I'm like. And so it's always a battle. And so I loathe sin, I loathe because it hurts relationships, it hurts how you think toward other people and how they think toward you depending on the situations involved. And so it's always a continual battle of fighting against self and becoming more at one with God and agreement with God and the more you become in agreement with God - that's what the battle is about, but you're always fighting, you're always struggling. But I'd far rather be in conviction, agreement with God than God just take it away from me – see?

Acts 28:23 – And when they had appointed him a day, speaking of Paul here, it says, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Here's a situation now where Paul is teaching and...amazing, they didn't have a New Testament and talking here about how that scriptures were being used – those things that...don't even know if they had the book there, or scrolls there, but Paul was very well trained, before he was ever called, with the knowledge and a certain understanding of the scriptures and he was able to discuss those things and then teach the people from those things about what Jesus Christ had given.

Verse 24 - And some believed the things which were spoken, and some did not believe. And when they did not agree among themselves, they departed, it says, after that Paul had spoken these words, so here are the words that were being spoken, The holy spirit did speak well through Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive: incredible here. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. So again here, going back over and again these prophecies out of the Old

Testament; over and over again they're using this thing about healing, it has to do with spiritual healing, it has to do with the mind, it has to do with the ability to see spiritually.

Verse 28 - Be it therefore known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. Over and over again some of the battles that Paul had with different ones and teaching them and talking about those that – even those that were closest by, even amongst the Jews, some of the Jews that were around at different times there. Over and over again he made it very clear here that this is why the truth was going out to the Gentiles, was being offered to all mankind – it's not just about the Jew but rather this process of being able to see spiritually and the ability to hear spiritually and a process of being healed.

Romans 7:14 – this leads us into a part of what Paul was talking about here later on. Over and over again that's why we're going through some of these things here – talking about the ability to see, why it's been closed off to some, why God offered it to others and what we in the Church are able to receive – what God has given to us. It's a process, and it's a process of conversion. It starts with the ability to see our true nature, see what we are so that we can change and God giving His ability to see spiritually. **7:14** – exactly what I was talking about a moment ago. Says, **For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.** So this is something we 'see', we can see this spiritually... that the law is spiritual. God gives us the ability to do that. We learn that very early on in the Church. We begin to understand the words of Jesus Christ when He talked about those things very early on when it's recorded there in Matthew about what sin really is – that it's a matter of things in our heart and mind, not just something physical; it's something that is spiritual – that you can be guilty of murder because of what's in your heart toward another person - not just because of the physical acts alone. Adultery – just by what's in your heart. So over and over again those things that Christ gave, so we come to understand that the law is spiritual.

It says **but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I do not allow, interesting language here of how he states this, and that which I would want to do, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.** So wherever we are in our growth, there should be things that you understand that you're battling. I don't care where you are, because if you're not battling something then something is wrong. If you're not battling something about self – something's wrong – see? We can continue throughout our spiritual life to make change and growth and draw closer to God and candidly, all these things as a whole are going to smack continually over and over again the trunk of the tree – it's going to go right back to relationships – over and over and over again – relationships with others. In other words there is that which is within us of where we see, where we are spiritually at a moment in time and there are things that we don't want to repeat; certain things that we've done in the past, certain mistakes, certain ways we've said something to someone. How often have you said something; and I hope this happens regularly to you that you moan inside after you've done it? Why? That which I don't want to do, I do. That which I *don't* want to do... back and forth it goes and it's what Paul is talking about here. He says, **I then do that which I don't want to do; I consent unto the law that it's good.** You realize that if you're not having these battles and thinking this way that something's wrong in your mind – spiritually? If you're not having the shame or the twinge of conscience or the guilt that comes into you and if we don't see things that we're doing wrong in relationships and things we say sometimes to people, or how we treat someone...if we don't understand there's a battle going on and we're just living life frivolously, without seeing things in self that need to be changed, we're missing the mark – we truly are spiritually. There's always that which must be worked on. Every one of us have changes to make in relationships. There's not a one of us that's perfect by any measure. And if we're not having problems with

relationships it's because we must be somewhere up in the mountains in a remote area away from everybody else...

If I then do that which I don't want to do, isn't that the way our life is? If your life isn't this way – something is wrong with you! That's what the message is here! The ability to see, spiritually, begins with the ability to see what has to be changed here and our desire to enter into the battle. And the more we *fight* that battle, the more God will give us to 'see' spiritually in life from Him, of the truth. **If then I do that which I don't want to do, I consent to the law that it's good.** That's what you do every time you go through this because you see. Every time...because when you have the twinge in conscience – what are you saying? God's right – I'm wrong! If you're not having this go on then something's wrong – see? That's the point. It should happen in your life day by day because that's where repentance comes from, that's where repentance is fuelled. The ability to repent before God is the ability to see self where you agree that the law is right and that you're wrong.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing. I love these verses. They tell us exactly what the battles are, how we think, something that we go through day by day that should be very normal and very natural to us – that's unique to us and not to the world. Why? Because we want to change. We agree that God's word is right, God's laws are right, and that we're far from Him and we want to draw closer to Him, to become more at one with Him. **For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing.** That's a conviction, and we're not always convicted of that. There's still things in our life we think that are good, hence we haven't conquered and overcome certain areas of our life yet. It's like the smoking, we still like it, it's good, we like the taste of it, whatever it is – we like the drawing to it, the addiction.

I'm just using that as an example of something that if we can see something physical like that, multiply that many times over into many things in your life, because that's just the tip of the iceberg. It's a very simple small physical thing in so many ways and yet it's not when you're fighting it. Relationships become a whole lot harder than something physical like that – a whole lot more difficult to see and understand. Why? Because you live through life and there's just things you do by habit that you've done by habit all your life in how you treat other people, in how you talk to other people and sometimes you just don't see how it hurts others; and until we come to see how it hurts someone else, how our comment, how our reaction, how our response hurts someone... So we always have a battle to change and conquer and overcome.

Paul says **In my flesh dwells no good thing; for to will is present with me;** in other words there is that which I choose to do and want to do. Isn't that the way that all of us...especially shortly after you've already sinned. There's that which we choose to do, we want to do, we want to do what's right, **but how to perform that which is good I don't find.** That's what he's saying here...in other words in self. You have to continually cry out to God for help every day, for help to have the strength, to have the mindset, to have the power, the closeness to Him to see and to repent and to make things right, to be willing to quickly say, "I'm sorry" to someone else. It's a very hard thing for people to say, "I'm sorry, I'm wrong." How hard is that for you? ...to say, "I'm sorry." How quick do you do it when you've said something to someone that hurts someone else? How quickly do you say, how quickly do you get a hold of your attitude...sometimes it takes a while. See, it's not always instantaneous is it?

For the good that I would like to do, I do it not/I don't do it: but the evil which I do not want to do, that I do. How often evil comes out of our mouth, things we say to someone else that hurts, that cuts.

And if you don't think that's evil – well, then there's things you just don't see – yet, that you need to come to see about self, about some of the bands and some of the yolk you're putting on others and some of the hardship you're putting on others and the confinement in their life and how you're hurting their life and the relationship and the confining that relationship; because all good relationships come out of being made free. All good relationships come out of being a part of being freed, of freeing others, by how you treat them, the taking away of those shackles and those burdens and those things that come out of self that hurt relationships. And so the more you're able to get rid of those things, the more joy you're able to have in your life in a relationship with other people. People hurt themselves horribly in life in marriages, in relationships with children, with parents – over and over again because of things that come out of the mouth, that come out of the mind. Because what comes out of the mouth is what's coming out of the mind and how we think that needs to be changed, needs to be repented of. And the more you can get rid of those, the stronger the relationship becomes, the more you're at one with each other in relationships, the more you'll love each other, the more you'll care for each other.

We're going to stop there today. I want to go back to this and continue on from here. But again brethren, we're talking about these things in a vein of being healed spiritually. Your ability to be healed spiritually has everything to do with starting with self, with seeing self. The more you're able to see self, the more you're able to begin to see things that are on a spiritual plane and God uses that as a process of healing from the point of seeing self, conquering and overcoming it, to being able to see things on a spiritual plane. It's a healing process and God wants to give that healing to all of us.

With that we'll stop there today. And I hope brethren we understand. As we go through this series there's really a need to go back and pray about these things – not just to listen to them, but to go back and pray about them, to be able to hear what's being said and to be able to see how it applies to your life and ask God for the help to be able to see what needs to change in your life to become more at one with Him so you can be spiritually healed and so that you can see more spiritually. Because the more we see more spiritually, the stronger the Church is.

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