

Today we're going to continue with the sermon series *The Way of Peace*. This is *Part 3*. As was stated last Sabbath this is really a *profound* sermon series as God is beginning to reveal new and deeper understanding to us and we are nearing the time of entering the Millennial period that has been prophesied for so long now. This series that we're going through right now compliments in a very powerful way what God is giving us at the Feast, so it leads up to things that are going to be given to us with deeper understanding so that we can even appreciate what we're covering now even more so at that time.

So again, this is kind of preparing us for some of that and I marvel sometimes at how God inspires sermons, when they're given and so forth and you see a pattern of things that take place because He does the moulding and fashioning and when you begin to see how they fit together, how they flow together, it's an awesome thing. It's just like how the sequence of the next four truths that are being given to us. There's a sequence in which they'll be given at the Feast and a sequence by which God has inspired them to be numbered as well. But in the new booklet being written, it starts out a little differently and we're going to be discussing... so if you count 1-2-3-4, we're going to be first be discussing 2 and 3 in the booklet and then 1 later on because of writing and the sequence of how some of those things are done. So there's a purpose in both being done that way. But I find it immensely inspiring how God inspires such things like that and why it's being done a certain way at the Feast and why it's being done a certain way in a publication. I'm just very inspired by what God's giving to us.

Last Sabbath we had just finished reading some verses in **Ephesians 4:3** that stated - **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace**; and talking about that how that endeavouring has to do with work and effort we put into what this is talking about here. Endeavouring; it's a Greek word that means exactly what it says. We have to *endeavour*, we have to *work at*, we have to put *effort into* keeping *unity* in God's way of life in the Church, especially within the Church because this is written to the Church, this is to those who are begotten of God's spirit. So when we receive God's spirit, His desire for us within the Church is to *work at unity in the Church!* And that is *an attitude then of being at one with God*, a desire... (And this is very powerful when you see it in a greater spiritual way, especially concerning what God's giving us at the Feast); it is so important to grow in oneness and unity with God, to be at one with God.

It's not a small thing in the book of Revelation when God says, '*Do not add TO... and do not take FROM,*¹ what He has given; because it's so important that we do things *exactly* the way God says because it's the perfect, right, just, absolute way of life to live. There is no other way. And so if we bring something in, or we leave something out, it's like telling a story but not telling the entire story to someone about a matter which ends up being the same as lying because you maybe are trying to deceive or withhold information so as not to have all the truth in front. And that's as bad as adding to it in that case, if it's not the entirety of what is needed for judgement, for decisions, or for a relationship. Again, that's why God tells us then there is only one way of life – Jerusalem, the way of peace. There is only one way of peace!

¹ Revelation 22:18-19

I was thinking about that this morning walking along the beautiful river there in Spokane where the waters come down over that rock. It's absolutely beautiful down through there in different seasons of the year and with different amounts of water – it's constantly changing. You think of the marvel of God's creation and thinking about some of this here, thinking about the way of peace; the *product*, the *end result* of agape. Agape – God's love in action; it produces peace. It's a way that God desires so much for His Family and we have to go through so much in this human life to learn the value of it, to appreciate it, to grasp the significance of it all and how God has worked *so long* to give us Jerusalem (not the city, the way), the way of peace and what it means. It's an awesome thing.

We need to grasp that more fully, we need to embrace that more fully and to understand we are a Family and God brings us together as a Family and He expects our fellowship to be that of a Family in unity of spirit. That's what He's saying, **endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond**, that which binds us together, **of peace**, a way of life to be lived. *And we fail miserably at that sometimes* because we're human, because we're selfish. People who don't get along with each other! And you are unique; many of you are unique because you haven't been around very long yet. 1 year or less, 2 years or less, 3 years or less? And the longer people are together with each other and the more opportunities they have for being able to be together and in fellowship, you find in time that there are differences in personalities, there are things that come up in conversations; and sometimes then we begin to battle with differences in personalities. Whereas when we're all new and we don't know each other very well it's easier to get along.

It's like two people in life who meet each other; a man and a woman, and this is repeated billions of times on the earth...and they think they know each other. They think and believe that they love each other and hopefully that carries through. Sadly it doesn't. Because dating that leads up to marriage – you get to know an individual depending upon the time factor involved, depending upon the openness of the parties involved and sometimes because you don't live with someone (sadly in the world today it's becoming more of the norm to do that before marriage); if you're not constantly with someone you really don't know them in a lot of ways, in the things that make for a relationship that reveals whether or not you're willing to work at it or whether you're going to be selfish. I hope that to some that makes sense; to some that doesn't make any sense probably. It depends on what you've lived in your life.

And then people get married and they begin to realize within the first year of marriage (and this is pretty universal), you get to see things in each other that you didn't see before; and they see things in *you* that they never saw before...whether you close that toilet lid, or not. How you brush your teeth and where you put things when you're through and how you clean up around the sink after you or whether you don't; and whether the mirror is just filled with white when you're done brushing your teeth. Little things like that... and whether you bother to clean it off. Little things like that which after a few weeks can begin to bother some people and if you have two people that get the mirror dirty and they don't care, then you can work with that I guess. 😊

But with relationships; you have to work at them don't you? And what is unique in God's Church? He brings us, He calls people of all backgrounds and that's the way the world is. We all have different backgrounds, different kinds of personalities; and God calls and brings them together and says, "This is your Family. It's *My* Family...and it's your Family." And how are you going to treat God's Family. If *only* we could keep that in the forefront of our mind always in everything we say, do and think about each other in the Body. But we don't, mainly because of selfishness, and the inability to forgive. The longer some people have been around, the *harder* it is to forgive and put the past in the past and let people grow, let people mature, let people change – give them that benefit as you hope they would give to you.

But sometimes we don't see ourselves the way we need to. And so just like in the matter of marriage, if both work at the relationship in the beginning it grows and it matures and it becomes something beautiful through time. Those who don't – it becomes something ugly quickly and it only gets uglier. It takes two. So *one* can live this way of life and live it toward another and life will be much better but that doesn't guarantee the response and the actions of the other...especially in the environment of the Church.

What an incredible verse and we haven't even gotten started; it says a lot doesn't it? **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit**, and a oneness that's there of a way of life. And if we live that it will produce what God wants produced in our life – peace, peace, peace! *Real peace! True Peace! Not a false kind of peace when things go your way like nations do.* We go and conquer someone; we're going to give them peace! Our idea of what peace is. You do it our way and you will have peace. And that's the way a lot of marriages are. You do it *my way*, usually coming from the husband, and we'll have peace. It's sad the way this world is, it really is. It's pathetic! It's sick! And thank God we're almost to a point in time where the truth is going to be able to go all over this earth and people are going to be able to be fed week by week, the truth, in one way, and there is only going to be one government and one Church and all the massive confusion that's out here in Islam, in Christianity, in Judaism... it's going to be cleared up and the truth is all that's going to be left. And people will have to make choices through time as to what they're going to do and it's going to be a whole lot easier to conform to the pressure, the environment at that time, to do what is right even though it might not be their nature and will to do so necessarily.

Incredible here what God is saying in one verse that's so powerful and so incredible if you really grasp and understand what He's saying.

Let's continue on with Galatians now. **Galatians 5:13 - for brethren, you have been called unto liberty**; it's a word that just means freedom. Liberty, a freedom, a unique freedom. I think of a freedom that God has given us through a truth that to me is awesomely beautiful, that goes back to the Garden of Eden and goes back to Adam and Eve, a truth of a freedom that God has given in the Church even more so in a very powerful way to women. There's been a horrible abuse through time just because of the differences in strength, physical stature and so forth; I'm talking on a physical plane of a man and a woman and how men have thought toward women; and because of lust, and because of greed and other things that are out there in how men think. God is blessing us more and more to bring those things into unity and oneness with God, to bring things into subjection to law, to order, to what is right and He's giving us a freedom of understanding, if we'll receive it and embrace it, that is beautiful, that produces peace; God's kind of peace. It's an awesome thing.

You have been called to freedom, to liberty – only do not use your liberty/freedom for an occasion, in other words an opportunity, **to the flesh**. And so Paul is going through here and talking about certain things that we've been given; but we have to be careful that we don't misuse what God has given to us; because with selfishness it's still easy to misuse what God has given to us.

I'll tell you what, the spirit world is really stirred up right now and when we get through the Feast you'll understand why even more so. And I might just add right here, right now, that it'd be very wise for everyone, expedient for you above all times that we're living right now, that you be very close to God because that is the only way to fight this battle because that being is stirred up now. He's going to be a lot more stirred up starting after the Feast. He already is now, but starting after the Feast he's going to be far more stirred up in this world. We live in some horrifying times and there is that which he hates

above everything else and that's you, because you're vulnerable. God isn't. Jesus Christ isn't; but we are. And so you need to take that to heart and understand why some things are happening out there right now in people's lives in an intense way, because that being is stirred up in an awesomely powerful way and it's going to get worse.

So you need to ever be close to God in prayer. You need to be close to God in spirit and to be fighting the battles against sin and repenting constantly; striving to see yourself, striving to see your nature, asking God to help you to conquer and overcome and to grow and to drink in the kinds of sermons He's blessing us right now to be able to live, to be able to have in our lives. Because there are some big changes that need to be made in a lot of people's lives in a greater way.

We're at a point in time where we're at a plateau and God desires that we jump ahead in growth. He's offering us greater growth. And especially those who've been around for a long time; there are some of you that are backsliding. I don't like seeing it. Some of you in the *ministry* are backsliding and I don't like to see it. You're hurting yourself and you're hurting the Church by not doing your job and your responsibility toward God in a relationship with God. And if you don't yield yourself to that process you aren't just hurting yourself, you're hurting others as well. And I'm not talking about any isolated case or cases, I'm talking about a bombardment that's taking place; and sometimes we don't recognize it for the spirit world that's out there. You're no match for it! You are no match for a spirit world that exists out there! That's why I so often read what I do in 1 John. Do you know the verse? Is it in your mind? Is it in your thinking? ...because it needs to be. I'll just quote it to you here again...

1 John 4:4 - You are of God little children; that's your strength, that's your life, that's your power - because He is your petra. It's not some place that people go to at the end-time to be protected physically from the rest of the world. That's as bad as people being sucked up into heaven in a thing called a rapture and they're up there watching everybody else suffer for seven years down below. That's their concept! And we had a bit of that concept at one time until God helped us to understand that's not true; that all of us were going to be somehow scooped up and taken over to Petra in the land of Jordan, and we were going to live there for 3½ years and we weren't going to have to suffer with the rest of the world. Well, that's not good and that isn't God's spirit and that isn't God's will for us. We're going to go through with others in the world around us. We're not going to be separated from the suffering.

God is your strength; He is your high tower, He is your rock. That's what the Old Testament talks about – that's Yahweh Elohim... your rock and your high tower and your fortress and your strength and your life.² You are *no match* for your own *nature* let alone the nature of a being that's out here who has spirit power to influence in the mind. Okay? So the only way that we have strength is because of God's love, God's mercy, the grace we're given through Jesus Christ, the blessing of being able to be forgiven of sin. **You are of God little children and have overcome them:** that's what God has granted us; it's absolute if we'll yield to the process - to overcome this world, to overcome ourselves, to overcome the powers that be that are against us.

...because greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world. Who is in you? It's God the Father and Jesus Christ – both. God will dwell in us and we can dwell in God. And that's why it's so important to continually *fight* against our own nature and not sin because then we get cut off from God. We don't have a whole lot of time in front of us; and what a horrible time to finally be conquered because we let

² Psalm 18:1-3/Psalm 59:9/Psalm 144:1-2

down, because we backslide, because we let down spiritually and we're not stirred up and we're not focused like we should be and we're not bringing our stinking rotten mouth into *check* in things we say about others and how we talk and how we think toward others and how we respect one another in the Body.

God Almighty wants us to love each other in the Body! *What's WRONG with anyone if you don't love everyone in the Body? You're saying, "I don't love YOU God!" That's what you're saying! If someone doesn't love someone else who is a child of God something is distorted and wrong with the mind! And so I'm speaking to all of us! This is not a time to play games...of all times! This is not a time to let down...of all times! This is a time to be stirred up! I'M STIRRED UP! I'M EXCITED BY WHAT GOD IS GIVING TO US AND I WANT YOU TO BE EXCITED BECAUSE GOD WANTS YOU TO BE EXCITED about what we're going to be given at the Feast and right now in this sermon about PEACE! He wants you to be INSPIRED by it, to be MOVED by it, to be CONVICTED of it, to WANT IT, and to do what is required to bring it to pass! To love one another. 'This commandment I give to you...' over and over and over again in scripture, 'that you love one another as I have loved you.'*³

Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice. He wasn't selfish. He didn't get *His feelings hurt* because somebody said something or did something to someone else, or someone you love...or to you, didn't take offence, didn't revile back, didn't talk back, didn't want to *get even* with someone else because they felt that they were wronged by someone else. I'll tell you what; some of you out there *need to get your act together spiritually!* I don't like to speak like this but *I have to, I need to* because I'm pleading with some of you. I want you to come through this! I want you to be there! Don't think you have it made, whoever you are! Because sometimes that's kind of how we act. What sin are you battling with? What sin are you yielding to? What sins are you giving into? ...and *especially* in your relationship with one another in the Body of Christ. Do we not grasp and comprehend if we have something against someone else in the Body we have cut ourselves off from God and we don't have a relationship with Him and He will not hear our prayers?

ELDERS?! Do you understand? There is a GREATER responsibility upon you and you've been placed where you are BY GOD ALMIGHTY to be an EXAMPLE in the Church! And if you carry around bad feelings towards others and you have an attitude toward others and you don't love others and it's very obvious by your countenance that you're having a battle toward others and you don't respect one another; not even amongst yourselves IN THE MINISTRY? I understand more now why Mr. Armstrong talked the way he did. THERE IS MORE EXPECTED OF YOU in the ministry! There is no excuse not to love each other. Some of you don't respect each other in the ministry, you don't respect who's over you! You don't respect some of the senior elders! You don't respect the evangelists! And if you don't you're sinning so great it's almost incomprehensible how much you're sinning!

I'm sorry, but I *hope* this moves some of you to repentance and change. Because I'll be real candid with you; if you don't I can't use you because God Almighty isn't going to use you, and what a shame that would be upon you and your family in the Church to have to go through that; to be removed or not be used. What a horrible thing when God is gearing us up so we can serve in a greater way for what's coming.

So do we understand the seriousness of not having a spirit of unity and a bond of peace in the Church of God? We're God's children and God brings us into fellowship with each other. How can we *not* love

³ John 13:34/John 15:12

each other? If you meet so often that you know each other so well... what is it that you have against someone else? What exists there? Do you have a difficult time? See, I know some can't even *talk* to each other. Some can't even go up and greet each other. I go into a congregation and I feel *sick* when I've left and I realize some didn't even come up after not seeing me for a great length of time and greet me. "Oh, we don't want to bother you because you're too busy." Bologna! Bologna, bologna, bologna...and I'm talking about unclean. (Bologna is usually unclean; it's pork as a whole.) How can that be in God's Church toward me? If you have that toward me what do you have toward each other? I can't *conceive* of thinking that way toward Mr. Armstrong. And I'm an apostle, as Mr. Armstrong was; some just don't get it sometimes I guess.

What about an evangelist? Is there anything we have against an evangelist that we think in a wrong way toward him? I said 'him' because all three are 'hims'. Do we have respect and honour? Do I have problems? I have problems. I have weaknesses, everybody does. God uses imperfect human beings to do His job, to do His will, to serve Him; because that's how He's chosen to work. He's chosen to work through the Church, through His people. He's not going to go out and do it for us; just like there are things you should never do for your child. There's a time that they're to leave home. There's a time they're to be on their own, isn't there?

You know God could do it all for us. He could take care of every little problem and sometimes that's what we want. We come into the Church, "Oh God, take this away from me... take that away from me. I don't want to go through this... My boss, my mate, my co-workers..." Whatever it is. We want everything taken care of for us and we want God to intervene and just make our life so easy and pleasant. And we find out it doesn't work that way. We've got to go through trials; we've got to go through hardships. We've got to address difficult things because that's how we *grow*! We've got to change and so we have to yield ourselves to a process there; and God wants us to learn, that's how He's able to work with us. And He wants to work through us. I'm very imperfect; I understand that; every one of us is. Every one of us has faults and weaknesses and the more you get to know someone, the more you see certain things and you wonder, "How could they be there? How could they be doing that job?" Sometimes we think... "I could do it better. I don't understand how so and so got ordained; it must be because..." Whatever. And we miss the mark and we don't understand how God works.

There are changes that need to be made out there in people's lives and we need to repent. And again, I apologize for becoming strong in what I had to say, but again on the other hand I know that there are things that we need as well. I don't like doing it, but if it helps to save someone, if it helps to turn someone around – so be it!

Do all of us understand that within the Church nothing is hidden? Do all of you out there understand? Do all of you ministers understand that everyone sees you? ...far better than what you think. I know when someone's having a bad day. I know when someone is having a problem with someone else. *I know*, if I'm there. If there's any spiritual perception and maturity and growth and knowledge of friendships and relationships at all, people know; and people in a congregation generally *know*. So is love being nurtured? Is peace the fruit? Is peace the product? Sometimes it's not and God has called us to change that. How can we not love each other? I tell you, that is so foreign to my mind. I know it and I understand it, but it's foreign to my mind because it can't exist there.

No matter who you are I can say this before God, very clearly so, "I love you. I *know* who you are. You're God's and that endears me to you in a very special way." And that's the way we should see each other in the Body. We should be endeared to each other because God is there. Do we have selfishness and

weaknesses and problems? Yes! But do we accept each other for who each person is and at whatever stage and growth they are? Because it takes time to grow and change and conquer and overcome.

Galatians 5:13 - For brethren, you have been called to liberty/freedom; only do not use your liberty/freedom for an occasion/an opportunity to the flesh; I was talking about this being who's stirred up. You know the *best* way to get at me? ...the *best* way to load me down? ...the *best* way to get me off focus for sermons or writing? ...is in the ministers. Because you have been called to leadership. You've been called to be an example in the Church. You've been called to *uphold* and to strengthen what is out there and if any let down and pull back – which *several* have and are – then that makes my job much more difficult and it distracts me. So if you were a great being and you wanted to disrupt and to distort and to hurt a Body, how would you go about it? That's our history. That's the history of God's Church! That's the history of what Mr. Armstrong had to go through. And you know who Satan went after more than anyone else? The ministry. If you can get a regional pastor; if you can get an evangelist; if you can work on them and tear them down, how many more can you take with you? Because that's his tactic, that's what he did in the angelic realm. A little chirping here and a little chirping there; a little whittling away here, a little whittling away there – that big mouth, that perverted, distorted mind and mouth, seeing what he can eat up, seeing what he can destroy, seeing what he can twist and subvert.

I remember places like Hawaii and a minister that was there; the *whole area* left with him. Washington, D.C. and the *whole area* disappeared as a Church. Entire regions disappeared as churches, no longer a part of the Church of God. That's how he works. You're going to allow yourself to be a tool? Are you going to pull back and allow yourself to have something whittled away at you and hurt the Body in the Church? That's how he works! Be on guard! This is a time to be on guard and be alert! You don't know how stirred up he is! You don't know what's coming down the pike! You don't know the Feast sermons yet. He does! *He does!* They're written in notes! He has the power, the ability to know, to see. He is a spirit being. *He knows!* He has the ability to hear. *He knows!* He has the ability to hear my wife and I talk; or Johnny... talk about various matters. Johnny is a senior evangelist and we share much. So there is a being out there who knows. Doesn't know it fully and as powerfully as he's going to know it by the Feast, at the Feast. So he is upset...and when some powers are upset it makes it pretty tough and it makes it harder on you. But, **greater is He that's in you than he that's in the world**, if you yield yourself to Him. That's why we've got to take more seriously where we are in time. That's why we've got to be more spiritually alert and spiritually watchful and spiritually on guard than ever before in our lives. All of you! ...but I especially cry out to the ministry because there's sin out there.

If you can't say what I just said a moment ago about every member, every person, with a clear conscience before God Almighty...that you love everyone and you mean it with all of your being, then you've got sin to deal with. And if there's sin there, Satan has a door. That's his power. That's what the Bible talks about.

That. Is. His. Power! ...in your life. Do you know why? That's when you're cut off from God! You're not protected! You're not shielded! God is *not* your defence and your high tower if you're cut off from Him. *Sin cuts you off from God!* Wrong thinking toward other members in the Body will cut you off from God! It's a *great* thing, not a small thing; it's *all* important, awesomely important if we can grasp it! So He says, **don't use your freedom for an occasion**, an opportunity to the flesh, in other words to be used for selfish reason, to elevate self, to take advantage of others who have been called to the same liberty.

I think of some who take advantage of others in the craziest ways sometimes; simplest, easiest of ways; don't think anything of taking advantage of someone else. Some of you who are new, you have to be careful when you come in that you don't take advantage of others, of their generosity because they're striving to live God's way of life. There are little things sometimes. I hesitate to mention it, I don't know if I should, because sometimes when we're new and we're babes, sometimes some things are harder, but sometimes I've seen it in people who are not babes. Taking advantage of a freedom, of a liberty that we've been given in simple things. What *if* someone who is struggling takes you out to eat? What *if* someone has invited you out on the Sabbath, after services to eat, and they're struggling, but they're striving to be generous and striving to have fellowship and they're the one sacrificing to give; and people think nothing of ordering things that others aren't ordering; \$10.00 mixed drinks, \$20.00... Heard a story not too long ago where that's exactly what happened in an area. \$20.00 for the drinks and the food was about the same. Think... Why do that? Can't you have a coke? Can't you have an iced tea? Now, if you're paying for it and you want to do that...fine! But someone else out there who's struggling, who's working hard? Why take advantage of their generosity? Does that make sense, what I'm saying? See, there's a spirit and an attitude there of appreciation, a thankfulness, of gratitude...or is it a matter of *expectation*? We just *expect* someone to provide for us, to take care of us, or to do that for us and because they have more than I do... or whatever. I could go through example after example after example like that where if we're not careful we could take advantage of other people's generosity, freedom and liberty that they're striving to live toward you. And that's what we're talking about here.

It says, **but by love serve one another**. What is love toward each other? What is the attitude of mind that should be there in how we treat each other, how we think toward each other? Generosity is great, but taking advantage is wrong. So how do you serve others? Think about that. Just as an example in a meal like that, in a situation like that. On both sides...how could both serve and be pleasing to God? Because there's an attitude and a spirit there. I can tell you what it is but you should know, and if you don't know ask God for help to learn it. So, how can you contribute to, add to, give to, in order to serve others called to such liberty?

Verse 14 - For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. And we love ourselves... that's where selfishness is; that's what the word is, that's where it comes from. We love ourselves. I love the scripture where God makes the statement there, 'for no man ever yet hated his own self, or loathed his own flesh,'⁴ ...things of that nature. We pamper, we take care of self...that's the way we are as human beings. Self is first. That kind of thinking needs to change. We need to make others first around us, lift them up in importance in how we think toward them and how we want to serve them and help them, not for them to serve us.

Verse 15 - But if you bite and devour one another, who is this (Bible) talking to? This isn't talking to people out in the world; they can't hear it, they can't receive it! Who is Paul talking to by the inspiration of God's spirit? To God's people! To people who've been impregnated with the holy spirit, to people who've been begotten of God, to people who've been called to *change*! And it's not any different today than it was back then; it's the same because human nature and human beings – we're all the same! *With* God's spirit we're the same! We still have selfishness to battle and conquer and overcome and we need help from God and we need to grasp the need for God's help. We need to grasp the need to draw closer to Him, to be on guard spiritually, the need to live this way of life and to be focused upon it so that we're doing it and not missing the mark and backsliding because we're not focused like we should be!

⁴ Ephesians 5:29

Verse 14 - For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

And in the Church of God, who is your neighbour? Those of you in this region? You're neighbours to each other. You might be a long way from each other, but boy oh boy are you neighbours in the Body of Christ. You can't get any closer! Where you are with people, where you are around people... just like Ralph Dowd, everybody's his neighbour. He goes all over the country! And so when you're mixed together with whomever you're meeting with... they're close to you – and that's where we learn and we apply God's way of life, how to love each other – to give to each other.

...but if you bite and devour... Does this have to be said in God's Church? Yes, *sadly* people *bite* and *devour* each other. Had to deal with some of this last week. Hard! I *hate* dealing with stuff like that! I *hate* having to get involved with situations like this where people bite and devour – *bite* with words that strike so deep that in *some cases, some situations it's going to take a lifetime* to battle from here on out...things that are said. An *entire lifetime* there'll be some things there that plague and hurt and damage and cause damage; just because of things that come out of a mouth sometimes. We can say such *cutting* things to human beings, to one another sometimes that can do so much damage and we don't get it and we don't *grasp* how much damage we do! What a *horrible* thing to cut with a knife so deep, *cut deep* into the heart of one's we're supposed to love. Sometimes, *sadly*, even in marriage. What a *horrifying* thing to take place! And then people can't see through that and they have a difficult time with it. Sometimes those who do those things want to justify why they did what they did and there are some things where there is just no excuse for in life, period –ever! ...to ever be done! *No justification* leads up to stabbing someone in the heart on a spiritual plane. There is *no justification whatever for that!* Sad, pathetic, sick, distorted, perverted, a wrong mind that must be repented of and must be able to see the seriousness of the sins involved.

I talk to different ministers out here at different times...talked to one this morning that discussed a situation he's had to deal with of individuals crying to him because of relationships within the Church – *crying to him*, not knowing how to deal with it, *crying to him* sometimes out of guilt, *crying* not knowing what to do or how to do it, *frustrated, hurt, cut deep!* And that's in the Church of God! How could such a thing be?

You might be dumbfounded to hear this, but hey, we're all human beings. And in time if you had a congregation that was able to meet every Sabbath...and the larger you get, the more potential there is for this kind of thing happening. The more you're together with people and the closer you are together and the more you learn about each other and see each other and see faults... What do you focus upon? It's so easy to find fault in people; it's so easy to find the wrong in other people's lives – but what do you see that's there that God sees? ...that God is working with? That's what I strive to focus on.

... but if you bite and devour one another, finding fault, *especially* when it comes to finding fault with others, talking about others. Should never be done, and the moment it's done there's sin to deal with. **...take heed that you are not consumed one of another.** I've seen it over and over and over again in God's Church in other people's lives...and it hurts *me*. It hurts me when I see it. It hurts me when I have to become involved in it, because I *have* to. Or other ministers have to and I hate to see them have to get involved with it but that's what it's about – it's about helping people come out of darkness. It's about helping people come out of sin. It's about helping to lead people out of those things that hurt and destroy; and that's what this is about. But it hurts. We don't like to see anyone suffer. We don't like to see anyone hurt. I hate to see people hurt themselves. I hate to see people in relationships... sometimes people can get so caught up in certain kinds of relationships and there's so much friction

there and so many things that have been said and done that after a while they both become so spiritually weak that you ache for them because they can't see what needs to be done any longer, or how to do it. ...**consumed one of another**. People can actually get to the state where they consume each other, hurt each other, pull each other down. That's why in some environments it's better to flee and escape: it truly is, spiritually, in order to grow. It's *your* life we're talking about and if you have no other way of dealing with it, it's *better* that you escape and draw close to God and get *your* mind right. And *then* be able to come back... if you're able to, and if not, stay away from that environment.

Verse 16 - This I say then, walk in the spirit, it's the only way you can live this way of life; it's the only way you can love each other; it's the only way you can talk right to each other. It's the only way you can fight your attitude toward someone and come to grips with it; and for mercy and patience and compassion and whatever else needs to be there...or if there needs to be a matter of dealing with it or talking about it, to be able to deal with it with righteous judgement. That's a toughie! And it's a toughie sometimes for ministers as well – to have righteous judgement. We *all* battle with that; to separate one's self fully from something to where there's no prejudice involved in what is said. That's not as easy as people might think it is because we're all filled with such prejudice in life and we must conquer and overcome those things. And to stand back and to say, "I know this is God's will and how it should be dealt with. I know that there's not any other judgement here involved that's selfish on my part. This is looking at it objectively and what must be done and what is best for the entire situation." Those are hard things to do and those are things *you* have to do. You have to do it in your families. You have to be able to objectively look at something and say, "What is right? Am I swayed one way or another by my feelings and my emotions to a certain person," or whatever it might be, "can I judge this rationally and clearly without prejudice, without emotion, without wrong judgement here?"

We're tough cookies, aren't we? Human nature is a tough nut to crack and we're just pretty tough, we really are! And yet, we must yield ourselves to the process. We must not just yield, we must cry out for it so we can change, so we can become something different and better, so we can have Jerusalem to dwell in forever – the way of peace. That's what God wants for you. That's what God wants for every one of us, to be able to dwell in the way of peace forever. But peace doesn't just magically happen! It comes from God. It is of God. It *is* God. It *is* the way of love. It is love in action and it produces that which can be dwelt in, lived in, forever. And to get there is a tough, tough road because we don't have that within us by nature and it has to be worked at, it has to be conquered. But we have to hunger for it and want it so much; not just for ourselves, but for the Family, for the world.

My wife and I do so much travelling we see people in so many different situations and sometimes because of some repeat trips in some hotels and even some waitresses and different ones; they know us and we've gotten to know them. And we desire *so much*...so many of them we come in contact with, to see them live into a new age. Now, I know they're not all going to be able to, but do you have that feeling toward others that you'd like to see them be able to be removed from the hardship and the pain and the suffering that's in this world that you know that they have to contend with day in and day out – because they don't know the truth even. They don't know what's coming! They don't know what we know. And to have that desire for them... my heart aches sometimes when I am around different ones and having conversation with them in the world that don't know this way of life. And I leave sometimes after having been with them and I desire so much. But in time, that's what God intends for every one of them to have, it's just going to come at different times. But that's what we should have toward everyone we come in contact with.

This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh ...because the two don't go together. The lust of the flesh, the pampering of self, the selfishness, the way *we* want it, the way *I* want it, the way *I* see it, the way *I* think it should be, the way *I* justify it; that *I'm* right and *I'm* okay and everybody else is wrong. We're tough! We're tough nuts to crack, we really are!

For the flesh lusts against the spirit... talk about a war! Talk about a battle! This! Carnal flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to each other: they don't mix! They fight each other! They war! And we have to enter into that war and want to conquer through the power of the spirit that which is selfish. There's a battle that goes on in our lives! Are you in that battle? ...or do you just kind of get tired of it sometimes and you want to escape? *I understand that*, but *YOU HAVEN'T BEEN CALLED TO ESCAPE AND TO HAVE IT EASY! If you want it easy...* well, you can't have it! You know, you just can't! I thought, go back...go out in the world... but it's not easy, that's what I was called out of! That wasn't easy! It was 'hell' on earth the way I lived, the way I spoke, the way I acted toward others. That's what it was! I hurt people and they hurt me! That's the way of life out there and I was far more concerned about *this one* – me, and how I was treated than I was of how I treated others.

So you don't have peace out there; we ought to know that one by now! But God wants us to have peace here; to start learning it, to learn it in a greater way, to elevate its importance, to *desire* it. God desires it! He desires it so much we can't even begin to comprehend the desire and power of God's spirit who desires it within His being. See, because of the Feast that's coming and because of this sermon series, I have a greater desire for it than I've ever had. I'm starting to make some certain changes here. Though they be little at times... there are certain things changing. I find myself actually driving down the highway sometimes and just letting people be in the 'race'; and it's not aggravating me like it used to. Now sometimes it still does, and probably far too often, but I see a *change* starting to come on me that I'm very thankful for. Let them be in that rat race, because it's so easy when you're in high traffic, bad traffic and people are driving nuts, it's so easy to get caught up in the same spirit that's out there. But I'll tell you what...it's so much nicer when you just do what you need to do and let the rest of them... just be defensive in your driving, but watch out for the other guy.

I'm using this as an example. I know some people think, "You must be the worst driver in the world! You must have the worst attitude in driving." I use it as an example because I feel like we relate to it. If you can relate to something and understand something that happens in the world, understand that it happens in every aspect of life, not just the highway. It happens in relationships everywhere you are. If you can see that spirit; if you can understand that mind and then learn from it – wow! ...and learn peace, desire peace, understand how it comes about; that it doesn't just happen. It starts here – and I'm pointing to myself. So every one of you...that's where peace begins: it starts in yourself of what you live and how you live it. You can't give peace to this world; you can't make the world live peace. That's why God's starting one person at a time through the power of His spirit helping us to change, helping us to grow because we can only change ourselves with God's help – if you understand what I'm saying. We can only yield ourselves to that process of change. I want it for myself. I want to be a part of a product that helps others to attain to peace. I want to be able to be a part of that into eternity...well, it won't have to be into eternity; just another 1,100 years plus, because after that it's finished. There will be peace. God will have brought it. We will have attained, we will have grown to it, we will be living it. But to get there is a tough, tough journey, it's not easy because we have to fight this, we have to fight self. And that's what this is talking about all the way through over and over and over again.

For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to each other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you are led by the spirit, are we following it? Are we yielding ourselves to it? Are we crying out to it as we should? Or are we carrying grudges? Are we upset at others in the Church? Are we upset at some of the ministers out there? Are we upset at some of the members and different ones out there? Who are we upset with and *why are you upset with them?* Why are you carrying around an attitude on your shoulders? There are people I know so well when they're carrying an attitude toward others and I just want to shake them and say, "Don't you know what you're doing to yourself? You're ripping a hole in yourself spiritually! You're hurting yourself, you're backsliding! Your *misery* is because of your *thinking!* You're *unhappiness is your own doings...not somebody else!* NO ONE causes you your misery!" We have to judge that. Do we understand that? That if you're miserable inside, if you feel misery inside and you see something out there that's 'causing you' to be miserable and the feelings you have...to be *angry?* Those are all sin. If you have anger, where's it coming from? Who's the *cause* of your anger? You are. *You are!* Nobody else! *You've* allowed it! What's in your thinking that you've allowed that? Why aren't you at peace?

Was Jesus Christ ever angry? Did He have reason to be? Well, the way some people think they'd say, "Yeah, He had reason to be." No! Because of the way He thought, the way His thinking was. It wasn't in His mind. But it's in ours so often. Why? We do it to ourselves. When it comes down to it we have to decide how we respond, don't we? We have to decide, each one of us, how we respond to everything that's around us and if you allow yourself to become angry, jealous, envious... We've got ministers out there who are envious of others. Ministers! Jealous! Why? *Why?* Are we going to allow what happened in Worldwide, especially at the end, to happen to us? Are we going to allow to happen within the ministry what happened in the ministry of the Church? Is it possible that ministers have envy toward each other? Oh, I tell you what... I lived through some incredible things where ministers are territorial. Whenever someone new started attending, if they were close to a border...what would be considered a borderline of what is in your region... '*your*' region... and then there are people who'd get into arguments about, "No, they should attend here because..." whatever the reason is, "even though they're closer to you because the way the highway system is it's a shorter drive for them and it'd be less expensive for them to come here every Sabbath." "No, they have teenagers and we have more teenagers and they should *really* come here because that would help the teenagers." And it was really about the minister and how many people he had in his congregation. So the more you had in your congregation it kind of lifted you up to where when you all got together and if anybody mentioned how many was in the congregation... Sometimes those things came out.

"Oh, you have 550? Yeah, there's (175) in ours..."

"What?"

"175 in ours, yes."

And it's like one's better than the other. No, no, no, no... Why do we make such comparisons in life, not understanding what God is doing and whether it be one or one million? And I'm mentioning things here that exist, that are real in life and that we all have to be on guard against – things that shouldn't exist; especially there because there should be a level of spiritual maturity – right? ...above others who are especially babes coming along. You would expect that someone who's 2-3 years old not to quite have the same maturity as someone who might be 45 in spiritual age...I would kind of think?!

Verse 18 - But if you are led by the spirit, meaning you're following that lead of God's spirit. And God draws us, He feeds us every Sabbath, He gives us what we need in our lives to examine, to look at. We want it, we desire it, we pray about it, we repent where we're wrong, and we desire to continually be fed knowing that repentance is a way of life with us, knowing that correction is a way of life with us. We must receive correction because there's much to be corrected in this physical life. I want that, I want to

be able to *see* and to *understand* those things that need to be changed in my life. If I become blinded to them or I ignore them, they'll begin to conquer me and make me weaker. That's the way it is in our spiritual life and that is sometimes what happened to people. After a while people become so oblivious, to try to talk to them about some of the most basic concepts of sin is like banging your head against the wall. It's so clear, it's so simple; but the only reason it's simple is if you're close to God, if you have God's spirit *filling your mind* with the ability to see spiritually.

But if we backslide there's some of the most basic of things sometimes we just can't see, and simple concepts of love, simple concepts of sin and understanding how *bad* sin is. And *never* a justification for it! *NEVER* a justification for hurting someone else! *Never* a justification for stabbing someone in the heart spiritually!

Verse 19 – Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these; adultery, fornication... it mentions those things that are sometimes the greatest of battles with human beings because in some of those things we have some of the greatest pulls as human beings. Natural pulls – things that God created within us that He wants us to learn to control, to work to deal with His way. And so these things are mentioned. But as we learn and as we grow we come to understand these are *spiritual* in nature and if we understand the *spirit* of adultery and fornication it's like idolatry. Spiritual idolatry – if you lift anything up, if you do *anything*...if you mix with *anything* in this world... bring in a different concept of something that isn't what we've been taught. If we bring in a different idea that we believe something different than what we're being taught (which this area experienced not too long ago in a bad way); if anyone brings in a different idea, different teaching, different concept, different belief... they've committed spiritual adultery. They've committed spiritual fornication, very similar to raping you spiritually – calling it what it is – because if you receive of that and it hurts your mind that's what's happened to you on a spiritual plane in your mind. Calling it what it is – spiritually. That's how dangerous some things are. That's why we're not to add to, nor to take from. That's why more than ever we need to have that spirit of unity; because unity in the Church today starts with, first and foremost, truth, doctrine that God gives to us to bring us into unity and oneness with Him.

You can't live in the past, like I mentioned in the last posting. *All others have stagnated* and they only have a resemblance of the past. And there are people who live in the past. *We have grown awesomely since the past!* We don't stop growing! *We've matured!* And as long as you understand that and have that balance, that's great. But some don't, sometimes people don't have that.

So we *must* be with God where He is in the present truth as one scripture refers to it as, the present truth, where we are in our growth at a specific moment in time because God's Church has always been growing.⁵ It's been a progressive revelation. That's an awesome thing to understand. By the time you get to the book of John he was able to put things, have things together in a mature stronger way than what Peter or Paul had. They didn't have what John had. They didn't live that long; they didn't live into that point in time and you could see a maturing process and a revealing process that God was giving to the Church. And then it was thrust into a time of darkness on the earth in a sense, and Thyatira that was over a thousand years long, old as a Church era; and then finally came down to Sardis where it almost died. It was dead and dying and God raised up Mr. Armstrong to continue on, to bring back, to restore truth. And then look what He gave to him!

⁵ 2 Peter 1:12

I was talking to some last night about the excitement I'm experiencing right now about what God is giving about being able to add to... it reminds me of Mr. Armstrong in 1985, after the book had been written, when he attended one of the refreshing programs that we were also present at headquarters there. Mr. Armstrong came in and there was an incredible excitement about 'Mystery of the Ages'; and we couldn't understand to the degree he did. He lived that 50+ years; that 50+ years that only he could understand in that way; and we could only try to appreciate it to some other minor level in comparison, because it was minor compared to his. But he was genuinely, fully excited about the book; that finally... and I understand that now in ways I never could back then...finally after 50 some years everything that God had given to him as far as a picture, a vision was able to be written. Do you remember him talking about like a puzzle and a picture and all the pieces in its place? And it's like there was this picture by that time now that he had – the clearest picture that man ever had to this point in time; the most advanced picture of God's plan and purpose ever. John and Paul, Peter, none of them saw what he saw. They didn't see the magnitude and to the degree of what Mr. Armstrong was given because of the time and because of the progressive revelation that continued through time as God was giving it. And God gave *more* to him than what they had – put it together in a clearer picture than what had ever existed on the earth.

And that's happening *now* even more so. *It just continues to grow. Wait till Jesus Christ returns!* The things that are going to be given to us and the *CLARITY* and the *BEAUTY* of it all and how much it's going to be magnified. But right now? I understand that to a degree as he did and what we're being given at the Feast that adds to, and puts the finishing touches on what God gave to him in 'The Mystery of the Ages'. It's awesome! A unity and a oneness God wants us to have within the Body; a growing, maturing process we go through in life. Not bringing anything in different, but *being at one* with what God gives to us.

...adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, in other words, wrong pursuits of sensuality; **idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance**, in other words quarrelling, **emulations**, 'to have bad feelings towards others' in Greek here, the word; **wrath, strife**, 'selfish ambition' is what this literally means in the Greek; 'selfish ambition'. If people aren't careful of that they can get caught up in that. Selfish ambition; wanting more, wanting something, something in the Church perhaps. **...envyings**, envious of others; usually of what they have, or what we perceive that they have that we would like to have that we think we deserve – or whatever. **...murders**, and murder isn't just murder; it's a spirit. All these things are a matter of the spirit and the way we think.

And sometimes people just do not grasp the depth, the seriousness, the magnitude to fail to love someone else when you have the ability in front of you, the ability to forgive, the ability to love, to nurture, to embrace, to put the past in the past and go up and embrace. Is there someone out there you can't embrace? Is there someone in any congregation, that you can't embrace someone else? When's the last time you did? That's a good one. When's the last time you hugged someone and said, "I'm so glad to see you." Do you feel that way about each other? "I'm glad to see you again this Sabbath! How was your week?" Some of you don't care. I'll just tell you candidly, some of you just don't care about other people's week and how it went – you really don't care. *You don't care!* That's the bottom line. If you did, would you go and embrace them and talk to them and ask them out of concern? And if they told you – would you have mercy, compassion, feelings? And sometimes if we do that more, you know what? It helps us to understand we're all in this together, we all have battles, we all have conflict, we all have things to deal with.

...drunkenness, revelling/carousing, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do, the word meaning 'to practice', **practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.** Because you see, in *all* of these, to one level or another, on a spiritual plane especially, we have these in our life. We do. And if you don't understand that, you don't know yourself yet, you don't know your mind spiritually. The point being is you don't practice it. You seek to conquer and overcome it when God shows you a wrong spirit, a wrong attitude, a wrong thinking, a wrong feeling –whatever it is; and you pray to God, "Father forgive me. I don't want this in me; I don't want the *thought* even there in my mind. Forgive me, help me to fight against this, help me to resist, help me to grow in Your character, to draw closer to You." You have to cry out for those things! You have to fight for those things! But if certain things are done on a repetitive basis and you don't really try to conquer and overcome it after a while it can get to you.

Verse 22 - But the fruit of the spirit is love, so there is a fruit there of the spirit as well of what can be lived, how you think toward each other, how we feel toward each other. Love is something to be practiced, to be lived. There are certain things about love; there's a way of life, there is a matter of law that we live that reflects what love is. Then, **joy**, is a product of all that, how you feel. You see, if you're not happy you have no joy, or you're grumpy, or you're irritated, or your angry, or you're upset, of you're... whatever it is toward someone else in the Church or anyone in the world...I don't care. *Who* are you upset with? How upset are you? How is it affecting you? Well, if it's wrong you won't have joy because you're not thinking right; something is screwed up in your mind that needs to be corrected, that needs to be straightened out, that you need to cry out to God and say, "Father, I don't know fully where this is coming from but I know this isn't a right product in my life. I know this isn't a right fruit and it shouldn't be here and I can't blame someone else for what I have in my mind, in my feelings and my unhappiness and my frustration or anger..." or whatever it is. "So help me to see it so I can pray about it, so I can conquer and overcome it." Because you've got to be able to see what the battle is in order to fight it. We've got to understand our own mind; and *then* as time goes along – joy and happiness, a fullness can be there more and more.

We live in a very frustrating world. I don't walk around all the time full of joy. It's my own fault. If I don't eat at the right time I don't have a lot of joy, certain chemical ways of my body and whatever that we have. If I don't get a good amount of sleep or whatever... you know how you might wake up in the morning if you're going back to work and you think about that traffic that's out there and all the happy faces you're going to be dealing with at work – especially if you work at the complaint department of a certain store or whatever. It's really a joyful thing to enter into that.

So sometimes our jobs aren't a lot of joy to have to go to, but they are a means to an end and we look forward to that – the end; the beginning of something better so that others can have a better life. But that puts *us* to the test. How are we going to treat others? Sometimes we're uncomfortable and we're not doing well; we take it out on others. I'm guilty of that. Sometimes when travelling I have to be careful; you do too. How do you treat others? How do you treat others in public when something irritates you, whatever it might be, and maybe they did something really wrong and maybe made your life a little more inconvenient after you had a full day of inconvenience already? Sometimes that doesn't really stir up joy does it? You've got to *work* for it, you've got to *fight* for it, you've got to ask God for help to have a right mind and a right thinking toward others. It *doesn't just happen* when you live in a *carnal physical body*.

So all these things again here, the **fruit of the spirit ...love, joy, peace, longsuffering...** How long are you willing to suffer with someone else, to go through certain things with them or for them, for their sake? ...and to give time for their growth, for their development, for their changing?

...**gentleness, gentleness...**

...**goodness**, exercised toward others. These things are about relationships and how we live in life and how we think.

...**faith**, a matter of a relationship with God and what we live by; to whether we *believe* what God gives us and feeds us and nurtures us with.

...**meekness**, a spirit of being able to be taught, 'teach-ability'; that's what this is about – a teachable spirit. That's what meekness is; a teachable spirit, especially in God's way of life that we're willing to receive it. That we're willing to receive what God has for us and *especially* if it comes to certain situations and certain times in our life when a minister has to come to us and talk to us, that we receive that and change. A teachable spirit...sometimes just a willingness to learn about others, and you know what? Sometimes if you just take the time and the patience and the love just to get to know someone.

My wife and I were walking along this morning along that river out there and I was discussing a couple situations and a couple relationships and I made the comment (I'll try not to say the names)... what name can I use that I don't know anybody in the Church by that name? I'll make up a name, something that surely no one has. 'Merkle'. You know, Merkle is just Merkle. That's the way he or she is and we accept them for the way he or she is, "That's Merkle. I love them but there are certain things every once in a while that in this particular area of life that they get into a bind. I love them and I want to see them come through this. They're a part of the Body, they're a part of the Church of God..." and there are other times that I look and desire to focus on the right, on the good, and on the response to God and a right relationship with God. "But every once in a while they get themselves in a bind and I hate to see this, but you know, Merkle is Merkle and they got this certain personality and in time they're going to be able to conquer that and overcome that, just as much as I hope to overcome and conquer mine." So, can you accept Merkle for Merkle? ☺ Longsuffering, patience, *love*. We're all unique and accept the uniqueness of each one of us, the differences that make us who we are. And so sometimes just getting to know someone – sometimes their background. If you get to know their background and what made them; what made Merkle the way Merkle is.

If you come to understand some of the hardships they might have gone through in their life, in their growing up, maybe in their family, maybe something that happened on a job or jobs, maybe certain traits. Because we all carry baggage that's made us what we are. Because we live in a carnal physical world, and so we carry certain things with us and whatever you carry with you makes you; and Merkle has baggage. But don't look to that, look to what God has called them to, change, growth, what they're going to attain to and to love them because they're God's. Seems so simple, but it isn't because it takes practice of living right things toward one another and having this mind in subjection to God's way of life and trying to bring it more and more into subjection.

So again ...**temperance**; this is moderation. I mentioned that last week about *moderation*. There are some things in this world that have gone way past moderation and sometimes we have to pull back the reins in our lives. That's why I mentioned about dress and women's clothing today. I've seen a gradual change where it is just getting worse and worse as time has gone along. It reminds me... I was thinking

this week here about the example last week about bathing suits. I'm sure there are two or three out there that are just happy with me about that one right now because I said no two pieces at the Feast, period. If a husband and wife are together someplace and they're out there in the world and they're not going to be seen by anyone that's something that they have to decide amongst themselves; but as far as the Church is concerned, the environment of the Church – we're going to have to pull back the reins. We're getting ready to go into the Millennial period. We better start setting the pace of what's supposed to be right even more so in our lives and by example toward one another and new people who are coming along.

Some of these dresses styles anymore, that some of them come down very low and women don't understand how that looks in some cases. And I thought of an example of the scripture about hair where God said, 'If you don't get it by cutting it too short, just shave it all off.'⁶ Then maybe you'll get the picture! *Just take it off!* And I thought the same thing about the clothes. If you want to wear a bikini out there, just take it all off because that's what you've done to a man...and some women know that. And if you know that, greater is the sin in your mind and your being for being that way and not caring toward others around you and not showing love toward others.

Men and women think differently – truly. That's why this earth is *populated* as it is. There are some things you shouldn't even have to say that we should fully understand in life about nature. And sadly I have to get very basic about some things. I have to say something about dress because there were complaints last year in different places about bikinis?! People are tired of seeing it! They're tired of watching you walk around nude when you're supposed to be in the Church of God; you're supposed to have God's spirit in you! *Who are you walking around nude?* I'm just calling it what it is. That's why you're going to have one piece this year or just don't go swimming. And dresses? And shirts? And cleavage? Be careful.

Do you love your neighbour? Do you not understand the way of human beings and what's in people's minds and how people think? ...what is natural to a man and his thinking? You say, "*Oh he shouldn't think like that, he shouldn't be that way!*" God made him *that way* – *blame God!* That's why God says to have clothing in moderation, because there's a certain way to love each other and to understand. There are just some things that are natural that are right when used right, when done right; that enhance relationships – *primarily*, God says, *where?* In marriage. Especially in the beginning of it even more so, because as you get older in life things change: the man changes, the woman changes. We *change* in life and that's good. We learn from it all. We learn from all the changes of life.

It's like being a grandparent, when it's time to be a grandparent it's a lot different then when you were a parent and you had children, making a lot of noise and so forth, things you could deal with in a way that when you get older you can't deal with in the same way. It just changes, and we learn from all those changes about life, and the beauty of life that God has created, when it's done right.

...moderation - against such there is no law. If you do things right, if you live right, if you think right, if you walk in the spirit, if you're led by the spirit... you're living love and you don't have to have things spelled out that you shouldn't do this or you shouldn't do that because it's automatically a part of us, that we wouldn't think of that. We wouldn't think of doing it any other way but the way God says to do it.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:6

And they who are Christ's have impaled the flesh with the affections and lusts. Just like what He went through and what we seek to do and conquer and overcome. **If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory,** which always produces one of the following - **provoking one another, envying one another.** All the things of human life that we battle. I'm looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles because in part of the sermons we will be able to see these things in a greater way. God's going to give us that ability to see things in a greater way than what we have; to understand certain things, why they had to be this way and could not be any other way, why God's way is so absolutely perfect in His creation and what He's doing. It is really awesome! The more you see that God helps us to see and lets us see about what He's doing the more awesome it becomes, it truly is. Everything! Why Satan's been here for 6,000 years. *It was God's plan that it BE that way* and sometimes we don't get it and we don't understand the necessity of it in order to become a part of the God Family. God's going to help us understand it in a greater way, to understand the beauty of God's design – that to become a part of His Family it can happen in absolutely absolutely *no other way!* God is perfect. Perfect in all His ways and it's hard for us to grasp that sometimes.

I'm excited because I want to write. In the past I have not been so excited about writing. The first book, I wasn't excited about writing, but I knew I was supposed to. The second book, I started enjoying it more because of what God was giving, because it was unique in the sense that I didn't know what I was writing until I was actually writing; and then God would give me what I needed – He would lead me to where I needed to go at that moment in time. He didn't let me see ahead; I didn't know where everything was going at any point in time; and that's how it happened. And I learned from that and it became more exciting! Writing became a little more exciting to someone who loathes writing. And now to go through this...just like today, I sat down just for a little while and all of a sudden things were there and I didn't want to stop. God's way is exciting!

And I get excited when I see more sermons coming out of a sermon because I'm on page one here and I have 6 pages. That has the potential of being six sermons but I'm not going to do that. But it shows the seriousness of what we're going through because I haven't gotten very far, because God is showing us much in a short length of time about things that we need to be on guard and watch in our lives and within the Church and understand how a being out there would like to get at us. The greatest hatred he's ever had is toward those with whom God is working. In 6,000 years, that's the way he's worked. He tried to attack Christ; he tried to get at Christ. He couldn't get at Christ, but he's gotten at us, he's gotten at every one of us. He's gotten at you; he's gotten at me – every one of us. Not a *one of you* is unscathed, not a *one of you* hasn't yielded to him; not a *one of you*. And sometimes we don't know that that's what we've done, that we've actually given him power over us and in us. Any time you sin you give him power, you give him influence, you give him recognition. Any time you sin. Any time you don't love your brother you give him power and you don't want to do that.

You want God to be in you, 'greater is He that's in you...' and that's your strength. And that's why we must repent so quickly and *fight* this fight and not allow these things to happen to us that happened at the end of Worldwide into Laodicea. Those things there are a reminder, speaking primarily to those who've been around for a long time who knew that era, that time, who lived through that – because Satan would love to come back and repeat his strategies that he was so successful with back then; and we can't let that happen. We must fight against it; especially now. He's going out screaming and kicking and hollering as a spoiled being that he is. He's about to be shut down. He's not going to be able to be in the Millennium; he's not going to be able to dwell with man in the Millennium and it's going to be an incredible torment to him for a thousand years because his mind is so perverted, so sick and so distorted – to not to be able to have influence over mankind, to not be there...that's *his* torment for a thousand

years; and we can't even begin to comprehend that. It's a great punishment - truly is. I'm looking forward to him receiving every moment of it, every second of it for what he's done and continues to do to mankind.

And please understand that because such things are said, because God is saying such things, if we understand what God is doing, that even all the more so he wants you, that being does. He wants to come at you so you must be strong because God has given us a job to do and it's not just about who is going to be called, it's not just about millions who are going to be called – it's about *that* being as well. Atonement is about that being. Much of the plan of God is about that being and if we understand that certain things are being said that God gives to that being at that moment in time. And that's why we have to understand the soberness of this, because of where we are in time to understand he's going to be that much more stirred up, that much angrier and so forth. *And you must be close to God!*

See, that's why I cried out like I did in the beginning of this sermon – because some of us don't see the attack and that *you're* being attacked and that *you're* yielding yourself to him and that *you're* making yourself a *pawn* of his, a *tool* of his – so much so that I am concerned that if you carry it farther you will betray the Church of God and me as God's apostle. That's how far you have the potential to go if he gets a hold of you.

We have people of our past who are out there who like to listen, they are listening today, who like to find fault and twist and distort and pervert what's said because they have that same kind of mind and they don't understand it; and they're suffering because of it; they're unhappy. They're not filled with happiness and joy. That's why I tell them sometimes to get a life! Go fishing! Have fun today! You're not keeping the Sabbath anyway – Why don't you go fishing! Go do something, relieve your mind! Relieve me! I feel sorry for them, I truly do. They don't know what they do. But there is a being who knows what he's doing. See, if as a human being you get caught up in that and you become a pawn, it's a horrible life. Thank God when He frees us from that, for those who will be freed from it.

Some of them don't understand either; which they don't believe anyway, that if you die... some think that when they die, or whatever, that they're automatically going to be able to be resurrected in the Great White Throne. Don't take that one to the bank. You may have already been judged! If you've already committed the unpardonable sin there's no purpose of resurrecting you to life again. Be careful... all human beings are capable of such things – that's why we must *want* God, cry out to God, understand the dangers of making wrong choices, of living a wrong life.

Colossians 3:1 – Then, if you have been risen with Christ seek those things which are above, and we have been. We're buried under the water and we came up out of the water to walk in newness of life – that's what it symbolically pictures, being buried with Christ, burying the old self. And when we come up out of the water, to walk now in newness of life and God gives us the *ability* then; that's why you have hands laid upon you, and you're impregnated with His spirit, because you can't do it on your own. We have to have the impregnation then and to receive of God's spirit so that we can walk in newness of life and that's what it's talking about...**then if you have been risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.** To understand where it comes from, it comes from God *through* Jesus Christ our High Priest, our Passover.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on this earth. What is our affection? That's what I mentioned last Sabbath; where is our desire? Do we desire? That's why I love going from area to area because I am so encouraged by when I see people come such long distances to be together, to sacrifice

to be able to be together. It gives everyone that opportunity when we go from area to area to do that, and to save for that and to have that opportunity. And it's a special blessing, a special time of fellowship that we don't normally receive. And those things are, I know, appreciated by people in a greater way. And that's always encouraging for us to be able to witness that, to see that.

And then I think on the other hand of situations where people don't even bother driving to Sabbath services when they have the ability. They're right there, hour, two hours away and people won't even *bother* going to Sabbath services to be with other people in God's Church because *that's not where their heart is!* Where is their heart? I don't know?! Maybe it's on something after sundown... What are they going to go do...? I don't know! But why not hunger and want to be with God's people because there's something unique and special in fellowship that we don't receive any other way. And yet some don't understand that because they don't grasp the importance of fellowship. They don't understand the importance of being glad to see someone else who is of the same mind, who's been fighting some of the same battles...that is, if you're fighting those battles during the week. Maybe you're not fighting those battles during the week and so maybe you don't *hunger* to be with others who are of the same mind who are fighting the battles during the week – because you're not fighting the battles during the week maybe. I don't know. What is it?

What is it that prevents people from being together, from not hungering and being together when they have the opportunity? That blows my mind! *We've gotten lazy maybe, I don't know, because we're so small and so scattered* and we have the internet today. Can it be a curse to us instead of a blessing? Can you misuse something? Just because you have the ability to sit there in your chair? And some people are straightening up right now in those reclining chairs, shaking their head... taking another drink of coffee. That's good. But if you have the ability to be together, use it! Why don't we hunger for that? And if you don't hunger for that, I'm just telling you something is spiritually wrong with your mind; you're in deep, deep, deep spiritual doo-doo – okay? Shouldn't have to explain that one! It is what it is.

I know why it exists, but some people who live and practice that, don't know why it's existing in their life. They don't know why they are thinking that way, they don't know why they don't have the hunger to be there, they don't understand what has happened to make them that way. I know. But it is just like the scripture said earlier; it is so contrary to what should be there with God's spirit that dwells in your mind. It'll seem so contrary you can think, "How can anyone be like that?" And you've got to be careful of that because that can make you self-righteous then. You can think... "Oh, I just don't understand how so and so can do such a thing." Well, give yourself enough time and hopefully you will be able to see how because you've got a big dose of human nature yourself...selfishness just like they do. It can happen to you, certain things you do that you don't see in your life. Be careful to cast a stone. Be careful where you throw a stone, you might get stoned.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; Is the world your friend? Are people in the world closer to you than people in God's Church?

Verse 3 - For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members; put to *death*, it's just like putting down in that grave, that watery grave, that we put the old self to death. **Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, passion that is sin, in other words, that leads to sin, that is sin, evil coveting and greed, which are all idolatry: They're all idolatry – every sin is idolatry. It's an idol. If you can picture this in your mind; you raise up a big obelisk and that's what it is to God. You raise up some great big idol; you raise something**

up above that you think you can do and you can live, but God says, “Don’t do it.” And you think you can do it or you can believe something different or whatever it might be. That becomes idolatry – something that your pride has lifted up that you think you can do or that you can have that God says, “No you can’t.” It becomes idolatry, spiritual idolatry. That’s what spiritual idolatry is – raising up an obelisk where God says you shouldn’t do that.

So if we do any of these things, that’s what we’re doing, we’re committing spiritual idolatry before God, raising up something that we think we have the right to do and telling God He doesn’t have the right to tell us we can’t. Isn’t that the way human nature is? We have this battle; there are certain things where we don’t like anyone telling us we can’t do. There are people who don’t like me telling them sometimes what they shouldn’t do. They don’t like me telling them that they can’t do this, that they shouldn’t do this, to be corrected sometimes is difficult for people because by the time they’ve done something and have gone so far – then to be corrected it’s like, “Who are you to tell me?” And then they have a battle with me, or some other minister or whatever it might be. That’s too bad.

Verse 6 - For which things' sake the wrath of God will come on the children of disobedience: wrath has to do with punishment for not repenting. Wrath is used in the New Testament especially as a matter of the death penalty, the wrath of God that will come upon human beings. And in time you will pay what God says is to be *paid* for sin, and that is death, save we repent. Repentance is how we’re saved from death through Jesus Christ, that’s how we’re able to be forgiven of sin.

For which things' sake the wrath of God will come on the children of disobedience: in which you have also walked at some time, when you lived in them. But now; so we’re to be different now – that the point. We’re not to *be* the same way we were before. We’re to put to death the old ways and to keep it put to death. **But now you also put off these, all of these; anger, wrath, rage, malice, envy** – that’s what it is. Malice is envy; this type, the Greek word here; **blasphemy, filthy communication**, in other words abusive language, **out of your mouth**. God says that shouldn’t be in us, it shouldn’t be in our mind let alone come out of us.

Do not lie one to another, seeing you have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created Him: We’re to become like Christ, to grow in that life, that which God moulded and fashioned in Him in human flesh, who walked on this earth, who had no sin, who had the *mind* of God. And we’re to grow in that so we can become more like God in the way we think, in the way we live toward one another.

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, it’s not a matter of people’s background, who they are, what their nationality... some people, they have problems because someone’s of a different nationality or a different race, or whatever. People have prejudices over the most screwy things sometimes – truly! Prejudice; because it has to do with people thinking they’re better than someone else; they’re raised above someone else and perhaps occupation, perhaps *ordination*, whatever it is. No, there’s no such thing in the Church of God – no such thing.

...circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: might add, **man and woman;** Sometime people think they’re better than the other, sadly. I’m finding that in ordinations. The truth is coming out of how some people really think. That’s brought some things to the surface that if people will only look in the mirror they will know how prejudice they are, speaking to men...and even some women. But men toward women, toward ordinations... Need to think soberly of what God has given because God is in this and God wants us to learn from this.

Verse 12 - Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, that's the way God wants us to be toward each other, **kindness;** How merciful are you toward one another? How merciful are you to others when maybe they've done something toward you or said something about you or toward you or whatever it might be? How merciful are you? ...or do you want some payment back? Do you want to see 'whatever' done to them?

...bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, I love verses like this and some of the things that are told there. It has to do with an attitude of mind of tolerance, of the right kind of tolerance of allowing for the differences so often. That's what it's talking about here. Allowing for the differences because we're all different from each other. Sometimes there's great differences. How much are you trying to understand the other person – why they are the way they are? Merkle is Merkle. They're different from me and if it wasn't for God's spirit we'd probably really rub each other, and we do kind of rub each other, but Merkle is Merkle and I'm me and I need to change and love Merkle. I surely could have thought up a better name there, but I didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings anywhere; and if there's a Merkle out there, I'm sorry.

...forbearing one another and forgiving one another, that's a biggie, **forgiving one another,** putting the past in the past and not bringing it back up again to be used against someone. That is an awesome thing – the ability to put it back there and never to drag it up again – *never!* And see, if we haven't forgiven then we keep bringing the past up. It can go on and on and on and on and on because people can't forgive sometimes. They can't put the past in the past. Let them be who they are; try to be there for them; love them...they're God's.

...forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, and if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. It's an amazing thing how we can receive something like this, of that magnitude from God, and we won't forgive someone else. There are some pretty strong parables about that and what God has to say.

And above all things put on agape/put on God's love which is the bond of perfection. Did we read that earlier? **And let the peace of God,** it's a fruit for living a certain way toward one another. **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one Body; and be you thankful.** There's a lot said there too. I'm not going to have time right now, we'll start there next Sabbath because this thing about being thankful and about the peace of God able to *rule* in your heart – there's a lot said there, there really is, what that means and what God is telling us; and just the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness for what God has given to us. It's an awesome thing.

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