

Today we are going to conclude the sermon series entitled *The Way of Peace* with this being *Part 5*. This subject is about how the world is being changed from the power of darkness to the power of light. It happens as we change, each of us individually; as we reject the ways that produce everything that opposes peace, that's the opposite of peace. And that's what we've been called to do, that is our calling; to change, to receive that way of life into us. It explains in a very powerful way what God has been doing for so long, His desire to have peace in His Family, to have peace in the angelic realm and everything else that He's been doing because of all that's happened through time in the angelic realm and with mankind. His desire is very much about 'Jerusalem', about the way of peace and giving us opportunity to live that and have that. It is very much about His way of life.

Our behaviour has to change as we reject the spirit of evil that comes from selfishness, pride and lust. And we have to see it as that, as evil. Pride is evil. Selfishness is just downright evil; it's nasty, it's ugly, it hurts; and those are the things we have to see in ourselves and ask God for help to conquer and to overcome. That's what this battle is about. And it is a battle!

Let's go over to Ephesians 2 and continue on from where we left off last Sabbath. We're going to continue now by focusing a little more closely on things that God has recorded for us that show the importance of peace being accomplished *in* us and how that is done, and emphasising the word '*in*' because it has to do with God's spirit. You can't do it on your own, you can't do it by yourself, you have to have God's spirit living and dwelling within you to live this, to experience it, for it to become more a part of your life.

**Ephesians 2:11 - Wherefore remember, that in times past you were as Gentiles in the flesh**, that means *just totally carnal*. Sometimes people do have the blessing of being able to grow up in the environment of the Church, but there's enough out there in that length of time before you come to baptism to experience plenty of your own human nature. I've never known people who go through that stage of life without experiencing plenty of their own human nature. It is the way of life. We have great amounts of selfishness deep inside of us, we truly do. And then with God's spirit He begins to help us to see that. It's not a pretty picture. And actually the longer you are in God's Church, the more you grow, the more you're able to see that...the heart and core of it deep, deep down inside, truly.

So again here, he's saying **to remember in times past you were as Gentiles in the flesh**, totally carnal, totally selfish, filled with pride, **who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands**. Paul is always addressing the Gentiles as a whole, talking about those things in Judaism and then showing this way of life in Christianity, what Christianity was supposed to be, not as the world has it. The principles here are very powerful for us to understand them in a different way because we don't have to have those things addressed to us about Judaism and the Gentile world, non-believing world, in the sense of Judaism; because neither one were right with God. And that's what he brings out at different times here.

**Verse 12 - That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens**, so whether it be Jew or Gentile, both were without Christ. We haven't known that way until God calls us and that's the way it's always been. Until God begins to draw us and call us, just as Jesus Christ pointed out very powerfully so, 'no

man can come to Me except God the Father draw him.’<sup>1</sup> So God, of Himself, chooses the time that each one of us is drawn to Him, called to Him. That’s why it should be exciting and inspiring to those of you who are new and young in the faith, to understand God did it personally. He called you! He drew you! It’s His time for you! And if God has drawn you and brought you to a point of being able to make a choice about baptism and you are baptized (which we had a baptism here today, congratulations – that’s always exciting from area to area...). What an incredible process to go through, to understand God has great purpose for your being drawn and called. You may not understand fully what it’s all about yet, or why. That isn’t important; the important part is that you respond and yield to it and hold onto it and make everything of it.

**That at that time you were without Christ; being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus, you have to be *in* Him and He in you; it’s how it works. That’s why it’s so important to remain in Him, continue in Him, to abide in Him because sin cuts you off from that. Whenever we sin we get cut off from abiding in, from dwelling in, from continuing in, remaining in; all those English words that are used to describe that one Greek word. **But now in Christ Jesus you who in times past were far off are now made near by the blood of Christ.** This should sound familiar, Old Testament scripture that we quoted toward the beginning of this series. **For He is our peace**; that’s how we attain peace, that’s how we’re able to latch hold of it. That’s how it’s able to become a part of our life. And so He *is* our peace; by dwelling in Him, by being in Him and He in us we can attain to peace, we can grow in peace, it can become a part of our being.**

**For He is our peace, who has made both one**, that’s how we’re able to attain it – it’s through Him. When he says ‘who has made both one’ it’s speaking of Jew *and* Gentile; **and has broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; having abolished in His flesh the enmity**, that’s an *awesome* thing to understand. That’s a difficult thing sometimes for some when they’re drawn and called; because they don’t think that they’ve been against God. They don’t think that they’ve been working against Jesus Christ or against God the Father. On the contrary, they think they’ve been trying all their life. And the reality is they’ve just been in ignorance all their life until God beings to show them something that can only be seen as a part of the holy spirit. The holy spirit has to show it to you in your mind to be able to see what is true and what is right, so you can make decisions that you otherwise would never be able to make in life.

**...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *the enmity***, meaning in His flesh, the spear that was rammed into His side and out came, as it says, water and blood and spilled to the earth; becoming our Passover so that we could have our sins forgiven us. And so that which kept us from God, that which was a part of our mind and a part of our life, that ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be’<sup>2</sup> can begin to change. We can begin to change; we don’t have to stay that way. So it says, **having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *even the law of commandments contained in ordinances***; because it’s a matter of sin. Everyone has sin in their life.

**...for to make in Himself**, we have to be *in* the Body of Christ. That’s why we have to go under the water and then have hands layed upon us so that we can be *placed into* the Body of Christ. That’s the only way it happens. **...for to make in Himself of both one new man, *so making peace***; it’s about making peace with one another; it’s about making peace with God. It begins with God; it begins in and

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<sup>1</sup> John 6:44

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:7

through Jesus Christ. **And that He might reconcile both unto God**, both Jew and Gentile. Both were deceived. Neither one had God's spirit. Jewish people never had God's spirit; it was never given to them, never offered to them. They were given the law, but not God's spirit. That's what's so incredible about Pentecost, to understand Pentecost...that on The Day of Pentecost God gave the law to the children of Israel; but one great ingredient was missing and they couldn't live it, they couldn't do it. Because on Pentecost in 31 AD God gave His holy spirit to reveal in a very powerful way how you're *able* to live that law, how you're able to even see it, to understand that *it's spiritual!*

Going on here, **and that He might reconcile both unto God in one Body**, in the Body of Christ... **by the impaling on the stake, having slain the enmity thereby:** as we just talked about. **And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them who were near.** Peace; that's what it's all about, the gospel, the good news. It's about peace. It's about a Family! It's about relationship within the Family and that which is the fruit of living right before God, of obeying God's way of life. It produces something – peace in the relationships. And that's why we talk about so often then Family and the importance of a spiritual Family that God has given to us...and the importance for us to make sure that there is nothing, *nothing* with anyone in God's Family in our mind, that we hold anything against in any fashion or form, any ill will, any bad feelings...otherwise those things just have to be repented of; something's wrong with us, not with them – not with somebody else. I don't care if they came up and slapped you in the mouth! *It's your mind and your attitude toward them that counts, it doesn't matter how somebody feels about you.* Someone might just have had enough of you, or whatever, but it's *your* response and what *you* do.

Now, hopefully and prayerfully if somebody's wrong in how they've talk to you or treated you or whatever it might be, you're able to come to repentance yourself...but how you respond to something like that... God is deeply concerned and wants us to be concerned in our lives so that we don't sin and get cut off from dwelling *in* the Body and cease to have the ability to grow in peace. Because that comes to a screeching halt if we're not in the Body of Christ. **And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them who were near.**

Let's just take the time to look at Isaiah 57; again, that area of scripture that we read toward the beginning of this sermon series. **Isaiah 57:14 - And shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way**, just like building a highway, 'cast you up'; has to do with building a road, building a path to follow, building a highway. As you build up the dirt, as you raise it up higher and pack it down so it'd be well travelled... it's a way that God wants to be *well travelled*. This is the way to travel. So he says, **Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people.** Whatever the stumbling block is; whatever that would be on the path that would cause us to trip or slip up... build... build it up so that there's nothing you will stumble in.

**Verse 18** – it's all about peace... **I have seen his ways**, and what are they? Selfish, filled with pride...*filled with pride*, selfishness... incredible the human mind! And then that determines how we treat others because if we're selfish we're not going to treat people the way God tells us we should. If we're filled with pride we're going to have a wrong spirit and a wrong attitude toward others and we're not going to be able to communicate with them in a right way of true friendship and that which is genuine...because we tend to raise ourselves up.

**I have seen his ways and will heal him:** this is part of a healing process; over and over again throughout the Bible that God has shown us. **I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace,** God's great desire for His Family, for healing on **The Way of Peace – Pt. 5**

this earth. **I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near,** Jewish people were near, but they needed this. They didn't have what was needed. They needed healing. The Gentiles were afar off; that's what Paul is talking about in Ephesians. Those who were near...they were lacking; they didn't have God's spirit. They had the law, they had that advantage, they had things contained in the law about God, things about God that others didn't grasp and comprehend; but that's the only primary advantage they had. How much did it help them?

**I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is a far off, and to him that is near, says the Eternal; and I will heal him.** Everyone needs healing.

Let's go back to **Ephesians 2**. It's peace here in **verse 17**, speaking of what Christ came and preached...**And came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to them who are near.** That's where it started. It started with those who were near. 31 AD, well, even before that obviously; when Christ was speaking, that's who He went to. He went to the Jewish people. And then in 31 AD God's holy spirit began to be poured out upon the Jew first. They were there; they were obeying things having to do with Pentecost and so forth. And because of that, that's where and how God started the Church. And then, through Paul, that message began to go out into the world.

**Verse 18 - For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.** So an ability to go before God the Father continually, to be heard by Him, for Him to work in our lives...comes through Jesus Christ, by being able to be forgiven of our sin. That's why it's so important continually over and over and over again that we see things in our life that needs to be changed and we repent before God. When we have treated someone wrong... we've been addressing this subject for some time now in the Church. Week after week after week after week I've heard of problems in God's Church...brother to brother (which means brother to sister, sister to brother – whatever...in other words a general term); relationships of things where people have had battles and difficulties and it boggles my mind in one regard; in another it doesn't at all because I know what we are. But especially in the midst of a series like this you'd think we'd want to get a hold of that very quickly and make the changes...and not let those things happen in life, and not let them get so stirred up that people need to have help to get things resolved. So week after week after week after week after *week after week now and throughout the midst of the other series we had...* problems that emerge from time to time to time to time throughout the week; of people having battles and difficulties and clashes and wars and schisms and on and on it goes.

I don't go and bang my head against anything; but you know, spiritually sometimes that's kind of what you feel like. Can we see what has to be done? Do we see the importance of it? Do we grasp the magnitude of the *evil* that we perpetuate? *Do we grasp there's a spirit world out there that is SO INCREDIBLY STIRRED UP RIGHT NOW?* There are people going through a lot of things right now because a spirit world out there is stirred up. They're not happy! And I am convicted with all my being that there is one being who's learning some things he's *never known*. He's just learning them; he's being told in a very powerful way through this Feast of Tabernacles what's coming His way and what's going to happen in this world. And so they're stirred up. They know!

I don't remember where it came from so please, if this was you wherever you are... someone thought that maybe this was a matter of their being able to hear prayers and such. It's not about that. Demons, Satan, they don't like to be around you and your relationship with God and there is that protection that God gives you anyway. But I was talking in a vein of things that I preach and when they're preached or things that I write...they know what's there, they have the ability to see, to know those things. So they

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are indeed stirred up in a very powerful way and before Holy Days anyway... Isn't that what happens? Generally before Passover every year we kind of talk about those things because they get more stirred up. They *hate God's plan! They hate what it pictures!* And then before the Feast of Tabernacles season they get stirred up again and they try to cause problems to God's people...and this year even more so.

So again here, **verse 18 - For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building is fitly framed together and grows unto an holy temple in the Lord:** it's about dwelling in God and God in us; it's about what God is building and what we're able to be a part of. **In whom you are being built together for a habitation of God through the spirit.**

That's how peace is accomplished; that's how peace becomes a reality – because of what we yield ourselves to, because of what we want. And you've got *to want it!* You've got to *want* God's way of life; you've got to have that desire within you that you *want* His spirit in your life to help you, to fight the battles from day to day, on the job, in your relationships with people on the job. Obviously they're not trying to fight the battle you're trying to fight, and so that can make it even more difficult because you see a human nature there that is so irritating sometimes. But God has shown that *you* know the truth and they don't; and through the midst of that we have to have that spirit and mind and attitude that you look forward to the time when they're going to be able to see what you see so they can work on this together to change and to grow, to be the kind of Family we have in area to area in Sabbath services with each other, that we're able to share in God's way of life.

We are a Family; but we're not a carnal physical family in this world that fights and bickers and tears each other up; because that's the way of the world. People get into arguments and think *nothing* of it in family, tear down each other in a family, get into disputes and *raise* their voice and scream at each other and they think nothing of that, of hurting the family or how people are going to be hurt, or have their feelings hurt or go away somewhere and cry. **BUT NOT IN GOD'S CHURCH! THIS IS A DIFFERENT FAMILY! IT'S NOT A CARNAL FAMILY!** Truly, we need to see that and have that great desire within us that we truly love each other and want to see each other be able to be healed – truly; and not get into confrontation and dispute. To have that happen takes work. If you have peace, if you have a right relationship with others, you have to work at it. What can you do to be friendlier to one another?

And sometimes the longer you know one another, if you're not careful, you slide off into what's easy as far as human nature is concerned; rather than working at the relationship you let it pass by. You've got to work. *You've got to work* to be friends, to make friendship work – truly! You've got to give! You've got to think about it! You've got to fight against the mind, of things that might otherwise be obstacles that would otherwise *prevent* you from doing the things that would help to strengthen the relationship – time spent together. *Time spent together...* How important is that? ...to spend time together? Just on the Sabbath? If you have opportunity, if you can, what can you do? More, if you're able to. And how much time on the Sabbath as I've mentioned in times past? Just before services begin and just after services is over and it's scooting down the highway? That's not working at friendship, that's not working at the Family, that's not working at making something produce Family, produce peace.

So it's upon each one of us to look into our own lives and see what it is that prevents that from happening. You know what prevents that from happening? Selfishness. It's easier to do something else. *It's easier to do something else than confront this mind* that's in your head, this thinking that goes

on between the ears – truly! ...and bring it into subjection to the ways of God, to fight against it, to fight against any thoughts that would prevent the ability for the Family to draw closer together. We are a Family and God wants us to grasp that in a very big way – truly. And any kind of family relationship, I don't care what it is, requires work, requires sacrifice.

Marriages that succeed, that draw closer together involve *sacrifice*, fighting against self – *always*. Same way within family when children come along – *it requires sacrifice* – it truly does – time spent, effort put into it and so forth to take care of, to address things that sometimes aren't pleasant to address; but they have to be addressed, they have to be worked out. Sometimes it's just easier...you get tired, you get home from work and you don't want to deal with anything. It's easier to bury one's head in the sand and hopefully something will go away. You know what? Never goes away; it just festers and gets worse.

Relationships, because we're in a carnal physical human body, require effort and work. And the work and the effort so often has to do with fighting self, fighting our own pride and selfishness – it truly does.

Do you have a difficult time ever talking to someone? Do you have a difficult time approaching someone? Is there anyone you would have a difficult time approaching and talking to in the Church of God? You have to ask yourself then, why? Where's it coming from? Where will the change come from if there's ever going to be change in drawing closer together as a Family? What is in the past or what is it that hinders that or causes difficulty with some of that and how can you break through that and what do you have to do in order to create peace, to heal the relationship if there's a need for healing in a relationship? How far are you willing to go to heal relationships? How far? What are you willing to give? What are you willing to *sacrifice*? Because that's what it comes down to – it always does. And if we're not willing to do so then we're holding onto something that we shouldn't be holding onto that is not our right, nor our prerogative to do so.

**Colossians 1:12 - Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us acceptable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:** it's a beautiful picture! We're able to be with one another as a Family, to inherit with other saints what God is offering to us; talking about here, 'light' that God desires us to be able to receive, 'light' to get rid of the darkness, to get rid of the things that cloud, to get rid of the things that murk up the waters.

**Verse 13 - Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated/changed us into the Kingdom of His dear Son:** that's the change that's taking place. There is a *change* taking place in our life as we move from one toward the other. I love the example of Mr. Armstrong coming out of Traditional Christianity. In over 50 years of moving out of the darkness, and as he moved farther and farther out of darkness, as God gave him more and more 'light', he was able to share more and more of the 'light' with the Church. We were able to be strengthened by that through time. Those of us who came later in the scheme of things, we were able to be blessed because of all that had been conquered before that, because of all the 'light' that had been accumulated by that point in time. It's kind of like now as we continue to grow in God's Church. Those who come along now are able to have the benefit of the sacrifice of others who've gone before and gone through that process so that now there's *more 'light'* to be given and that's the way of God. And so, again, it's a process we go through and we're able to share that with each other.

What an incredible bonding that we have with one another, that we're able to share in the same thing – it's the truth, it's the way of God we share in. You can't share it with the world. When you first come along you want to share this and you find out real quick like what it's like to share this with others –

unless God's drawing them they're not real happy with you. A lot of relationships change, relationships in family's change, relationships with friends change and after a while, unless they're called, it's not the same anymore. You go on and you grow on and they stay where they were and that distance between gets greater and greater. But you look forward to the time that they're able to see what you see, whenever that is. But you're able to share it: that's what we have together; God's word, God's mind, God's way of life that we're able to share with one another.

**Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son; In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation:** and so there's that which begins with Jesus Christ, and then we're able to share with one another as that continues to grow, that Family. **For through Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created through Him, and for Him:** In times past in the Church we read things into that, what was being said, if we understand those words and sometimes in the Old King James they're a little more awkward. But if we understand what that means – all of God's plan, everything began and was centered around Jesus Christ because it was the only way His Family was ever going to become a reality: it starts with Jesus Christ. It's a very powerful thing to understand.

**Verse 17 - And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.** Or in other words are established, or made to stand. And what is it that's primary that's supposed to stand? What is it? God's way of life, peace, His Family; **And He is the head of the Body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* He might have the pre-eminence.** We have so much to learn. By going through this series right now there are things that I know are at the doorstep but we are not quite ready to go into it that yet...but really, it makes a lot of sense when you think about it... about Jesus Christ. What we're going to go through at the Feast kind of opens the door so we can see even more, and grasp more about what God is doing in and through Him and the uniqueness of His life that is far more unique than what we really grasp. We see some things, but we don't see all that God is doing and the purpose of it and why. And the more you learn the more exciting it becomes – it truly does. The more you learn, the more awesome, the more exciting it all becomes.

As I've been going through and writing some of these things and going through the sermons I am just absolutely in awe of the brilliance, of the beauty... there are words you can't even use to describe it – the glory, the majesty of God Almighty and how great He truly is in everything He's planned and perfected in His plan. It is so awesome! Words are so inadequate.

**Verse 19 - For it pleased *the Father* that in Him should all fullness dwell;** there is so much more to be learned about regarding the life of Christ, truly. **And, having made peace through the blood from His being impaled on the stake,** (I'm adding some words here because I hate the other word that's used.) **...and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; through Him, whether *they are things upon the earth, or whether they are things in heaven.*** In other words, God's desire to bring peace; it's all about peace; it's all about reconciling everything to Himself, His way.

**Verse 21 - And you, who were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works,** the word means 'evil'; and sometimes we just don't see sin for what it is. Sometimes we just don't recognize some things that come out of our mouth, some things that we think about others or say about others... that they're just downright *evil*. They really are! In the scheme of things, when compared with what God is offering us, with what He's showing us, there are some things that are just *downright evil*

and we don't want evil in our life. That's what God has called us to get rid of! **So you who are sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind**, what a blessing that you're no longer fighting against God. Once you come to a point of baptism... now sometimes there are some struggles along the way with different things that come along; and we've all experienced some of those kinds of things, but we still have some battles that we have to address from time to time. They're good reminders for us that the battle is up here (in our mind); and it is our mind against God, not against someone else in God's Church, not against me as God's servant and so forth, and not against some doctrine or truth that comes to us...it's about God.

Sometimes we have to deal with those things and we're reminded of what God has brought us out of – that we were all enemies in our mind against God. We didn't choose God's way of life – He chose you. *You did not choose God! Not a single one of you!* Not a one of you ever chose Jesus Christ or God the Father. If you chose it in the world...you chose the wrong ones, you chose what the world taught you about God and about Christ and you accepted something that is of the world. Actually it's of Satan because he's the one who is behind those religions. He's behind the greatest, the largest group that calls themselves 'Christian' today and all the others who have followed their core doctrines. Amazing what's taken place!

That's people's concept, and they're deceived and they don't understand that, and they're actually enemies to what's true because some of these people sometimes who are a little more zealous in what they believe, when they come across you and what you believe about the Sabbath and about the Holy Days and what you think about the trinity, Christmas and Easter... they don't just, "Oh I just love the way of God and I'm so thankful you have shared this with me because I have been in ignorance!" That's not their response, is it? They don't understand their mind. But that was my mind; that was *your mind* before you were called; unless you grew up in the Church and you still had battles to deal with in the mind. But especially that contrast between not knowing at all, not having learned any of it at all, and then God opening your mind and all of a sudden coming to understand what your mind is like; that you *have* fought against God *all your life* until God brings you to a point where you're no longer enemies in your mind as it says here. So, **you who were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by evil works...**that's what kept us apart, away from God, has kept all of mankind away from God until God draws us and begins to help us, to heal us.

**...and now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable**, in other words without blemish. That's God's desire. So the more we yield to God, the more we yield to Christ living in us and God the Father and us living in them...then we become cleaner, our lives become cleaner, our thinking is made better; and as we continue to yield to that – less blemish. And we're always going to have some blemish, but His desire is to present us holy and unblameable and that's another subject we're going to get into in a moment here, how that's accomplished; because we're never totally perfect, we're never able to come to perfection, never – we can't in this body; you can't in a *physical, carnal, selfish, pride filled* body. You can only grow and have that become less and less in your life; less and less pride, less and less selfishness – but you can never conquer it in this body. You can never be rid of it in this body. Only one was ever able to accomplish that and He had a parent who was God. That's what made Him unique and different – totally, completely. Human beings can't!

**... to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable**, in other words, not to be called into account. There comes that point in time where God receives you. **...unproveable in His sight: IF ... If you continue in the faith grounded and settled**; that's what it's all about. It's about faith; because that's what God attributes to you for righteousness. It's not because you are, not because I am, it's



because of what we believe – it's because of what He's given us to see and understand wherever we are in time, whatever has been given to people. I think of what was given to Abraham. There wasn't a lot there in the sense of the plan of God, in the sense of the way of God, in the sense of understanding about Christ and the Messiah or all the things that have been revealed through Peter and Paul and James and John and on it goes. He didn't have any of that! But he was judged according to what he was given, by how he lived his life, and it was about faith – his believing God: and God attributed that to him for righteousness sake. So the longer time has gone on, the more God has given to us, but we are still all judged in the same manner, in the same way; it's a matter of faith that's attributed to us for righteousness.

So, **if you continue in the faith grounded and settled**; how grounded are we, how settled are we? We're pretty settled in what we believe. We're pretty united in what we believe in the Church; the things you do, the things you've geared your life to, of what's taking place that's going to continue on for a while and we don't know how long... It's an awesome thing to live, to experience and God attributes that to you for righteousness. **If you continue in the faith grounded and settled; and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel.** Every once in a while someone is – every once in a while. Got a little shock the other day... about a family that is new, has been around with us as a family for about 3 years, close to it, husband and wife, son and daughter decided they didn't believe this anymore. I think, "What a horrible thing! Just getting started and throw it away when we're so close." Something happened along the way. So it's always good for us to be sobered into reality and to realize you're not there until you're there. You've got to keep fighting, you keep fighting all the way to the end – whatever that end is. For most situations for us it's going to be when we see everything come about and come to pass; but in times past people had to fight all the way to the end of their life, whatever that period of time was. That was their end.

So again here, it's good to be sobered; those of you who are new, and those of you who are younger and those of you who are older. You can't ever let up. ...**grounded and settled; and not be moved away from the hope of the good news**; We have a hope of good news right now that by May 27, 2012 we're going to be there one way or the other; in God's Kingdom or in a new age...and we look forward to it with all of our being. ...**and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard and which is preached to all creatures which are under heaven whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.** In other words, to all who will hear. All don't listen obviously.

Let's move on to another area of scripture because we're kind of wrapping up the flow and the theme here, but it's all about God being in us, we being in God and that's how peace is able to be in our life. There's so many ways of talking about this because it has to do with the mind and the being of God. It has to do with the fruit of what God wants us to have in life – that is peace. But so much of that comes as a result of what we live which is in agape, it's God's love and we know we can't have that unless God's dwelling in you and you can't have the fruit of that, which is peace, without God dwelling in you. That's the product of life that God wants you to have *in your family, in your life, in this Family* – peace. And if there isn't peace something's wrong with the person who's not at peace. So easy to see somebody else that's not at peace with us, but it's about our attitude toward them that counts, that God looks at, that we're to be sobered by.

Let's turn over to John 14. I don't care how many times I go through John 14, and I've gone through it a lot because it is one of my favourite places in all the Bible by far. You know what? This means more to me *this* year than it did last year. It's an amazing thing! I think of how long that God has been showing me things in John 14, and it started when God first took me into the ministry back in 1982 out in west

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Texas, and John 14 began to come alive and year by year as time went along it became alive more and more and more. And this year because of what we're going through and because of the sermons we're getting ready to have at the Feast of Tabernacles...*this* means more to me than it ever meant before.

It's an amazing thing how you can go through a place in the Bible – doesn't matter where it is - and grow in it. I don't care how often you go through something... I've gone through Chapter 14 for *years* and I'm still learning more! I'm being *inspired* more! I'm *seeing* more! And you know what? I can't *give to you all that I see here* – each one of you – it's up to what God has given to you, where you are, and what you're able to see at this point in time in *your* life - because it's a spiritual matter and it's an exciting thing – it truly is. Awesome indeed! John 14! It's always been inspiring and it's an awesome thing to experience. It just gets more inspiring. And sometimes you kind of shake your head at how this can be? That's one of the beautiful things about God's word and God's way of life.

**John 14:19 - Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you will see Me: because I live, you shall live also.** There's a lot in this. He's talking about something that, yes, will happen eventually in the future through time, that because He lives, because He continues on as our High Priest that He can dwell in us and we in Him which the previous verses have all gone through and talked about over and over again. It talked about the giving of the holy spirit, the comforter, and now we're past that a little bit here. And so He's continuing on with the same theme and He says, **because I live, you shall live also;** it wasn't a matter of something in the future; that's kind of a given, it's between now and then that counts and that's what this message was about in John 14; about Him dwelling in you and you in Him; in the Father and the Father in Him and so forth. And on and on it goes. It's about dwelling in God and God in us.

**...because I live, you shall live also.** Spiritually! Not something in the future; again, that's a given that will follow in time; but *because* of the life He has as our High Priest and *because* of what God gave to us He can live *in* us; that's what He was telling them about...**you will live also.** You're going to have a different life, you're going to be able to think and see things differently. What an awesome thing! You can see the plan of God, you can see the law, you can see the Holy Days, you understand what it's all about from Passover to the Last Great Day. It's a *powerful* thing; and it's because of God's spirit that's in your mind; and when that leaves, if that ever leaves your life you know what happens? You begin to lose some of those things, you begin to lose the meaning, it starts going away.

There are people out there who have been scattered for so long that even in those very basic things they have been losing it. They don't have the same vision you do anymore that they once had. Not talking about even growth that you've had, just talking about the basic things that are there about the meaning of so many of those things. But you have them, they're a part of your very being because of Jesus Christ who lives in you; you have a spiritual life, a life that's in you that's growing. I have a hard time staying out of this... this next section especially that we're going into and bringing some of the things together in the truths before that...it's just a very powerful thing, it truly is. It's just an awesome thing to experience, to live, to be a part of.

It goes on to say, **At that day,** the day you shall live, He says you shall also live, He says, **at that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you.** And for the disciples, for those who were listening at that time, it was on The Day of Pentecost, that's when this started. This is when it began. Before that they were just being drawn by the holy spirit and their ability to see wasn't complete. It was kind of a long period of time; they were with Him for that short period of time in their life, a little over 3 years when Jesus Christ went by and they began to follow Him. And they were being

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worked with by God's spirit, there were things they were able to see, but in a very limited way; and then finally on The Day of Pentecost in a very powerful way God brought it all together for them and so much more as they went beyond that when they were finally given the impregnation of God's spirit.

It's just like some of us when God begins to call us and draw us. We're drawn by the holy spirit; we begin to see things, we're able to see certain things of the truth that we have now that they didn't have back then. Jesus Christ spoke in parables for a reason; and they weren't given all that we're able to see clearly now in the same way. So their ability to see was still kind of cloudy, obviously. Today, when new people are drawn and called, you read something and God gives you much more than what they had back then. That's an awesome thing to understand.

**Verse 20 - At that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them,** and that word 'to keep them' means 'to guard, to keep watch over, to observe'. That's what you have to do. And how do you do that? When things flare up in life, especially within the Body, that's where we begin first and foremost in a very powerful way spiritually. We should address those things very quickly, and again here, it has to do with living by God's way of life, living by His laws and loving one another. And again, if we fail as John talked about in 1<sup>st</sup> John, if we fail to love someone when we have the ability to do that; if you have the ability to spend time, to do something with someone else that draws you closer together and you fail to do that, then God says you fail to love and to fail to love is to murder. And sometimes we don't understand that!

You have to fight your mind and ask God for help to live this way of life, to guard, to keep watch over, to observe what He has given. They're not just there as niceties that we can read about on the Sabbath, or that you can read about once in a while in your home. They're about a way to live and especially to live when there are problems. That's when you need them the most! When somebody has said something or done something, that there's something stirring things up, you have to address that in your mind. Why are you being stirred up? Why are you getting upset? Why are you getting angry? Why? It's always *your* mind that you have to look at, not somebody else's, your mind...because that's all you have the power to work with. You have power and control in your life if you yield yourself to that kind of power in life and control.

**He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me:** and if we *don't* do those things then how much do we love God? Incredible! He equates whether or not we're exercising love toward others, whether or not we're forgiving toward others in our attitude... it doesn't mean you forget. There are some things you have to deal with in dealing with people that you remember so that you are able to deal with the way God wants you to deal with a relationship. Sometimes things have to be addressed and you have to remember. But to hold against? To cause it to interfere with the relationship? That's where we go astray.

**And He who loves Me shall be loved of My Father,** so again, do we grasp what reflects our love to Christ and God the Father? It's so much about our relationships with one another;

**And he who loves Me shall be loved of My Father and I will love him, and will manifest/reveal Myself to him.** He goes on to explain it...

**Verse 22 – then Judas said to Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?** How is it that we're going to see you and others can't? Because they could only think physically. They didn't understand spiritually what it meant to have the Church, what it means to

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see things on a spiritual plane, to see Jesus Christ, to see the truth of God, the way of God, the things that Jesus Christ gives to us from God the Father. So, **Judas said to Him...How is it that you will manifest Yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If a man/woman/person loves Me, if you love Me; you will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode/Our dwelling place with him.** We'll dwell in you. You will be Our dwelling place. God's great desire... incredibly powerful!

If we will keep those words; in other words, how we treat each other, how we talk to each other, how we think about each other and so forth...and that's not a small order – truly isn't.

**Verse 24 - He who does not love Me does not keep My sayings/My logos:** that's what this word is here, **My word;** truth, way of life, all these things that are included in the meaning of this. It's amazing how God equates love and loving Him and whether or not He is dwelling in us, whether His love is there or not. It all goes back to always, always, always how we treat each other, how we think about each other, our relationships with one another; **and the word/logos which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you.** In other words, while I'm yet here with you right now; **but the comforter, which is the holy spirit which the Father will send in My name, it shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you.** It will bring to life, make it come alive in your mind in your life – something to be lived.

**Verse 27 - Peace I leave with you,** what was He leaving? The truth, the truths of things about the gospel, the good news, God's way of life, the way of life to be lived, how we're to live toward each other. So much of what He said... I marvel at this when I think about this on Passover when I read this; we read through chapter 14-15-16, scriptures through chapter 17-18. And over and over and over again what is the subject? It's about loving each other. Passover service ought to come alive for you because Passover is about fellowship; it's about fellowship in the Body of Christ. That's what the word 'communion' means; that's why I hate the word the way the world uses it, Traditional Christianity, but it's the word for fellowship. It's about fellowship in the Body of Christ and what makes it right and pure, has to do with our relationship with Jesus Christ; and it's all about Passover. This is where it begins. The ability to be forgiven of sin so we repent when we're wrong and we treat others wrong.

In the book of John over and over again... what does it say, chapter 15? It starts out talking about abiding in Him and He in us and so forth and if you don't abide in Him you can't do anything that's right before God, that's spiritual. **John 15:7 - If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you. Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit;** in other words, God *wants us* to use His holy spirit, He makes it available to us by and through the sacrifice of what Jesus Christ did for us so we can be forgiven of sin, and then it goes on to say; **As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you: continue in My love.** It's the same word 'to abide, to dwell in, to live in'. **If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love;** and that's the problem! And that's why *every week, ever since I've been in this sermon series* there have been those who haven't been living this and they get in disputes and confrontations and have fall outs and cry and sorrow that's involved with that...because that's what happens when people who are supposed to be close aren't able to be close, and the tears that flow and the hurt and the pain and the suffering that goes with it. *Shouldn't be in God's Church;* but it is because we're human beings. But we should repent of it! And especially during a time like this as we get ready for the Feast of Tabernacles and want to be right with God and recognize there's a spirit world out there that would *love to see you go by the wayside.* That's their desire! To see you fail!

God's not going to fail...but we can, or do something stupid and have to wait a thousand years. That's why I've so often mentioned; I would so hate to think that what I'd begun I'd have to do it again in this body. I'm serious! We are so blessed! If you can do this once *how blessed are you?* I feel for mankind, I feel for those who had to live 600-700-800 years. I can't even begin to imagine that one! I mean it! The mind of man and what people were like and the evil was so great in the hearts because they became *expert* by that time, in evil, they truly did! They had it refined to an art if you can grasp that; because of the age of life and their ability to manoeuvre and manipulate. Isn't that something that human beings grow in? The ability to control, manipulate... and some of them became such experts at it and that's a horrible thing to become expert at – truly is. And then to have to live again in a body again; but at least this time it'll be for the right purpose to conquer and overcome that mind and it's going to take a long time to fight against that mind and to change and to conquer it and overcome.

And so again here, I just ache inside sometimes when I think of people not getting along with each other and people having disputes and sorrow and anguish and hurt and suffering in life, and words that are spoken; because that's what happens throughout the Body. It's happened in many different areas since I've started this series, and you know what...it's happened in many places I haven't even the foggiest idea...and I don't want to know; not my job. It's our relationship with God and we just need to yield ourselves to it more and more and more to a point where we *hate* that kind of thing in our life. The more you hate it, the more you work to fight it and overcome it and to yield yourself to this kind of love that God is talking about; and it's a sacrificing kind of love. It doesn't just happen because we go to Sabbath services or we go to the Feast of Tabernacles or we pay our tithes. That isn't what produces fruit of friendship and closeness in the Body, in the Church. It's because you *sacrifice* to give. You sacrifice to give, to be with others, to be a friend.

I think of Ralph Dowd when I say that. He has sacrificed a lot to be a friend to many, genuinely so. Travelling to different areas and so forth...it takes money, it takes effort, it takes time. ...To do little things for individuals in different areas? It takes time to endear people to you, that you do something, whatever it might be, to endear someone more and more to you.

So what is it in life you can do to endear people to you in relationships and friendships. What is it you can do to give more? What kind of additional time can be spent with someone else? And I hope and pray that we're at a point in time now that we fully grasp and comprehend that if we're not using every opportunity to be together with God's people Sabbath by Sabbath, if we have the ability... You know when I was first called I didn't know there were any churches. Back in 1969 I had no idea there were churches anywhere in the United States. I thought Pasadena was it. If anybody ever was going to see a minister, a *live* minister, he's going to have to go to Pasadena. That's what I thought by reading the literature – didn't have any idea. I was *dumbfounded* when I sent out a letter for baptism and heard back from a minister up in Nebraska because I lived down in Kansas. *Excited* when I heard there were services you could drive to three to three and a half hours away up in North Platte from where we lived down there. *I thought that was great!* You got to be kidding me! Only 3 hours away? Because I thought the closest was Pasadena. And if we grasp what we've been given, if we grasp the value of what we have, we'll do it.

And so to be with others of God's Church...? There's sacrifice involved, there truly is. A lot of it comes from right here. But if your heart is right and you strive to do the things that God has given to you, you know what? He takes care of everything – He truly does. It doesn't mean it doesn't come without sacrifice, because then it wouldn't be sacrifice in the beginning. Everything begins with sacrifice, it truly does.

So I hope and pray that at least we're getting the message in a very powerful way that if you're an hour away or two hours away I'd like to hear the reason why you can't be together with other of God's people. Now if it's financial and you absolutely can't do it and your car blew up, I understand that. To a point; because there might be someone who lives not too far from you that if you just gave them the opportunity to serve, you know what, they might enjoy sacrificing to come by and pick you up. Because, 'isn't that funny'... there are people like that in God's Church! And sometimes we deny them the opportunity to sacrifice themselves and to learn and to draw closer together; because that's what it's all about; and they'd jump at the chance, the opportunity. And that's the way we are! Willing to do those things, willing to help one another out.

I want to go back to what I was saying because I really want to get this point across. I hope and pray for the time we have remaining in this age that if we're within a certain distance of Sabbath services *I could care less what the excuse is... WHY AREN'T WE IN FELLOWSHIP? And do you think that you might be sinning if you're not there? Do you think that something might be wrong with your mind if you don't hunger and thirst to be in fellowship with others in God's Church? DO YOU THINK REMOTELY SO THERE MIGHT BE SOME EVIL THERE? ...SOME ROTTEN STINKING SELFISHNESS THAT'S EVIL?* Because something's wrong! How else can I put it? That's hard to understand. *Something is wrong spiritually in your life if you're not with God's people, if you have the ability and capacity to do so – every, every Sabbath!* If you have the ability! If you live up in Timbuktu, and we may have someone there now, I don't know... and you can't get there because it would take an airline ticket to get there, I understand. But if you can drive and it's not that far...? To me there is absolutely no excuse or reason under the sun why we're not together. And if you're not doing your part you're not growing like you should be and you've been backsliding, you've been slipping and it's a bad example to the Church!

What happens if someone begins to not come to fellowship? You know what happens so often in my mind? I wonder... "Oh boy, I hope there's not something that they are fighting and getting weaker and going to go by the wayside before long." And every once in a while that happens and I hear it. I don't like that, it hurts. I've experienced that so much in my life.

I think we got the message. But now are you going to do it if you haven't been? And if you've been coming just before services started are you going to change that? And if you've been leaving as soon as it's over and the 'amen' is said... why? Why? When I've visited some of the areas, I turn around and I haven't had a chance to say 'hi' to somebody. And I think, "What on earth? Are we that big? 2,000 people in an area that we can't get around to say 'Hi' to each other?" We're not there! Okay? And I turn around and I think, "Yeah, I didn't even see so and so... I think I saw them in a glance at one point there but, man, they're already gone?! Wonder what happened." Sometimes people do have a reason, most of the time it's not very good.

See, these things reflect something inside, it reflects something that comes from inside of us. How much do we want what God is offering to us? Family! ...in a Family that has peace, a Family that loves each other, a Family that cares for each other, a Family that prays for each other, a Family that is *forgiving* toward each other, a Family that doesn't hold the past against others because of something that happened in the past... you let them go because you love them, because you want them to succeed, because you want them to make it. Because Merkle is Merkle and you love them. I mean it; because that's the way you think. Sure, we all have different weaknesses, we all have different problems, we all have different things that aren't pretty, that aren't nice... Are we willing to overlook those?

**John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you:** what an awesome thing for God to give Jesus Christ, who said that the peace He had to give He was giving to us and how? By everything He explained in chapter 14; by dwelling in us. He wants to dwell in us, He wants us to dwell in Him, He desires that we live by the law, by God's way of life...because that's what it's about in loving each other. And that will produce the very thing that God wants us all to have – Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem; as a part of life – truly.

**Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said to you, I go away and come again to you, if you love Me you would rejoice because I said I go to My Father and My Father is greater than I.** I think of Passover when I read this. That should stir up in our minds what this is all about, how we're able to have this fellowship, how we're able to have friendship within the Body - because of what Jesus Christ did. We take the bread, we take the wine and we *wash one another's feet* because we're telling God there isn't one person in your Church that you have called me into, in Your Body, in the Body of Christ... there isn't one person there that I wouldn't jump at the chance of humbling myself and my attitude toward, to wash their feet. No begrudging, no bad feelings, no resentment of any kind – but love and appreciation and thankfulness for the opportunity. Anything less and something's badly, badly wrong – truly.

**Verse 29 - And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe.** Very powerful scriptures here.

Another one here, just jumping ahead a little bit, about peace; John 16:33. These things that were being said were on the last night of His physical existence on this earth. It was the Passover day that He was fulfilling – *He lived it*. He lived Passover. He was our Passover obviously; but He lived the fulfillment of that day.

**John 16:33 - These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you might have peace. In the world you'll have tribulation: but be of good cheer; in other words, be happy, rejoice; I have overcome the world.** So again, very profound scripture and a sermon in itself, something to meditate upon. What is He saying? What is He talking about?

Romans 4; again, noticing how this process of peace works in our life, said in so many different ways, expressed to us in so many different manners so we can learn the lessons we need to learn. This is an area of scripture in Romans 4 where Paul was explaining matters related to the promises that God gave through Abraham to be given to us through Christ. He's breaking into a thought here; **Romans 4:13 - For the promise, that He should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.** In other words, it's not a matter of how good we are and how well we do it, but we are supposed to strive to do it. We are supposed to strive to live it and to practice it! It's righteousness that comes through faith.

**For if they who are of the law were heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect: Because the law works wrath...** how merciful God is; because we all stumble, we all have problems, we all have done things in relationships and so forth; but we're to change it. Every time we see something that's done wrong in our life, we've said something wrong, or treated someone in a wrong manner – we're to change that. We're not to continue in it! We are to change! And that requires repentance, which is a matter of faith as well, believing and understanding that Jesus Christ died for us. Believing

that we're able to be forgiven of sin and that's why we *repent* and pray to God to forgive us. That's a matter of faith. Thank God for it, the mercy and the grace that He's given to us through it.

...**Because the law works wrath:** in other words, talking about the death penalty. That's what is required because of sin. God has given us the blessing of being able to be forgiven of it. **...for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace;** so over and over again here...

**Verse 18 - Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall your seed be. And being not weak in faith, he did not consider his own body now dead,** in other words sterile, speaking of the promise that he would have, lineage that would come from him, life that would come from him and eventually a specific Seed; **when he was a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief/disbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;** We've gone through some unique times for us. Everybody has gone through different stages in life. The disciples in the time of Christ went through some unique things. Paul went through unique things in his life that were unique to him. We are going through unique things, unique to this age and what we're living through and what we're living in at this particular point in time. And yet I see within the Church and my own life as well, the farther we go the stronger we're actually becoming. It's an exciting process *if we're yielding our self to God and continue to draw closer to Him.*

**Verse 21 - And being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed/accounted to him for righteousness.** So again here, this thing of believing what God says about Christ, about forgiveness of sin...and even about things that were given to us in this particular age of where we are in time. All this is a matter of faith. **Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed/accounted to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him...** and what is it we believe? What we're able to have, especially when it comes to the forgiveness of sin. That's why we repent. The fact that He will dwell in you. How deeply do we believe that?

One of the big things that I had for years and years and years, was so frustrated about in seeing what was taking place in God's Church when we got into the late 80's and early 90's, was the total lack of understanding that when you sin you're cut off from God. Of what it says back in Isaiah about that, 'God's ear isn't heavy that He can't hear; but it's your sins (It's because of our sins...) that He will not hear.'<sup>3</sup> And that's because we get cut off from God. If we truly had believed that during those periods of time we wouldn't have gone through what we did; but we became very weak and we couldn't really see that any longer spiritually. How deeply do you see it? Because you don't want to be cut off from God, you don't want to be cut off from the flow of God's spirit; you want to be close to Him.

I've mentioned in times past that sin is what gives Satan his power. It's an awesome thing to understand. When we're cut off from the flow of God's spirit, then we make ourselves vulnerable to power that is greater than us. That's why it's so important that we repent of sin over and over again, day by day by day – because you have sin in your life every day of your life! I remember a minister in this region at one time who gave a sermon and it was basically about looking to yourself as to how strong you are (he didn't put it across that way) and your ability to obey God. He asked, "How long can you go without sinning? How long can you go?" And it was kind of in the context... How many days,

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 59:1-2



how many weeks? And I thought, “How many minutes!” Because that’s a reality. How long can you go? Are you looking to yourself or are you seeking to draw close to God, to stay close to God, to be repenting of sin when sin is there so that God will continue to dwell in you. And that’s a part of faith; that if you live by that and you believe those things that God has given to you, that’s what’s accounted to you for righteousness. Not because you are; because you *know!* One of the *greatest things* you can ever come to grasp and comprehend in your mind is to know that you have sin in your life everyday *and you need God’s help to fight it, to change.* You cannot be perfect in your mind toward all people all the time.

What is your work atmosphere like? What is it like when you go to the grocery store? What is it like when you’re driving down the highway? What is it like when you...? Unless you’re living in a cave somewhere and totally cut off from all of humanity ... maybe the squirrels and the animals ... you’ll find somebody to be upset with... That’s the way we are as human beings and when you’re in contact, when you’re around others you’re going to have problems, you’re going to have sin emerge and you’ve got to fight against that, you’ve got to fight against how you think about others; on a constant basis you have to fight that. You let down just a little bit and that’s when it happens – truly. And so, how much do you believe that you have need for God every moment, every day of your life?

It’s when people become self-righteous and they don’t think they have sin that they’ve got a big self-righteous problem indeed and a matter of pride in their life and need to come to repentance and grasp what they truly are.

And so it talks about **this being imputed/accounted to him for righteousness. And it wasn’t written for his sake alone, but it’s for us,** so we can learn from it.

**Verse 24 - But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him,** which means to believe Him and believe what He said. And we just read in John 14 what He said and how we’re to have certain thinking and certain way of treating others and so forth. ...**who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, who was raised again for our justification.** It’s the process, how we’re justified day by day; because we sin, because we’re selfish. I’m selfish, you’re selfish. I am! ...and you are!

The thought goes on; **Romans 5:1 - Therefore being justified by/through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:** What an awesome thing! Think about that verse. Ask God to help you to understand more what He’s saying there; ask God for help to grasp and comprehend what that’s all about.

Let’s go on to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter and see what Peter had to say about some of this process. **1 Peter 1:1 - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification,** meaning setting apart for holy use and purpose; that’s our calling... **of the spirit,** so that God’s spirit will live and work through us; **unto obedience,** that’s the purpose; to obey God, to seek to obey, **and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:** Why? So we can be forgiven of sin, so we can continue to strive to obey, to live God’s way of life, to ask for that help to treat others right, to be at peace with others. **Grace unto you, and peace,** and *peace* – God’s desire that *peace be multiplied* in your life. That means we have to change, we have to change in our relationships.

**Verse 3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living/lively hope from the resurrection of...the dead,** on and on it goes about that process of those things we have in and through God.

**Verse 5 - Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time.** Beautiful verses here.

**Verse 6 - Wherefore you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold/various temptations:** we have battles, some times more than others, sometimes they're lessened and we have a bit of calm in our life; but the calm, the real calm, the real peace comes because it's being done God's way and you desire the help of continuing to do things God's way – because you're going to have tribulation, you're going to have difficulties and battles in life come your way no matter what. **That the trial of your faith,** things are going to come our way. Because whenever you fight against this God will show you things and things will pop up to help reveal them to you. Disputes, problems, difficulties at work or with others, or whatever it might be that causes tension...and then how do you respond to that tension? How do you respond to that stress? And that's what it all boils down to. How do we respond? How do we live then?

**That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found with praise and honour and glory of the appearing of Jesus Christ:** so this isn't a cakewalk, it's hard, it takes work, it's not easy and you have to fight against that... the biggest thing you have to fight against is right here... you look at it in the mirror every morning.

I'm going to go ahead and wrap it up here in II Corinthians 13:5 – this is what we have to do in the summation of everything we've looked at here. It's an area of scripture that so often in times past we've used during the Passover period and preparing for Passover and getting close to that period of time. And it really is something we need to look at now as we prepare to go to the Feast of Tabernacles. All of you that are new in the past three years – you haven't experienced a Feast like this, you've never experienced a full Feast like we're getting ready to experience. And when you're with people for 9 days, 8 days, 7-plus, because there are 7 in the first period of time and then the other day, but usually it's a little bit more than that because you get there a little earlier and you may leave a little bit later; so 8½ - 9 days as a whole you spend together with different ones.

When you spend a lot of time with people and are confined to different quarters than what you normally are spending time together in, you may not be fully accustomed to that and you may find you have to work on different things about sharing and about different people wanting to do different things; or someone wants to go to one place to eat and others want to go someplace else and you're trying to accommodate, you're trying to work around things. And sometimes human nature comes to the surface and you have to deal with it. But especially at this Feast of Tabernacles... to make the most of it. We thought last year that we may not have this one... and we may not have another one before Christ returns, we really don't know. But make the most of the time you have together, understand the beauty of having a Family.

Just like today, having everyone here like this is a beautiful thing, it truly is. Make sure that nothing happens at the Feast to where anybody says a cross word to anyone else – don't let it happen. Don't mar the Feast of Tabernacles this year by becoming impatient, by something not going right and therefore you take something out on someone else. Don't let those things happen. Swallow your pride; swallow what you might want to say in retaliation or at someone. Make it an atmosphere of peace for

others. Go work overtime to do that. Go out of your way to befriend people. I made the comment last year... don't let anyone be alone. You see someone in a fellowship, in a group; try to engage them in conversation. It doesn't have to be for a long period of time. Some people are easier to talk to than others. Some people have the gift of gab and others don't. Some people you can go up to and they'll do the talking for you. I have to work at it. As a whole, I have to work at it. I'm not the best at it, I truly am not, and some people even have less than I do in that area. And then when I'm trying to talk to them I *really* have a difficult time, it's like pulling teeth. But you've got to pull teeth. Work at it, befriend someone.

If you see someone alone, don't let that happen. And you know what? If everybody will do that they're going to have a lot of conversation, a lot of people they're able to be around; they won't be alone. It's easy just to be around individuals that we know really well and spend time with individuals we know really well, and on and on it goes. But sometimes you have to look around. That's what I try to encourage in congregations – try to get around to see everybody – say hello to everybody. Yeah, it's been a long time, but you know, just that being there with everyone – that says a lot, it truly does – and you'll be blessed for it.

So make this a special Feast, be determined to make it a special Feast. Ask for God's help to make it a special Feast, to make it the best ever.

**II Corinthians 13:5 – Examine**, this word means 'to take account of', **yourselves**. That's what it's all about. You know what human nature tries to do? We like to examine others. We like to take account of other people's lives. We really enjoy that. It's just natural, normal human nature. We like to examine others, we really do. What it is they've done wrong, what it is they need to change, be aghast at something they've said or done... or whatever it is in life. You can't live life like that; it's not good, it's not healthy.

So where everything changes and how *peace* comes to life is by doing this: **Examine yourself...** don't examine others, don't be quick to judge others – be quick to judge yourself. That's what God tells us; judge yourself, look at yourself, work on self. ...**whether you are in the faith**; living what God has said here. Are we doing what we can in Sabbath services to include everyone in our fellowship? Do we love everyone? ...or do we take the easy way out and just spend some time with different ones that are easiest to talk to? "Get in a corner with someone that I can talk to... that's... and I'm comfortable with this person but the rest I'm not so comfortable with because I got a work at that then." Well, work at it! I have to work at it; you have to work at it! But you know what? That's how we develop friendships and relationships, and that's why we have this bond that's closer when you do those things.

So again, **whether we be in the faith**, whether we're living what God says. Examine your thinking and other people in your congregation. It starts in the Church! And we're big enough now and we have enough people in enough areas now that in all areas that I travel to there is *that need* where people indeed look at their own lives in the sense of how they think about everyone else in their fellowship. How do we treat each other? How do we think about each other? Is there some healing that needs to take place? That healing is generally not with others, it's with us in our own mind.

So, **Examine yourselves whether you're in the faith**, take account of your own life, **prove your own selves**, that word actually means 'to examine'. ...**prove, take account of your life and prove yourself**. God did not give you the job of proving others. It isn't your job to prove others – truly isn't. So again

here ...**prove your own selves**; that's what we're to do. We're to look at ourselves but not someone else.

**Don't you know your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you?** How confident, how bold are we in that? How well do we know that in our lives? ...**except you be reprobates?** The word means 'unapproved, not approved'. God has to be in us. Jesus Christ has to be in us; and the only time they won't be is if there's sin that's unrepented of. That's the only time we cut off the flow of God's spirit in our life. And that sin has to do with any kind of wrong thinking toward anyone else; anything that's unresolved. It's not even enough sometimes just to say to God, "Father, I'm sorry. Forgive me for having said something, for having done this to so and so... or said something to so and so." You know what you have to do? You have to go to make it right. It's just like to a mate, it's not going to God and saying, "Father forgive me, I said something and I shouldn't have said that."

"Well... then do what you're supposed to do and then come back and pray to Me." Basically that's what it is.

"Go and take care of what you're supposed to take care of," God says, "and then come back and offer up your prayers before Me. *First* be reconciled to whomever...Be right with the other person."

Because if you're not right with the other person *you can't be right with God*. So that's why God says to look at self, prove self, examine self, make sure you're right, make sure that Jesus Christ is in you and you're in Him. **But I trust that you shall know that we are not reprobates**, or to be as unapproved.

**Verse 7 - Now I pray to God that you do no evil;** And so I marvel sometimes how we read through scriptures and verses and we read something like this, **that you do no evil**, and, "I don't do evil. Evil's evil; that's really bad. Who is evil? I don't do evil." Really?! Whenever you sin you do evil and God wants you to see it that way. Whatever the sin is, in something that hurts a relationship, it's just downright *evil*. And if you could see Satan in it, because that's the way he is, hopefully we can come to understand just how evil evil is.

**Now I pray to God that you do no evil; not that you should appear approved**, because we have faults, we have weaknesses and we have to go before God and repent and we have to go to people and tell them, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that, I shouldn't have done that." Expression we used in our family at times, "Give me another chance." Because my father-in-law before he died, it was one of his favourite expressions. Its like, "Give me another chance." We know what it meant. It's his way of saying, "I'm sorry, forgive me." Whatever! And that endeared us, that kind of an expression, it means a lot. And so again, it's about what we seek to conquer, what we seek to overcome, that we be right with God.

So again, it says, **now I pray to God that you do no evil; not that you should appear approved but that you should do that which is honest, though you be as unapproved**. In other words, it's always striving to do what's right before God no matter what.

**Verse 11 - Finally brethren, farewell. Be**, or as it is...**Become perfect**, so we strive for that, we *strive* to live right, we *strive* to obey God's way and God's law knowing all the while through this journey we have to continually repent of things that we do wrong. It's just a way of life! Not to be taken personally, and yes to be taken personally. Because that's where repentance comes from, it's from seeing self. **Finally brethren, farewell. Become perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind**, That is such a powerful thing to understand on a spiritual plane because it's talking about the *mind* of God Almighty. That's what God's called us to – to be of one mind with Him, at unity with Him.

**...live in peace;** what a beautiful thing to live in peace, because anything less than that hurts. I don't like to see people hurt. I've experienced a lot of hurt in my life, but with God's help, with God's spirit I've been able to deal with those things because I understand. I understand that people do things, that I do things, that we all do things that can cause hurt. Sin causes hurt; so I have to change and I want to give others time and space so that they can change. That's the desire. **...live in peace,** it's a beautiful thing! **...and the God of love and peace shall be with you.** If you do your part, if you're seeking to be obedient to God, if you're seeking to bring self into subjection to the laws and the ways of God, knowing that you fall short of that, but still striving with all your being to do so, crying out to God through the power of His holy spirit to give you the help to do so...what a beautiful thing here. **...and the God of love and peace shall be with you.**

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