

On the Last Great Day I gave the final sermon of the Feast that was entitled 'A Time To Be Sobered'. I've heard from many areas now and indeed so many people *were* deeply sobered. It's been kind of interesting hearing some of the stories, some of the things that first came into people's minds. Some completely shut down and could not hear the end of the sermon. I saw that where we were and some acknowledged that, that they completely shut down and didn't even hear the last part of it, thought that's what it was, and it was just kind of a traumatic thing in the thinking. And I've heard stories of all kind of thoughts that ran through the minds of different brethren and so forth.

Some were in a bit of a panic mode, and I understand that. And as was mentioned at the beginning of that sermon, the purpose was, indeed, to be sobered, and the definition of how we were going to look at this subject was given at the outset. The definition focused upon concerning being sobered in the sense of seriousness, the seriousness of it, the gravity of what we were going to address, and we were also going to look at being sobered in the sense of the definition of that which is marked by circumspection. And that's exactly what everyone had to do. They had to look into their own lives and see themselves and see what their relationship with God was like and with the Church, and with the ministry and so forth, because that's what it comes down to, the *truths* that God has given – which has to do with a relationship with God and with Jesus Christ.

And so again, marked by circumspection, of looking deeply at yourself and where you are in your thinking concerning where we are in time. And it was also explained how that the word 'sober' is used in scripture; and we were using those definitions as well because we went to some of those scriptures -having to do with being of sound judgment, of a right mind, to be spiritually alert – different ways the word is used in the New Testament. Sober in thinking.

Everyone had to take a look at their real relationship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ as these are manifested by our relationship to the Church. And that's really what shows us where we are, because our relationship with God and with Jesus Christ has to do with our relationship to the Church, to the teachings of the Church and so forth; to me as God's minister.

I thought it would be good to read a couple of emails that I looked at here today, just parts of them, because there are all kinds of thoughts. You all have different thoughts, different people have shared some of those with me, of what went through their mind; I wanted to read some of these to you. This one here says...

I just wanted to share with you both that at the beginning of the sermon you gave on the Last Great Day I had no idea where it was heading, but I know I asked God to strengthen me to hear what was coming. And when you said that the thoughts came to you that May 27, 2012, that it was not the date, I thought to myself, "Oh, we have to wait longer for Christ's return." Then I thought, "No, this is your plan God..."

In the sense of our own personal thinking sometimes in how we take things and maybe the surprise of something and the different emotions and the different feelings of what we may have to address with relatives, with family, with job, with finances, with all the other things that would definitely affect us.

The individual said:

...“No, this is your plan God, not mine, and I’ll follow you continually...”

...and went on to add that she would be with Ron and Laura. So anyway, very moving, of things that people have to decide because of some comments I made in that sermon. And she went on to say:

And I think everyone said the same thing.

And that’s been primarily the thing that has come back over and over again here. The individual went on to say;

But what I wanted to share was that after 20 years of being baptized, of many times of doubting my calling, of lacking the confidence, that the decision I made that day was a full and complete decision based on my relationship with God, not anyone else’s...

And this was in the context of others perhaps trying to dissuade or change the mind and so forth. By what was going to happen it was *her* decision. Says:

But I am now truly understanding what it is to have the confidence of my calling from God. I know I have so much to work on in me but I am even more excited now than before. I just pray I can hold onto this excitement and not get distracted.

A lot of insight there, a lot of things said that are right to the point of exactly the way it should be.

And another one...

After the sermon on the Last Great Day I heard various comments, nothing bad, about how individuals felt and what they were thinking during the sermon. The sermon was very sobering but it was also sobering to know that the sermon was for each individual in the Body according to their relationship with God then and in the future.

As I sat there listening I was thankful that I was from Worldwide and that I had seen much and learned from it; and I felt great conviction in my beliefs.

I know my weaknesses that God has revealed to me and I know I have so many more...

...in other words, things to work on, things that we need to see. Went on here...

He is merciful and I know the only way to finish this race is to stay close to Him and repent and repent and repent.

A lot is said there. Because it’s a process we go through; it’s a process of growth. Now, in some ways it was made easier because of what I said toward the end of the sermon – that which some people didn’t hear. We had some that didn’t hear it, didn’t hear what I’d said; that a part of what they were talking about with their conviction is exactly what I expressed in that, or maybe didn’t express it clearly enough, or perhaps some people were in partial shock, I don’t know, but that, “My conviction is deeper than ever before of what we’re doing, of where we are in time. The things that happened are incredible and

in a very powerful way, to me personally, reveal that things are moving forward exactly as God has given it.” But it was for *us* to look at ourselves, that’s why these things happen. Each one of us to search out our own selves, and candidly it was kind of easy. Maybe you were shocked, maybe you were sobered, but candidly, it still was easy, because the reality was at the end of the sermon we are headed full steam toward exactly where we’ve always been headed.

It was good that we went through that.

Let’s begin today exactly where we did in the sermon on the Last Great Day. 1 Peter 5. Now that we’ve had a little bit of time to digest some of this, to think about some of these things, let’s read it again. Because sometimes we can look at things, we can read things, and candidly in that sermon there I hope some go back and listen to it again because some of that shock and the shock value there and the numbness of mind that happened in some cases – because it is a numbing effect upon the mind sometimes when you hear something and you’re so jolted by what you hear, because all of a sudden all these things are flooding into your mind about what you’re going to have to address in the next few months, what you’re going to have to address when you go back home, what you’re going to start looking at from finances to relationships – because that’s what you would have had to do. And because of that there were some things we didn’t hear, or didn’t hear as clearly. So I encourage everyone to go back and listen again, because there is much to drink in of what was given. But let’s review this again.

1 Peter 5:6 - Humble yourselves, as I said in the sermon, be willing and desirous of wearing sackcloth. That’s not an easy thing because it has to do with humility, it has to do with fighting against pride, and it has to be a willingness, because we’re fighting pride, to look at self realistically; to understand where we’re coming from, to understand what we do and how we think as human beings, that we resist things, first and foremost, that God gives to us. Our first reaction, our first response so often in life is to resist things that God gives to us. And so there’s this battle that goes on inside of us. And so to humble ourselves is something that God has to do. We have to ask God for help to be able to work with this mind and to dig those things out that need to be addressed in our life.

So he says, **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God**, *under* the mighty hand of God! We place ourselves where we need to and we’re looking to God to help us to do those things that are necessary, because He needs to reveal those things to us; **that He may exalt you in due time**: And so we grow, God blesses us in our growth. He exalts us as we go through time, within the Church even, He strengthens us with blessings and we grow stronger and stronger until the time that we receive what it is that we all seek – a different life.

Verse 7 - Casting all your cares, the stress that so many of you are feeling while you were hearing some of that, because it isn’t an easy thing. That if indeed that was officially announced that day, that all of a sudden you’ve got to go back and you’ve got to face people, face people that you’ve told about these days or they know about these days and the pride and the humility and the frustration and things that are happening, knowing their reaction sometimes and the gloating and the mocking and things that take place, and, “See, I told you so!” type of thing. And so all those things that came into the mind, those things having to do, again, with finances or whatever it might be. Those are not small things, they’re big things.

And so God says, **Casting all your care/your worries/your stressful concerns/your anxieties/your anxious thought upon Him**; It’s a matter of everything fitting into God’s plan, that we have a confidence and a boldness. We continue to go forward, do what we *must* and God will help us. It doesn’t mean

He'll take the battles away, but He'll bless us and help us in fighting those battles. The battles are there, but the ability to deal with them confidently (hence a couple of those letters I just read), the ability to deal with things in a *confident* manner, *confident* of your calling, *confident* of what you believe – those things God will give to you if you continue to do your part in looking to Him and placing these things upon Him.

Be sober, be vigilant, that vigilance, to be alert, to be watchful, to be spiritually on guard is a powerful theme in the Bible, throughout the Bible. It is a very *powerful* theme of things that Jesus Christ said over and over again to the disciples and to us that's recorded. **Be sober, be vigilant;** and then the explanation of why, because especially, **because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith.** I love these verses. You resist him by what you *believe*. He can't stand what you *believe*. He can't stand anything about God, and the closer you are to God the more he cannot stand it. I've told people in times past, I've mentioned it in sermons – that just from that aspect alone of a demonic world...sometimes we're bombarded.

When giving the example of what happened on Atonement I was a little hesitant to use some of the example there, but it was a reality of something, to understand what Jesus Christ went through, that He allows us to go through on a much smaller scale, because we couldn't fight that kind of a fight - let alone fast for forty days - with that kind of a relationship with God, that knowing and so forth and the purpose of it. We couldn't handle it because – you know why? Pride, as human beings. Something like that can become a prideful thing to the normal human mind. "I fasted forty days!" Whoop tee doo! Maybe you better fast another forty days then...anyway, talking about human nature.

But it's a reality that He lets us experience for the sake of growth, for the sake of understanding the battles out there; and we're bombarded! This was a unique situation because of the timing and so forth and because of what was said, and because it was purposed that it be for the Last Great Day. That's what it was all about! It was about the sermon for the Last Great Day! I didn't know what the sermon was about. I knew some of the things were headed in a certain way, some of the things that would be in it, and some things I thought would be in it weren't. They're coming in later sermons. But the main part of it had to do with that period of time, and so I knew that there were things that happened then that were for that Last Great Day, but how it was going to come together, what was it all about – I had no idea!

What an awesome thing how God works, moulds and fashions us, prepares us as a Body because over and over again on this trip – when we started it in Europe, and all the way around – individuals, different ministers in the Church, sharing with us, that no matter what happens... it was like they were on a mission. It's like they *had* to let us know, "No matter what, we're with you in this! No matter if things go on, we're in this because this is the Church, this is the truth." I thought, "What an awesome thing that God is bringing people... some of you have had things that you've experienced and these stories are coming out now, of things that people have gone through. Another story that I heard about, a conversation someone had with a family member; and it was like this was an area that God prepared us for in a very powerful way – that *conviction* that no matter what... And that actually strengthens you. That's why I was saying that by going through this experience, hearing this from different ones, there are things you see God working... it's not just by coincidence that all these happened that people were prepared for various sermons and so forth, the things that happen in our life. It's because God's in it and He works with you by the power of His spirit to bring you to that point to be able to learn something in a magnified way.

When we travel, when we see people from area to area, we see this all the time! Sometimes it's magnified greater than at others; and because of this that's the reason why I have a greater conviction and an excitement than ever before about what God is doing with us and where we are in time. Told the brethren in Australia and New Zealand we may be back on Passover. See, before that somewhat bothered me, because I thought, "No, great tribulation has to be great! At some point here it's got to cut loose!" ...and things can go on that long, brethren. Things can go on that long! And when I mentioned about the 1 hour – 60 days... Let's say that were the beginning of something, of Europe coming together, that doesn't mean nuclear weapons go off on that day, that doesn't mean that the United States has even been hit yet! It doesn't mean that! Sometimes we think about a day and we think, "That's when it begins!" It doesn't have to! They're coming together, decisions that are made, power, they agree on something, they pass it, and leaders decide – and so they give their power in whatever form that takes. But sometimes we're looking for the physical thing that we know is coming. It'll be there! We don't have to rush things! We leave things in God's hands.

I hope and pray that we have the opportunity to *be there for Passover!* What an *incredible thing* if we could have all of God's Holy Days before tribulation, in the sense of bad physical things actually happen. Wouldn't that be an awesome blessing? We've been through the Feast of Tabernacles! I wasn't sure we'd have a Feast of Tabernacles this year. When we travel now, started with the Spring Holy Days – we took an extra suitcase with extra clothing in it, not knowing whether we're going to be able to come back... because God hasn't shown to me, He hasn't revealed to me *exactly* when certain things are going to take place, when the 2nd Trumpet is going to sound and the rest of exact timings. So this time here we took an extra suitcase. And if we go back again we're going to take an extra suitcase. But that's down to the wire... I will tell you that. That's down to the wire. But what an awesome blessing if God blesses His Church to be able to have a *holy convocation* of annual Holy Days all the way to the end. See? That'd be a beautiful thing wouldn't it? The power, the might of God to accomplish that...

Those things don't bother me anymore, because in the back of my mind in some ways they were still a bother. They're not a bother. We have peace with things like this when we understand. It's in God's hands and it's an awesome thing.

Whom resist steadfast in the faith... That's why we went through those different truths. Where do we go? This *is* God's Church. It helps to bring that home, that there is no place else, this is where God's working. And those truths are your strength, they're your power, they truly are. They are a tremendous power that God has given to you, what you believe, and Satan can't stand that.

I was going to say that in times past, in some sermons I mention this, when people have been bombarded by a spirit world I've told them, "Play the hymns." You remember David, when he played for Saul? I know some of what he played. Okay? And there are things that have to do with God's plan that those beings cannot stand. They can't stand a sound mind; they can't stand it if you're sober-minded in God's truth, watchful, spiritually alert, and so forth. They can't stand those things! And so whether it be a matter of playing something like that, that they can't stand to be in that environment, well, that's good. It's because of the truth. And the more convicted you are of the truth the more that they can't stand being around that, because of your response to God, your living by faith.

Whom resist steadfast in the faith, everything that comes out of your mouth, everything you do reflects what you believe, **knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the**

world. So we understand that, it's an exciting thing, understanding this relationship we have with God; but it's everyone that God's called, small as we are, around the world.

After we had arrived here in Hawaii yesterday after the Last Great Day, on our way back from Australia, I received an email from Skip Henry who observed the Feast up in the Niagara Falls area (and I imagine his jaws dropping about right about now when he hears this). And I want to relay a story he told me as there are a couple of very good lessons in it.

He explained how that during the Feast he and Bonnie watched a program on the Discovery Channel on TV. It was about a lion trainer who was attacked and mauled by two of his lions as he was in the process of feeding them. The attack went on for about 15 minutes, and the trainer escaped not having any vital organs ripped into, but he was mauled. After he was out of the hospital and fully healed he was really troubled by why they attacked him. He wanted to understand more fully so he decided to go to Africa to see if he could do a little research into it to try to see what he had done, make some comparisons of what he had done, to see and learn more about the behaviour of lions. And so they used a dummy for the test and tried to re-enact what had taken place when he was feeding them, and they came to learn that there were two mistakes that he made that triggered the instinct of the lions to attack – that triggered that instinct. And Skip explained how that this parallels what happens in our Christian lives when attacked by the roaring lion described here in the book of 1 Peter. It's very good.

The first mistake he made was that he stumbled and fell down. It's a mistake when you're messing around with lions, if you're a lion trainer. He said, because a lion sees this as weakness and his instinct is to attack. Awesome! ...his instinct is to attack when you stumble and fall. And thinking about our lives, the Bible says a lot about stumbling and the need for us not to do so, and there are some lessons in some of this, physical, spiritual.

I don't think I gave you the title of the sermon. *Sobered Indeed – Part 1*. Let's turn over to Proverbs 3. And so building upon some of those things that we focused upon during that Last Great Day talking about what it says in the book of Peter here about that lion and about a way of life that God wants us to live, and the strength He desires that we live it in, the *conviction* that He desires that we live it in. See, as a result of that sermon our conviction now should be deeper, more deeply imbedded in our being, in our mind, it truly should be, because that's the response. It's a matter of, indeed, *examining* ourselves, introspection, looking into our lives and examining our reactions and our thinking compared to what God has given to us, and then it becomes so great, what we see and what we understand, and that conviction becomes so much deeper as that process works within us by the power of God's spirit.

Proverbs 3:1 - My son, do not forget My law; God reveals things to us. Law is about how we live life. Law has to do with our beliefs. Law has to do with the truth that God gives to us. It truly does! It's about the Word of God, it's about the ways of God, it's about the truth of God, and the more we grow the more of His ways He reveals to us. He says, **but let your heart keep My commandments.** And so we miss so much if we just read through this and we just think of the 10 Commandments. Because there is that which God gives to us; He tells us to hold it dear to ourselves, to the heart, dearest to us; His truth, His word. And so as we went through some of those truths and talked about some of them they should be powerful to us, they should be precious to us, we should be excited and thankful that we see more. Because the more we see the stronger we can become and should become. And so the more we understand of God's plan.... That's why I marvel at what God has given to us during Laodicea, after the apostasy, and what He's given to us even in the last 2½ to 3 years...3 years now, nearly. And it's an awesome thing what God has revealed to us, and it gives us strength. But it's a way of life.

I think about this... the things we just went through about ordinations of women. If you believe those things, if you're convicted of those things, where do you go? If you understand what's happened over the past 6,000 years, how *wrong* it is! And we're just starting to open that door now to address something of what's been embedded in people's minds, a curse and a way of life and things that God has allowed to exist for 6,000 years because of the *hardness of the heart* of mankind, and because of the way man is. There's that which has gone on through time, that He didn't give them/couldn't give them truth about how to live life in a woman and man relationship, husband and wife relationship. And so God couldn't even give those things then. And so *because* of that, because of sin, man's been cursed and he's been cursed ever since. And God's taking us *out of sin*; He's taking us out of Egypt. And that's what people have to come to understand.

My wife and I were walking over here this morning talking about some of these things and this captivity! I hope we are beginning to grasp how deeply imbedded this captivity is in our mind, in the mind we have! And that slowly but surely we see things inside of us, and then as we see them we can *repent* of them, to realize our thinking. And as we were going over there I thought about talking about men sometimes and what they do in their thinking and the prejudice that's there, that they don't know it's there – *and women who allow it! Women who allow themselves to be oppressed, to be spoken to in certain ways, to be treated in certain ways* – it is evil, it's sick and God is blessing us in coming out of that! Because we're coming into an age when it's *not going to continue*. It's going to begin to be worked with. It's not going to be allowed in life. It's going to stand out like a *gigantic sore thumb*, and people are going to be made *ashamed* because they're going to be living in an environment where those things aren't out there. And so anyone who participates and practices in those things, they're going to stand out like a sore thumb. It's going to be made known. I'm thankful for that, sometimes that is the way sin has to be made known, and there are things not going to be held back anymore.

So you think, "What an awesome thing just those things alone that God has given to us!" It truly is, and it *has to do with commandments and laws*, doesn't it? The truth that God gives! If you go through those truths you can't separate it, it's tied in with the Word of God, the way of life, the truth of God and obeying God. Incredible!

Verse 2 – For length of days, and long life, and peace...you know, if we understand truths, they give us peace, they lead to peace. We learn how to implement them in our lives and adjust our lives accordingly to be in unity and oneness. It's about unity and oneness with God, unity and oneness of spirit. And all this knowledge that God gives to us, all the more truth that He gives to us helps us to put everything together in a better picture, the big picture of things. It's about unity and oneness to live God's way of life. It's an awesomely beautiful thing!

For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to you. Let not mercy and truth... See? Because that has to do with the law of God. Mercy and truth has *everything* to do with the law of God, the ways of God, the commandments of God, the way of life of God. So He says, **don't let mercy and truth forsake you**: don't let them pass you by, don't quit fighting for them, don't quit working for them, don't give up on them! ...**bind them about your neck**; you know, just like here in Hawaii, the lei's and how they put it around your neck, and they're beautiful, whether it be the ones that are more masculine that kind of fit more of our personality. What are those? Nuts? Whatever those things are, those big round things...anyway, they're not as nice and fragile as those flowers, they're kind of like we are. And so we tend to wear those kinds of things. I mean, I don't want to go around necessarily....I've worn them, not really excited about it – I'd rather have the hard shell things, whatever they are. It's kind of

like me, you know. And so to me it's more masculine. ☺ But it says here, **wear it around your neck**, it's beautiful.

...wear these around your neck/bind them about your neck, write them upon the table of your heart: in other words, they're dear to you, they add to your life, they're beauty to your life, they compliment your life.

So shall you find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. You know, when you live right, you live better, you treat people in a way that others don't treat them, it stands out; first of all with God. God is pleased when He sees that we make the changes in our life, when we respond to Him, when we repent of sin and strive to live what's right. We acknowledge what we are, we acknowledge the wrong in our life and this is a pleasing thing with God because that's the process we have to go through, isn't it. And with people around us, they reap the benefit of it, the blessing of it; on the job, whatever it might be, fellow co-workers, employees, employers, relationships that we have; family. The more we start living this way of life....

I remember a man one time making a comment, and I've heard this at different times as well from different people saying something in a similar sort of form, that a man was called in the Church at that time, his wife was not and she was concerned, "Obviously these changes you're making and our marriage, our life, our family, everything is so different from what it was." And He said, "Yes, but, because I'm living this I'm going to be a better husband. I'm going to become a better husband because of this and so this should be exciting. We're going to have a better marriage because of this." That's right! It's true! Sometimes it doesn't always work that way though because people get stirred up, they don't like the truth, they don't like this way of life.

So shall you find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Verse 5 - Trust in the Eternal with all your heart; God gives us truth, we're convicted of that, we see what He's done, we see there is absolutely no other place...no other place since the 21st truth. After that there begins to be this chasm and it gets wider and wider and deeper and deeper, this gulf between us and everyone else who is scattered – greater and greater and greater, deeper and deeper and farther apart. We're on one side and they're on the other, and I look forward to the day they can cross over. But now they can't yet, it hasn't happened yet.

Trust in the Eternal with all your heart; and so we see these things, we trust in God, and candidly we all have to come to even if it wasn't May 27th this is God's work; God knows what He's doing. We know this is where He's working and we follow Him. It's as simple as that; and that's what everybody had to come to. I hope everyone did; I feel like everyone has, as a whole. Some may still be in shock, I don't know.

Trust in the Eternal with all your heart and do not lean to your own understanding. You know what this is saying? This is where we stumble, this is where people fall, this is where the lion comes rushing in. Truly is! *Truly is!* That this thing of leaning to your own understanding, of the way *you* see something, or the way *you* interpret something, or you interpret something here in the book of Revelation. Your own understanding; it's not something that God has shared with us and said, "This is the way of life, this is what the truth is." It's something that we kind of hold onto ourselves and whatever the example might be. Our own understanding; God says don't lean to it. There's a way that God works. We look to the truth, the knowledge that He gives to us and we build upon that.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. See? He'll show you where to go. He'll *lead you* in the way to go. He'll direct the path, the road, the whatever that you're to take, and He'll bless the road you're on so there's no excuse, there's no reason, there's no way of tripping, stumbling, whatever. God clears the way; He makes it straight for us.

Be not wise in your own eyes; we look to God to give us wisdom. We look to God to give us understanding. We look to God to give us the truth, and then we seek to build upon it spiritually.

...**fear the Eternal and depart from evil.** That's why I love that one letter. "I see things in my life and I know that this is going to be the process; I'm going to repent and repent and repent." Because that's what we do. It's a growing process that we go through.

Dropping down to **verse 21 - My son, don't let them depart from your eyes:** God's ways, that's what it's talking about all the way through here; God's truth, God's commandments, mercy and the truth as we read. ...**don't let them depart from your eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:** that which comes from God. Hold onto it! **So shall they be your life to your soul, and grace to your neck.** Just like, again here, where it talks about, 'wear them around your neck, write them on the tables of your heart'.

Then shall you walk in the way safely; you know, God gives the path, He puts down the road for us to follow, the way to follow, and then we have to start making the steps, we have to proceed forward and continue forward. That's why I love the example of where we are in time, that we're in that 6th day. We're in that 6th period of time where we're marching and we just keep marching. And then one day... on the seventh day – you know just like what happened in Joshua there, seven trumpets went off and the walls came falling down. What a powerful, powerful thing to understand.

Then shall you walk in the way safely, and your foot shall not stumble. Beautiful! '*Then you'll walk safely.*' If you do these things, if you hold onto these things God gives us a path, He gives us the way to go, and then we walk forward and we're not going to stumble if we'll do what He says, the way He says to do it. He makes the way there and we just follow His lead with confidence, with boldness of spirit.

Proverbs 4:1 - Hear, you children, the instruction of a Father, those are prayers we commonly hear at the beginning of services, that we be able to receive, that we be able to hear, that we be inspired by God's word. That's what those things mean, that we be able to *hear* what God gives to us. **Hear, you children, the instruction of a Father and attend to know understanding.** It's a beautiful thing, '**attend to know understanding**', and so we follow along in the Bible or we take some notes here and there, jot down a scripture so we can go back to it later if need be, and sometimes depending on what we hear we're moving forward, bending our ear in to listen, and whatever...those are physical things we do to receive something spiritually from God.

Hear, you children, the instruction of a Father and attend to know understanding; For I give you good doctrine, that's a good way of putting it. It's good; what God gives to us is true, it's good. The doctrine we receive from God, it's good, and there's only one place that it comes from; it comes from God through His Son. It's given to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ has it, He is the Word of God that was made flesh, and that mind, that being, that He is the head of the Church and He gives it then to the ministry, to the Church, and then it's given to us. And that's *exactly* how God has always done it from the very beginning.

For I give you good doctrine; forsake not My law. Over and over again, ‘don’t abandon it’, ‘don’t give it up’, ‘hold onto it’; ‘don’t let it pass you by’, ‘receive it’, ‘hold onto it’.

For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let your heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. And so again here, that which is physical that reflects that which is spiritual that God has given to us. **Let your heart retain,** it’s based on to love, to live by, **my words: keep my commandments, and live.**

Get wisdom, get understanding; wisdom isn’t something that’s just poured into you. Wisdom is something you grow in through time. The longer you’re in God’s Church the more wisdom that you can receive. Because first you receive knowledge, and today we’re flooded with it as far as the truth is concerned, the Church, and the website and everything that we’re able to put our fingers onto; there’s so much knowledge to receive. And then we begin to understand it, we begin to understand why things work the way they do, why certain laws and certain relationships and what regulates them, and we begin to understand because we begin to apply them, we begin to live them, and so we start receiving understanding. And then wisdom comes as a matter of living by and a conviction to continue in that understanding. It’s so much a part of us that it’s just a matter of this is it, this is the way and there is no other way to live and we’re convicted of that and so it’s just the way we are, and it’s what we live, it’s how we think. Wisdom.

Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not; neither decline, the word means ‘to turn away’ from the words of my mouth. Well, I’ve seen it happen ever since I’ve been in God’s Church. People that have declined or turned away from God’s words; and we *can’t* do that, we *can’t* lean to our own understanding, we have to understand how God works with us. And I know we’re more convicted of that than ever before in God’s Church.

Forsake her not and she shall preserve you: love her, *love her*, what does that mean? *Love* those truths, *love* the beauty of them, *love* what God is revealing, *love those truths* – all of them! To understand them... I still marvel at number one that Mr. Armstrong gave, because as a whole people never really, *really* got it deeply – government - that which governs life on the job, in marriage, in family, in the Church, and it comes from God the Father through Jesus Christ. That’s the process that comes into our lives, God’s government governing our lives; His law, His word and those things that are there.

...**love her**, and the more we live by it...and that helps us, that’s about a relationship with God, is loving God, thankful to God, starting to understand mercy, what mercy is all about when we are merciful to others, patient with others, longsuffering with others, that we’re not always real quick to just want to jump in there and change someone else’s life. We realize, if we really grasp it, that there’s still a lot to be changed in ourselves, and we’ve got our work cut out, and we hope and pray for individuals, that they’re able to see and grasp those things, and sometimes we back away and give people time to learn, to grow; because we all come out of different things. We’re all coming out of different backgrounds and it’s not easy, this battle against self.

And so it goes on to say here, wisdom is the principle thing, therefore **Get wisdom**, because it’s knowledge that develops into understanding that develops into wisdom, that which we are convicted of and live by, it’s *us*, it’s *who we are*. I thought about reading in the book of Numbers about Moses when he prayed what he did when the spies went out to spy out the land and God was going to destroy... *told* Moses anyway, as we went through that particular story before the Feast, and Moses had this prayer before God; and as I mentioned to you, it was what God’s will was in the first place. It was for Moses to

learn, it was for Moses to express and for Moses to grow and for us to learn from such examples of God, about God in a more convicted manner. And because of what we've gone through now...it's very similar to what we've gone through, in one respect, to grow in that greater conviction of God, the mercy of God, the patience of God, the power of God, and that'll become stronger as we go forward.

Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore **get wisdom:** and with all you're getting, **get understanding.** Because we understand that's what leads to wisdom. **Exalt her, and she shall promote you:** how do you exalt her? The truths, the way of God, we lift them up, we realize *this is the mind of God*, this is the *being* of God, the Word of God; it shows us who God is, it shows us the mercy, the power, the love of God to us. And the more we receive of those things the more we receive of God; and the more we can agree with and come into unity with that the more at one we are - 'homologues' as it is - in belief, in truth with God, and that's the process we're going through just as Moses was that day. He didn't want to see Israel destroyed! He wanted God to show mercy! He said, "Because *you're a God of mercy!* *I know that!* *I know you're a God of mercy and what would everyone else say,* so anything else doesn't fit into *who you are God!*" That was good. That was strong. That was powerful...because he had that mind in him by this time, more of that mind to be able to express this. It's a matter of growth, it's a matter of conviction, and the more you see God through the truth, through what He's doing, the more you see God and the closer you are in that relationship. It's a powerful, powerful thing, it truly is! And so that's the process we grow through.

Exalt her; Exalt God! It's God! I've given sermons about this before in the book of Proverbs, and some of the things in other places, the way we've talked about the expression of 'the Word', that which is of God's spirit, that which is referred to as *wisdom*, those things that are mentioned here from the very beginning about wisdom; it's speaking of the mind of God. It's not talking about man's wisdom; it's talking about that which is of God, that wisdom that comes from Him.

And so the truths, the truths that God has given us. Awesome! To go back through and look at them in that context - *This is the mind of God*. 6,000 years of captivity just in the relationship of men and women. Awesome! 6,000 years, and we're just now truly starting to come out of that. They weren't coming out of it fully in Worldwide because they weren't there yet, because God hadn't brought them up to this point of coming all the way out of it. We're now at a time where God's going to draw us out of those things and lead us into a new time that He talked about, to give to Adam and Eve that they couldn't receive because of a different part of God's plan that was being worked out then. It was not for them.

So again here; **Exalt her, and she shall promote you:** it's about God. *He'll* lift you up. Put God first and in due time, as it said in Peter there... it's the same thing. **She shall bring you to honour, when you do embrace her.** You embrace God because you embrace God's word. Sometimes we don't think of things like that. You embrace the truth. Where else do you go to get it? It's insanity! And so you embrace that truth because you've embrace God. You know where it came from - *it's from God!* And it gives you power and strength and conviction in a very powerful way.

She shall give to your head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to you. That's a sermon in itself. **Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;** so we understand that's a spiritual thing. To hear what God has and then to receive it is based on our decision once we hear it. What are we going to do? How are we going to respond? And so if we're able to... God gives us the ability to hear something, what do we then do with it? Do we make the change? Do we repent of the things He says we need to repent of? Do we embrace the things He says we're to embrace?

...and the years of your life shall be many. We generally read something like that and think, “Oh, instead of living to 70, I might live to 90.” No, you might live to eternity...that’s what it’s about. It’s not even about counting them! **The days of your life will be many.** It’s about a relationship with God and where He’s leading us.

I have taught you in the way of wisdom; ...and yes, they do extend in physical life too, because of peace, void of the stress and the anxiety and the worry and the things that tend to wear on human health and wears us down to where we die a little quicker in time.

I have taught you in the way, the way of wisdom, the way of the mind of God, the way of God, the Word of God, the way of the truth of God. I have led you in right paths. When you go, your steps shall not be straightened/or when you walk your steps will not be hindered, is what it’s talking about here, and when you run, you shall not stumble. Powerful! So when we stumble on a spiritual plane it’s because we’re not doing what God told us we should do, and it is at that moment that that being, that lion, has power in your life. A demonic world has power in your life because of sin. Sometimes some of our problems are *because* of that. Sometimes the result of sin has to do with those things...because, you know, the world does things and it seems like they get by with it, in a different sort of way sometimes, because they don’t have these beings around them in the same way. They *want* to get at you. They *want* to make your life miserable. They *want* to lead you away. And so you have a fight before you and our response to God and the quicker we can respond to God the stronger we are, the more we’re blessed. But if you don’t yield yourself to God you will be most miserable. Truly! I have seen it over and over and over again in God’s Church – how *miserable* people can become in their lives. They don’t realize what they’re doing to themselves.

When you go, your steps shall not be hindered; and when you run, you shall not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is your life.

Dropping on down to **verse 18** – over and over and over again, the desire God has for us; **But the path of the just is as the shining light;** there’s no reason to stumble, in the light. If you’re in the light the way is clear. It’s only by incredible neglect, foolishness, bad choices, wrong thinking that we would stumble. **But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.** It just becomes brighter and brighter, because the more truth we receive the more life there is, the more we see, the more we grasp, the more we understand the brighter it becomes and the brighter the path and the way we’re walking becomes. In other words, the more sure we are of that, the more confidence we have of what we’re walking on and walking in.

The way of the wicked is as darkness, the word means ‘foolish’. **The way of the foolish;** if we’re not wise, it’s the opposite of wisdom, it’s foolish. We tend to our own understanding, we tend to our own thinking and we rely on and do things and make decisions that God hasn’t given to us, some other way than what we should follow. We go off the path and it says that’s the way of the foolish; **is as darkness:** you stray away from the light just a little bit and it gets dimmer and dimmer and it can go out.

...and they don’t know at what they stumble. Isn’t that an incredible thing? That a person can begin to go off course, begin to think a different way, and *they don’t understand* that they’re stumbling or what they’re stumbling at, because they’re not looking anymore. They’ve fully taken off in a different direction. I think of all the people I’ve known! I think of since the apostasy even and all the people that have come and gone. We’ve had...man, I’d say a few hundred at least, maybe several hundred, that we

have been around and fellowshiped with that have come and gone since the apostasy, in this fellowship. Amazing! As small as we are, you get to know people, you spend time with them, and always - always, they get to a point where you can see clearly how foolish the mistake is that they are making but they think they're justified.

I've seen people try to justify themselves because of sex that wasn't right, because they think they can have this relationship, that that's somehow okay with God. What they do is they try to find some fault in something that's been taught, whatever that is. They don't know at what they stumble... "Oh, Jesus Christ has eternally existed! He wasn't just born of Mary and started His life then; that wasn't the beginning! He's eternally existed. You're wrong about that, so I'm gone! ...going to be with this person here that I want to sleep with in the first place." Because that's what it's all about! "I'm leaving the Church because *this* is what I want." Those kinds of things happen over and over again. Somebody will always find something to justify what they're doing and they don't know what they stumble...but yet to someone who is on the path that the light is bright it's like, "That's so insane! To leave the Church, to leave God, especially at this late date?! Do you want to leave...why? Because your wife wants to buy a house and do all these things and if you follow her then you really can't afford to tithe anymore, so that's more important to you than what God is offering to you and you say you *know* this is the Church and this is the truth, but yet you're willing to go and do these things, plus other things, because you just... you can't tithe anymore because you want this relationship and want things to be nice and easy... you want them to be happy and..." Pshew! Give me a break! But I've seen people do that...just recently. And it blows the mind, because I see the choice they're making! And they can even say, "I know this is the truth."

I remember the first time that happened after the apostasy, there was an individual who said she knew this was true... she believed everything, but she had this person that she knew she wasn't allowed to have, that it was sin to have them, but that's what she wanted. Miserable life that followed! *Miserable, miserable, unhappy life that followed.* But once a decision like that is often made the darkness is so great that the light and what was known before disappears and you *don't* know that it's the truth anymore and you *can't* see it anymore. It's a horrible thing!

My son, attend to My words; incline your ear to My sayings. To whatever God gives, we incline our ears, we attend to, we want to drink in, we want to digest it, and never cease doing that in our lives.

Verse 21 - Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. Over and over again that which you have that's close to you, that's dear to you. **...for they are life unto those who find them, and help to their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence,** in other words, that which you hold dear. And God says, hold it dear and He says, keep that heart now, with all diligence, *fight, fight to keep it, work* at it; diligence! You can't just wait around and it's going to happen, or that "Once Jesus Christ comes then I'm going to be more motivated and do it, because He'll be here and the world will be changed and it'll be easier and I'm going to be more serious..." No, you've got to do it when He gives it to you, when He offers it to you. But it's about the growth and the opportunities that are there, because if we don't give it when He gives it to us you can lose it all.

Keep your life with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. When we understand how God's spirit works in our life, that's where it comes from, that power and that life that He wants to give to us.

Put away from you a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from you; how we speak, how we talk to others, how we treat others – this is what it's talking about. Something that... a froward mouth,

perverse lips – you know what that is? It's when we don't live like we're supposed to in our relationships, that we would say something to someone else that hurts, that cuts, in relationships, whatever those relationships are. It doesn't matter...within the Body, within the world, within marriage, whatever it is, and if they're not the kind of words that edify, that build, that encourage, that are good and right before God they're just perverse, they're just disgusting, despicable before God. That's how God looks upon...that's how He wants us to see they're like. I could give you some more examples but I won't.

Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you. It's amazing how over and over again He talks about the strange woman, the alluring eyes, the temptation, because it's talking about that which is physical in life and so often what affects people, especially men, and it uses that example here in scripture over and over again in the book of Proverbs, and He uses that on a spiritual plane. It says, **keep your eyes**...it's kind of like what I mentioned. Do you think you can train your eyes? Do you think your mind can be trained to let your eyeballs do what they should do and not to do the other? Do you think that that can happen in life? Do you think a human being can actually change what they see and what they don't see, what they choose to look upon and what they don't choose to look upon? What they smell and don't choose to smell? Yes, you can. And that's what it's talking about here, isn't it? Incredible!

Let your eyes look right on/straight on, on what God says is right, **and let your eyelids look straight before you.** Don't look upon something else that's wrong. Don't look upon something else! Don't play with something else that is not right. Received something today, that someone recommended a book to someone else, 'The Book of Enoch'. '*The Book of Enoch*'?! ...during the Feast of Tabernacles! ...as maybe some good reading. No, it isn't, it's a bunch of you know what, excrement that falls out the back of a bull! Okay? That's what it is, page by page, word by word! It's not of God! So why would *anyone want to read that swill and that garbage*? Why would *anyone* want to encourage someone else that maybe you can be lifted up, maybe you can broaden your horizons...? No, I'm telling you what, you're just out of the Church if that's what you believe. You just separated yourself from God and you don't get it and you're striving to lead someone else into doing something like that? Where do you think that mind comes from? It's not of God!

So *already* since the Feast of Tabernacles...! I just got an email on it before services here, had to shake my head. Give me a break! What's *wrong* with you?! Someone already has to be put out of God's Church! They've already put themselves out. At this late date?! This close to the end?! Isn't that what I said at the Feast? *Every year* people leave. Is that the last one? I doubt it very much knowing human nature.

So we have to look at ourselves and say, "Where am I? Am I capable of doing something like that?" Well, if you mess around with it, if you yourself look at it and you begin to think there's something good in something else out there, and you think that somehow you can get something from God out of it, then you've done *exactly* what God says don't do, so you're not a part of us. Go find someone else who likes 'The Book of Enoch'. It won't be Living, it won't be United, because *even they understand* 'The Book of Enoch' is not of God. Blows my mind sometimes at what we will do.

Let your eyes look right on, why look in other places for the truth? Why do that? You know, it's like going over and as soon as it hits the ground you go over and put your face, plop your face down in it, breathe it in through your nostrils, slurp it up! That's what you're doing spiritually before God! And if we can see how stupid that is physically it's far worse and stupid spiritually to do that before God,

because that's what God shows. Why do something like that? **Let your eyes look straight on;** be thankful for what God gives. Don't deviate to the right hand or to the left. It's exactly what it says here, and let's notice the rest. **Ponder the path of your feet;** think about something before you do it. Think about the consequences, the meaning of it, the wisdom of certain things. Where is the truth? Why go anywhere else?

It's as insane as what I've tried to help people to understand that *ministers* used to do. Ministers would buy commentaries of the Bible and try to get sermon ideas out of them. And I think, "What on earth is wrong with you?" And this was when we were in Worldwide, and even there I thought, "What is wrong with your mind?" And some were even encouraged to do it by those higher up. You think, "A commentary written by some Protestant who's telling you about God?! Who's telling you about doctrines and about their perceived ideas of truth. What's wrong with you?! Is that where God is working? Is that where God is revealing some truth?" Or to go to the rabbi's and what they've written in books about Jewish religion, because *surely* they understand Hebrew so they know what the Old Testament is saying, they understand it and so we can learn something from them!

I knew a man who's the same man I've been down on, who's an evangelist in God's Church...who messed up the 14/15th Passover, who said that Christ might have suffocated, who started teaching about pre-Adamic man... and there are people who still hold him in high esteem out there, that one evangelist that caused more damage in the Church of God than any other single man did! He caused more damage because he taught these ministers and they went out believing some of it. Some went out believing all of it. Thankfully a few went out who never believed any of it. And the same individual thought that he could invite men possessed into his office in Pasadena, sit there and talk with them knowing that it was a demon he was talking to, or demons, and that he could have a conversation with them and learn something from them. Oh man! I hope that shocks you! And this should be just as shocking! Why go anywhere else? Is God working there? Is God working in any other place?

But people do things like this and I just throw up my hands like this... what can I do? What can you do? If that's your choice, you didn't ponder your path, you're going to stumble. That's what you do. You're stumbling. And after a while you won't even *know* that you're just falling down in it, plopping your face right in it. Sad! And that's where you choose to live, that's where you choose to make your bed – on cow patties.

Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. That's what we strive to do in God's Church as a whole...at least if you're going to be successful, if you're going to be able to grow closer to God, if you're going to be able to grow in conviction, then you do that. This is what we'll do. **Turn not,** don't turn... *don't turn to the right hand or to the left:* God has set the path. There is a way He works with us, there's a way He teaches us, so why on earth would you turn to 'The Book of Enoch' and some other materials as well? ...to other groups? Why would you do that?

So as we went through some of those truths at the Feast, if this is where those truths are and you're convicted of it why would you try to glean anything that's truthful out of anyplace else that doesn't have those truths, that won't accept those truths, that believes those truths are false? I hope it just blows your mind, I really do! Because if it doesn't you're on dangerous ground. "That's about the stupidest, most insane, most ridiculous thing I've heard of! Why would somebody do that?!" That's good for you. If you're saying, "I'm not about to do that. I'm going to stay close to God. I want to follow that path. I want to be in the light. I don't want to do that. I don't want to do something stupid like that." Or if

recently you started doing something stupid like that, get back on the path quickly and get away from it – realize how dangerous it is!

Turn not to the right hand or to the left; remove your foot from evil. Because that's Satan's power. **...remove your foot from evil...**remove your foot from sin, walk in the path that God has given, because He says, in that you're not going to stumble.

Isaiah 8:13 - Sanctify the Eternal of hosts Himself; Set Him apart. *Set Him* apart. You know, the first time I ever learned about how this word is used in a greater way regarding ourselves, when it talked about God sanctifying the Sabbath day, that was awesome! That's awesome to understand that God set the Sabbath day apart for holy use and purpose. But then when it hit me one time that finally He says *we're* to sanctify the Sabbath day, and I thought, "How can we set the Sabbath apart?" I didn't realize, grasp the full definition at that time. When we realize that God has sanctified the Sabbath and He says you're to sanctify the Sabbath you think, how can we sanctify something that God has made holy? He's telling *us* to make it holy. We have a responsibility in our response to God to make it holy, to set it apart for holy use and purpose, the Sabbath. And He says do that with the truth, sanctify it. He says *we're* sanctified through the truth and you're to sanctify it. *You're* to set it apart because this is your life, this is your growth, this is what God offers you for your mind.

Sanctify the Eternal of hosts Himself, and this is how you do it. How do you set God apart for holy use and purpose? Prayer – if we can understand that; sometimes when we have to have our lives shaken up a little bit here and look a little bit deeper – fasting is a powerful tool. Studying, listening to sermons, we sanctify the Eternal. The truth we receive, the truth we have...*now*, more and more we begin to see this is how you set God apart, by what He gives to you. You see what He's given to you is *holy* and you yourself have that response to God, "This is holy. This is from God. This is what God has set apart for us." We read some scriptures like that at the Feast, that He actually set so many of those things apart for this time, for us now, for the end-time. Incredible!

Sanctify the Eternal of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear/your awe/your respect, and fear to do anything else. Fear to go to 'The Book of Enoch'. **Sanctify the Eternal of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread.** That you would fear to do anything else. To fear to look into something that is not of God ought to just shake the tar out of someone to think that they would do something like that, that they could go that far. That's why I've said about a demonic mind – you can't understand it. And you can't understand when a mind becomes unsound, when a mind is no longer *sober-minded*, when a mind is no longer thinking right concerning the truth of God. To try to understand why the decisions are made...can be a million and one reasons and we don't have to know. We just need to know what we're going to do and what is right.

Verse 14 - And He shall be for a sanctuary; for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, so this is talking about Israel, what would be happening to them because they didn't live by God's way of life, and that's what's being addressed throughout this. And so He says, what they should do, what they should have done, they should have set apart God in their being, in their life, but they haven't. And He said, so, in essence here, and if they would that God would be a sanctuary for them, a place of refuge, a place of strength, a place of protection.

Going on... in essence here this is what they have done. **For a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, in other words, and for a snare,** that which captures a bird or an animal or something like that, that entraps them, **to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.** Because that's what

happens when you veer off course, and you stumble, you fall, and on top of that there's a being out there who wants to get at us and we will become ensnared, imprisoned, deeper in bondage than ever before – that's what happens.

So bind up the testimony, bind up what God has given to you, the truths, the way of God; **seal the law among My disciples**. Seal it up; just like it's here, now set a seal on it. You have it, don't let it go! Don't let it leave you! Live by it!

Let's go back over now to 1 Peter 2, and get some more things here in context. We spent a lot of time during the Last Great Day in the book of 1 Peter, but here; **1 Peter 2:1 - Wherefore laying aside all malice**; it's a word that has to do with ill-will, a desire to hurt, a desire to lash out. Sometimes maybe we don't see it that way, but if we do it that's our desire, that's the way we're thinking if we lash out at someone, if we use our tongue in a wrong way, just like a whip – we want to *get* at someone, we want to hurt them, we want to tear them down, we want to put them in their place – whatever it is.

God says, **Wherefore laying aside all malice**, ill-will toward others in the way we think. That's not the mind of God, it's not the mind of God in someone who's converted, who's striving to change; and so we have to fight that fight! It's in our carnal human minds but we've got to get it rooted out. ...**and all guile**, again that word for deceit, **guile, and hypocrisies**, because if we don't live God's way of life, if we're not applying it... again, and that's what's so dangerous sometimes – a strong message at the Feast this year was we have *all this knowledge* but it's not about the knowledge you have, it's about your living by it. It's about your implementing it in your life because that's where you'll receive understanding about God. And so you can know a lot about God and not be God's. You can know a lot about God and not be living this way of life, and that's what we have to repent of and change, otherwise it's a matter of deceit; it's a matter of **hypocrisies, and envying**. Get rid of the human emotions that sometimes we have toward one another; because that's why we say the things we do sometimes. We lash out in certain things because deep down inside of us there's some envy, some jealousy that's there that's distorted. *Why* be jealous of anyone? *Why* be envious of others? *Why* do we put people down? Why do we try to lift ourselves up sometimes by putting others down? That's such an insane part of the human mind but that's what human beings do! It's some kind of perverse way of lifting up self. It just is distorted and yet we tend to do it as human beings.

...**and all evil speakings**, backbiting, saying things about people to...or to them. **As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word**, so even for us as we're first being called, God says to desire the sincere milk of the word. And that's the attitude of mind we should have *no matter how old we are* in God's Church...10 years, 20 years, 50 years, whatever it is. **As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby**: to receive whatever portion we can from God, and to recognize what we are. You know, the reality is we're not born yet, really, we're growing but we're not even born yet. We're not born into God's Family yet; we're begotten into it. We're in embryo state, but we're not yet born into it.

If so be that you have tasted that the LORD is gracious. What an awesome thing! We taste of that at different times of our life, especially during the Feast of Tabernacles time and we see the mercy, the patience, the love of God to give us something like a Feast of Tabernacles where we're able to be fed for eight days, and then the fellowship that we're able to have with others and that bond that develops in relationships; that you have to experience it to understand it.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone/a lively stone/a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, you also, as lively stones... Jesus Christ is that cornerstone, living, powerful, and we go before Him, that Rock that so many stumble at through time, and yet that we're not to stumble at, we're not to fall; and yet we do if we don't keep on course. And that's the warning God gives to us; don't stumble in this way. And the reality is if we stumble at something He gives us in the Church - I don't care what it is - if we know this is it, whatever things God does it's God and God knows what's best for us. *He* moulds and fashions us.

...you also as lively stones are, as it is here, being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices: What a beautiful thing to understand here - spiritual sacrifices. I think of the Days of Unleavened Bread and how we focused upon the importance of sacrifice and that sacrifice always requires love. What we're talking about here - if you love it requires sacrifice. To love God's way requires sacrifice. To bring us all into Elohim, to bring us into His Family, it requires sacrifice and so it's a process we have to go through. It's not natural! You can't love God's love without sacrifice, and the thing you sacrifice most often... do you know what it is that you have to sacrifice above and beyond everything else? There's one word - the great word that God wants us to learn and understand that took away peace from the very beginning. Pride. It's what it's all about. It's this matter of pride. Because you have to sacrifice *that* to love others when it comes to totally giving. To totally give means self is out of the way, it's for their sake, it's for them; but if you're more concerned about what you get out of it or what you're going to receive or by your convenience, or by your ease, or by your comfort, or by what comes natural for you...because what comes natural for us is that which is just carnal - so you don't want that. You have to give! And so just as God gave from the very beginning - He gave free moral agency in a spirit realm knowing it was a sacrifice because He desired a Family.

...to offer up spiritual sacrifices: and so when we give, when we bring pride into check, or when we begin to learn and understand it by doing for others, by giving to others, by being there for others, by... Maybe I'll give a sermon on that - just came to me here, some things that we probably ought to dig into a little bit deeper. Incredible what God gives to us and what this means, and yet it's something we grasp in a shallow way sometimes. Anyway, spiritual! That's the way God looks at it because it's something that takes His spirit, to do this God's way. To truly give for the right reasons and for the right motives requires God's spirit. You can't do it on your own! What you do, your love, it's selfish, it benefits self! It really does, if we understand it. Human love benefits self, it always does! God's love is different when you look at the human relationship and human beings.

So **...to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by/through Jesus Christ.** It requires Jesus Christ living in you and through Him, His life in you and you in Him.

Wherefore also it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he who believes on Him shall not be confounded, believes Him! Now, you see, for us in the Church this means a whole lot more, because the reality is everything He gives to us as far as truth is concerned, *that's where it came from.* *It did not come from me.* The truths we have, up to 57, did not come from me, they came from Jesus Christ. From God the Father, through Jesus Christ; He is the head of the Church and that's how He leads us, that's how He gives them to us.

...he who believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: in other words, that's what you believe, **but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, in other words, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,** So if we *don't* receive what *He* has given to us, if we don't come into unity and

oneness with it, then we stumble. And that's what we stumble at, we stumble on Him. We don't stumble on each other; we stumble in something that happens in *our* mind. Someone else can't cause you to stumble. Someone else or the Church is not the cause of what our choices and our decisions are... you have to make your own decisions because of your own convictions, someone else can't be the cause of that. It's a matter of *your* convictions and your relationship with God as to why you choose the things you do, and if we don't choose the right thing, if we don't hold and embrace the right thing then the reality is that Jesus Christ becomes a stumbling block, just like He did with that individual. He recommended 'The Book of Enoch'. Jesus Christ has become a stumbling block because that's not of Christ; on the contrary, He has warned and warned and warned us *not* to do such things.

...and a stone of stumbling, so the question is sometimes, do we really see God and Jesus Christ? Sometimes people see people. Sometimes people just saw Mr. Armstrong, and "Well, that's the way *he* sees it and that's *his* decision and *he* can say that while jet-setting around in that gulfstream, you know..." **...and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word**, the *Word*, the Word that comes from God, **being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.** That's what God's appointed us to, to the Word, to His Word as He gives it to us. He's the one that feeds us, He's the one that moulds and fashions us by His Word and He just gives us more and more of His Word, His mind, His being, His life.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, that's what God has called us to, to stand out because God dwells in us. *Royal! Royal!*; that's the way God wants us to see the calling we have, of how awesome, how valuable, how precious it truly is. **...a royal priesthood/a holy nation**, God has given us that which is holy and we set it apart as holy. Our relationship is with Him. **...a special people; that you should show forth**, I love this **...that you should show forth the praises**, the word means, 'the virtues, the character, the moral excellence' – that's what this word means in the Greek language. **...the virtue, the character, the moral excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light**: God blesses us so that His life can live through us to the benefit of others, to the world around us, because of how we choose to live, how we choose to walk; and we're blessed to share in that and then for others to be able to see it. We have that in our fellowship if we yield to God; we're able to see that.

When Laura and I travel that's what we see, we see the changes, we see that moral excellence, that character that's building and growing in people; and *that's* what excites us! It's not because *you* just made the changes! Because you didn't do it on your own! It's because you yielded to God and God's spirit's working with you and it's by God's spirit that changes come about; *it's because of GOD* in the picture, and thankful that you did yield to that process so we can have this fellowship. It takes our choices doesn't it?

Verse 10 - Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. *Very powerful indeed.*

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