

The sermon I gave last Sabbath, *'Sobered Indeed – Part 1'*, was a follow up to the sermon I gave on the Last Great Day entitled 'A Time To Be Sobered' and that final sermon of the Feast period did indeed do some sobering. Today we're going to be hearing *Part 2* of this particular sermon that was given last week.

As I mentioned in last Sabbath's sermon, there were a lot of different reactions to that Last Great Day sermon and the thought was so horrible to some that they simply shut down; they simply shut down, and I understand that. They were not able to hear the rest of the sermon because in some situations what happens is because you start thinking of family, job situations, finances, different things there, that so much can come flooding into the mind of what things you're going to have to address when you get back home, that the mind was racing in some cases so much... I saw one person that literally just shut down and they really couldn't hear anymore. And I knew it in the sermon there. And some cases, because of the way I hit it, addressed it, or whatever, in the latter part, if your mind was thinking about any of those things just a little bit you might not have caught it either. And that's understandable. It was a unique sermon in that respect of what was given, actually being prepared starting on Atonement; something that God was preparing for us at that particular moment in time.

Before we begin today everyone needs to be reminded of the definition of sober that we focused upon in that particular sermon on the Last Great Day which concerns the dictionary definition and the scriptural usage as well. The purpose of that Last Great Day sermon was indeed to be sobered with the definition of the 'seriousness, the gravity of the subject matter'; and we also looked at being sobered in the sense of the definition of 'that which is marked by *circumspection*', of looking deeply at yourself and where you are in your thinking and in your true relationship with God, because that's what we had to address. That's what everyone had to address at that moment in time.

In that sermon it was also explained how the words for sober that are used in scripture have to do with 'being of sound judgment', 'of a right mind spiritually', and 'to be spiritual alert'. Sober in thinking, that's what we're talking about here. All those apply to that subject matter at hand.

Because of that sermon everyone had to take a look at their real relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ as these are manifested by our relationship to the Church, to me as God's minister, and to the truths God has given us. Because sometimes we don't think of things in that way. We don't think of the truths that are there, we may think of a person who wrote them; but you have to keep everything in focus of where it comes from. It's not about a human being, it's about God Almighty. It's about what God gives to us and what God feeds us, and everything goes back to God. Our relationship with others in the Church has to do with our relationship with God first and foremost. That's what God looks at. He looks at us and how we live our lives and our relationship with one another, and that's why it's expedient for us to recognize we need to keep that in focus. It's about God, because He is concerned about our relationship with one another and with the Church and with the truths that He inspires to be given to the Church. So when feelings occur because something comes up and someone says, "Came to my mind May 27th isn't the date, that's just when it begins." And then all of a sudden a person can be tested in their relationship with me as a pastor, as a minister, as a prophet, as God's apostle. But it all goes back to God; it's not about me.

Those things can help us to examine ourselves; circumspection. And to be sobered spiritually and to ask the kinds of questions we talked about on that particular day.

So today we're going to start at a particular scripture again that we addressed last Sabbath as well, 1 Peter 5. It'd be good to be reminded of that even for those who heard Part 1 and for those of you who haven't heard it yet, because we began by focusing upon a verse covered on the Last Great Day and this is one of them...

1 Peter 5:8 -Be sober, be vigilant; which means to be alert, watchful, watchful spiritually, on guard toward self; towards yourself and your relationship with God and how you're living your life. God says to be watchful, to be alert, to be spiritually alert. That's what that word vigilant has to do with. So, **be sober**, again here, all these working together meaning some of the same things, in essence, as to what we're to do, **because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour:** A real being! A real being that hates God, hates God's plan, hates, as we talked about throughout the Feast of Tabernacles, hates Jesus Christ, everything about Him. The one he sees as the one who passed him, because *he* was at the top of God's government as an angelic being. And so when he began to hear about God's plan for mankind and the one who was the cornerstone of it all, Jesus Christ, he hated Him, jealous of Him, envious of Him. Envy and jealousy leads to hatred and bitterness, anger and all those things, and that's what happened in his life. And so his desire is to mess around with people, he messes around with things in governments and everything else, but his real passion, his real desire as a distorted mind, a being if you will, is the Church, it's God's people.

So you need to be sobered to realize the final time we're in. As I mentioned in part in that sermon, and even more so last Sabbath, all these things that happen only convicted me more deeply of where we are in time and what God is giving us to do. Strengthened us! Hopefully it strengthened you as to where we're headed and what we're doing, and that's why in that sermon it was mentioned that we're having another ministerial meeting that didn't come into my mind until about two days before the Feast was over, because before that I would have said we're not having another ministerial meeting. Why? Now I know why, and some of those things will come out as time goes along. Incredible how God leads, guides, directs us and works with us.

So again, **because your adversary, the devil.... Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary...he's your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith,** I love this! Oh what an awesome scripture! **Whom resist,** the way you resist him, the way he's not able to bother you, get at you, hurt you, harm you, in any fashion is by your being steadfast in the faith. Faith is a matter of what you've been given to believe and that you're living by it, your choice to live by the belief, the truths that God has given to you is what faith is all about. Everything that we have as far as 57 Truths in our lives and God's word, God's way of life, all the things that are written that have been given to us, and we live our lives according to those things, that's what faith is! It's moving forward in faith! It's a powerful, powerful thing, and Satan *can't stand that mind*, he *can't stand* that environment and he has no power in it; no power whatsoever, powerless. What gives him power is sin. What gives him power is when we stray from the course, when we become a little more spiritually weak or weakened, when we let down, when we're *not* watchful, when we're *not* sober like we should be, sober-minded in examining ourselves before God. That's when he has more power.

And so it's a matter of being steadfast in the faith, **knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.** We're a Family. Everybody's going through things. Everybody has to address things in their life. We're all together in this. We are a great Family, and I am excited

because I've seen that more in this Feast of Tabernacles than any other Feast of Tabernacles that I've ever observed, and that's an incredible thing! Because it's God's spirit that's brought us to this. It's God's spirit that makes us Family, and as our yielding to God's spirit we grow and we mature and we draw closer together, and that bond, that bonding that takes place there by the power of God's spirit that strengthens and reinforces that in our mind is such a powerful thing. It truly is!

And so in last Sabbath's sermon, after that particular scripture, everyone was told about a TV program on the Discovery Channel that Skip and Bonnie saw up at the Feast in Niagara Falls, and he sent me an email about it. He said the program 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. Can you imagine? ...for about 15 minutes, and the trainer escaped without having any vital organs ripped into. So, he survived it. After he was out of the hospital and fully healed he was deeply troubled by why they had attacked him and so he decided to spend some money and go to Africa, make a bit of a dummy test here to find out what it was...to re-enact what had taken place so he could find out why they attacked. And so they did use a dummy for a test and tried to, again, re-enact the entire scene of what had taken place. And he came to learn that there were two mistakes that he made that triggered the instinct, a normal instinct that a lion has to attack. And Skip explained how that this parallels what happens in our Christian lives when attacked by the roaring lion described in the book of Peter here that we just read.

The first mistake he made was that he stumbled and fell down. You don't do that in front of a lion; he learned that in a very powerful way. He stumbled and fell down and the lion sees this as a weakness and his natural instinct is to attack. And that's very much about what our lives are like if you stumble. The Bible has a lot to say about stumbling, about falling down spiritually, it truly does. We went into a lot of that in Part 1.

A great deal is said there and much of that was covered in last Sabbath's sermon. We're going to pick up in an area where we ended off last week, in 1 Peter 2. We didn't cover all that was needed at that time because this is where we ended, and we're going to go back into some of it, because some more things need to be built upon now that people have had a week to digest. You haven't, but you'll understand when you go back and hear that and some of the things covered there.

1 Peter 2:4 - To Whom, and this is speaking of God. It's amazing to me sometimes and it comes out in some of the other verses here, how often those who translate don't understand what they're translating, because they read into it their beliefs, or different ideas they have about God and about Jesus Christ. And this here is in the context about God. Just pick this up and notice this...

1 Peter 1:23 – let's just back up here because this is important - **Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God;** that's how we're begotten. When we were given God's spirit it's His Word, it's the truth He gives to us, it's something that happens in the mind, it's a matter of a decision and choices we made because of what God has placed in the mind and then that begetting that takes place. It's by the power of His spirit that *strengthens* that Word in our mind, the Word of God, the Logos, and it begins to live within us, it begins to dwell within us. God! That's the part of God that lives within us as He gives us His Word and helps us to become more deeply convicted of it through time. And so we're given that, we grow in knowledge, we grow in understanding in time and then in time we grow in wisdom because of the exercising of the Word of God.

And so again here, **by the Word of God which lives and abides forever.** God's Word, says **lives and abides forever.** God lives and abides forever. It's about God. **For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory**

of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: we come and we go, we're here for a while and then we're gone, temporary life; but God is forever and His Word forever. It's what it goes on to say; **But the Word of the LORD endures forever.** The Lord in this case is God that it's talking about; that's the context. **And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.** Comes from God through His Son to the Church.

And then, **1 Peter 2:3** - backing up here - **If so be that you have tasted that the LORD is gracious.** Again, the context here, to understand, that this Lord being spoken of is God, the Word of God that endures forever, God who endures forever – eternal; man is temporary.

This is where we're picking up here, **verse 4 - To Whom coming, as unto a living stone,** interesting word here, this word 'coming', because it has to do with 'drawing near' or 'moving toward'. It's what we're doing in our growth, in our life, speaking of God; that we are coming toward God or drawing nearer to Him. And the words 'as unto' they aren't even there; they're in italics in your Bible. But, **To Whom we are drawing near or moving toward, a living,** or as the word is translated in two different places here the same, **living/lively stone,** it's talking about us.

It's beautiful what God is giving to us and what God is talking about here. Speaking of God, **to Whom we are drawing near/moving toward a lively stone disallowed indeed of men... To Whom coming,** speaking of God. In other words, we're drawing nearer as the living stone, a lively stone, **disallowed indeed of men,** it's like the scripture in Revelation where it says 'those who were beheaded'; it's not the word 'beheaded', it's 'cut off' – it's very similar to that, because we're cut off from the world, indeed, and even that word there has to do like with an axe, violently cut off from the world. That's what happens in our lives because we're no longer doing what the world does, and sometimes relationships are cut off, violently so, because people turn violent sometimes, they get to where they don't really like you in some cases, they don't like what you're doing and they turn against you. And so, interesting words that are sometimes used here; and this is a part of what's being said here. The word 'disallowed' – it just means 'rejected' in the Greek. **...rejected indeed of men.** We live this way of life and that's how we're treated; you're accused of being in a cult, you're a part of a cult, you're a part of a sect, and then your ideas are rejected, anything you have to say about God or about Jesus Christ, or your ideas, they're all rejected and therefore *you* are sometimes rejected because they really dislike what you believe anyway, and that's the bottom line, and that's what it talks about.

...but chosen of God, and precious, so, that's the process, that's what it's showing here. We're drawing nearer to God as living stones, as lively stones that God is making out of us. He has given us life, we're alive with His life within us and that's the context of the verse here, not like it is in my Bible at all. There's more meaning to it, inspiring meaning, showing that indeed, this is what happens to us; we're *rejected* by the world, rejected by mankind, but *we're chosen of God Almighty – What can be greater?* What can be more awesome, more inspiring? If our focus is on God then it won't bother us in the same way what other people say. We'll have more compassion on them and realize they don't understand, and they *can't* because they're not yet called of God! When they're called of God, when their opportunity comes, when they're brought to humility, then that process can begin in them. But right now it isn't, and so we understand, we begin to deal with it and grasp, because what we hold in value is our calling! A living stone that God is whittling away and knocking off the rough edges and working with us to put us in a place that He's preparing, perfectly, exactly. We're not just called randomly. It's like the universe! For people to think that there is so much out there He must have just thrown it out there at times, like a 'Big Bang'! Let's just see what comes out of it! Throw masses of things out here, and stars spinning off of one and then just let it explode and this great big circle pattern then starts to come

out of it, and see what happens. God isn't like that! Every star, every planet – He knows them inside out, sustains them. I can't comprehend that power. I know it's true but I can't comprehend it. And the more we learn about what's out there the less we can comprehend it. It's an awesome thing! And so when we begin to understand what He's building within us, this is the greatest of His creation. We are the greatest of His creation, the most *awesome*! Free minds, free moral agency, and a mind that chooses to yield to Him in order to become a part of Elohim – what an awesome thing!

And so this is what it's talking about. And when we start out as stones we're not so lively yet. The only living part we have really within us is God's spirit because we are stones all right, that's a good analogy to use in the beginning, just a lot of rock, thick, thick, rock, hard to chisel away some of the pieces, hard to get us into a shape...and so it takes a lifetime, and we start getting there a little bit at a time, continual chiselling away.

So again, **rejected of man**, and rejected by the world, **but chosen of God and precious**; precious to God. **You also**, and again, it's not the word 'also', it's translated a few times as different words so it's interesting to see some of the usage. 132 times as 'even'. 105 times as 'then'. **You then**, is really what it's saying, **You then as a living stone/lively stones**, that's what it's telling us. We're rejected by the world, we're as living stones, lively stones and yet we're precious before God because of a calling He's given to us, because we're *called* by Him, *chosen* by Him even as it says here. He looked down upon us and *chose us!* ...to separate us from this world, to experience this.

It's encouragement given to Peter from Jesus Christ, from God Almighty! **You then as living/lively stones are built up/are being built up**, it's a process in the Greek here, **a spiritual house**, we're a part of a house, we're a part of a Family, and the more we come to grasp that the more endearing each member of the Body becomes, and we understand we're a bunch of stones. ☺ We don't do things perfectly, but we love each other because we have this in common, we're fighting these battles together. Isn't that what the context of some of these things we've talked about is? Incredible!

Already here today, **a spiritual house, a holy priesthood**, that's what it is before God. 'A holy priesthood' – that means to serve Him, to serve His purpose, to serve His Family. It's about a priesthood that we've been called to and the change that can take place in us if we can have that vision, that we don't have all that now but we have it in time before God. And for us too, what words can express the awesomeness of the opportunities we have in God's Family – some, a few, who will be a part of the 144,000, others who are going to be *right there* in the largest part of what God does yet – because by the time the Millennium is over and all of you being at the beginning of that Millennial period and the opportunity to grow in and live in this way of life, and to one day at the end of the thousand years to be resurrected? ...to join in with 144,000 to do one of the greatest things yet that God has been preparing for so long; for *all* the rest of humanity, *all* the rest of mankind...a priesthood, to *serve* billions and billions and billions, helping bring them to salvation. Some who will be your relatives, perhaps your own children, perhaps your own family, perhaps your own parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles; and you'll be able to help them, bring them to salvation. What an awesome thing to understand what God has placed before us...all having such opportunities.

So you then, you need to see yourselves, that's what it's saying here in this light, **as lively/as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God and to Jesus Christ**. This means more to me than what it did last year at this time. It means more to me because of what God gave us around Passover and Unleavened Bread this year – *sacrifices* – to understand that God Almighty has sacrificed in the beginning of time as He began His

creation, before anything else began, and He had it all planned out all the way to the fulfillment of Elohim, because that's not the end, it's just the beginning.

And so through time all the things that have taken place that God Almighty has sacrificed to give us, and then we come into that and learn that it's about sacrifice. To have peace you sacrifice. To exercise God's love you have to sacrifice. And most of what we have to sacrifice? Self. Our will. Our Pride. Because we're human, we're carnal; it's that battle that's always in us that Paul describes starting in 7 and 8 of Romans, especially Romans 8 talking about those things.

That's what our calling is, to offer up... a priesthood – it's about sacrifice. Jesus Christ's priesthood - He is our *High Priest* and He set the example in all that to the ultimate, to be a sacrifice for everyone else. Lived a perfect life. And that is never to escape us because it's real in how we live our life then, a sacrifice to one another, to love each other, to fight against any feelings of jealousy, envy, resentment, bitterness, anger, becoming offended about something that someone says or does, they're just all aspects of carnal selfish human nature, because the only reason those things happen is because of what we are inside, and that's not God's spirit, so we have to fight against that and yield to God's spirit! And therein is the battle; and it requires a *spiritual sacrifice* to yield to God. It's a beautiful thing, something that no one can give to you, it's something you learn and grow in through time.

...to offer up spiritual sacrifices; how often do you have to do that? Maybe several times a day. It's just your life. This is my life, there's nothing else. Some can't understand that in the world, and I appreciate that...well, let's just say most in the world obviously can't even come close to understanding that. Everything we have is God's, truly. Whatever God chooses, whatever God wants, it's His, that's it. 'My time' is not *my* time, it's God's – see? And we must learn through time to have that becomes a part of our being. Anything else is foreign to us, you know? Because it's about others.

No one could experience greater joy than what my wife and I have. We are so awesomely blessed to be able to travel all over the world to be around, to be with, on a continuing basis, God's people from one area to another. Unlike God just calling everybody in Cincinnati. You know, that would be fine if that's what God chose to do and we're all called in Cincinnati and then He sends us out somewhere else, fine. But that's not how God's doing it, because it works much better the other way. Beautiful calling, awesome calling and precious before God; should be precious to us too.

And that's what's **acceptable to God and Jesus Christ.**

Verse 6 - Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he who believes on Him shall not be confounded. You're not going to be confounded. You're not going to shut down when the chips are down. You're going to move forward, you're going to grow and be so tuned into God that when God says turn right you turn right and you're glad to do it and you're so thankful you didn't turn left, weren't presumptuous, didn't do your own will. When He says turn left you turn left quickly, you do *exactly* what God gives you to do. When He says stop you stop, when He says go forward you go forward, and you don't decide where God's going to lead you and how He's going to lead you. You look to God to lead and guide and direct your life in everything you do. Truly! That's what it's about. And so you'll not be confounded. There'll always be answers there. We may not find them immediately but there are always answers as to what we should do, what we need to do and how we need to do it. They're always there in front of us, just sometimes it's a little hard to see because sometimes we want something different. I've gone through battles like that, some have lasted a long time where I really wanted some conditions and certain things around me

to be different because it wasn't pleasant, it was uncomfortable, it was a stress, it was trying, and then you finally have peace when finally all those things are layed aside because they're not important – God is. And that's something we have to go through in life.

So, **you'll not be confounded**. It's not just believing *on* Him, it's believing Him, and that has to do with the truths; because you see, Jesus Christ is the one who gave us all the truths we have. They come from God Almighty, but they come through Jesus Christ. He is the High Priest. He is the Head of the Church, the Head of the Body; it all comes from Him, from our elder brother. **Unto you therefore who believe He is precious:** That's what it's talking about here. We believe everything He's given to us and we grasp that word meaning 'precious' here, of meaning 'precious value'; that's what it means. We value highly, incredibly so, with great honour, of being of great honour, Jesus Christ, our High Priest.

But unto them who are disobedient, a word that has to do with 'being disobedient and disbelieving,' who don't believe Him, who don't believe the things that He gives, that battle that sometimes has gone on, does go on, in God's Church and we all experience sometimes to one degree or another, maybe at different moments in our life. I think of different ones who have told me about different things when they came along, especially from the past and their lives rekindled, recharged, awakened, because of an apostasy, and at different stages things that hit people, like one individual I remember telling me that this thing of the place of safety – that bothered him. "We're not going to a place of safety? I've always believed we're going to a place of safety! I don't want to suffer. I don't want my family to suffer. I want us all to go to this..." kind of a deserted desert place without electricity, without running water... "I want to go there during that time period. I want to be there, a place that holds about 14,000 people maybe maximum with one hundred fifty some or two hundred thousand and be happy for 3½ years there." Anyway... just kidding. We learn, we live, we grow through these things. So different things come along that we must grow and change in. Look at the 144,000 – we learn that the count is through 6,000 years and at first our tendency might be to resist some of that. We learn to accept what God gives us as we grow; the *present truth* means more and more and more.

And so again here, **He is of precious value, of great honour, but unto them who are disobedient/disbelieving/don't believe the stone which the builders disallowed/rejected**, that same word again. We're rejected *because* we receive the truth, because we receive God's way of life. We begin to live by it. *He* was rejected because He is the example of it all to the nth degree in that respect compared to us and what we go through. ...**the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made/has become/has been made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling**, you *don't want to stumble there*. A roaring lion? ...see's you stumble, he's there. You don't want to stumble. You don't want to stumble at the Word of God, the truth of God, the way of God. We want to be spiritually alert and realize the danger that's around us.

See, that individual (the lion owner) learned it in a hard way, suffered in a great way and nearly lost his life on a physical plane. We can lose ours on a spiritual plane, at least the opportunity we have now that might come much later on depending on how we respond and what we do in life.

And so again here, **a stone of stumbling**; and that's what it's about. Sometimes when we read a scripture like this and we just think about Jesus Christ. "No, I'd never stumble at Christ. I'd never stumble at..." But He gives us everything we have. So really everything we have and how we respond to it pictures whether or not we're going to stumble at Him. That's what it's all about. And I'll tell you, in God's Church even before the apostasy, knew of hundreds – *hundreds of people* – met them, visited with them, talked to people in their own homes, who stumbled through time and were never a part of

us again, even before the apostasy ever came. And then when that happened look at what took place, look at all the stumbling that took place and the power that Satan had at that time because of those who stumbled at what was said by a man that we should have been far more alert to, which God warned us over and over again, Jesus Christ warned us over and over again, "It's coming, it's going to happen. Don't let it take place. Don't become lukewarm." What did we do? We became lukewarm! We let down! We did *exactly* what He said we should watch out and not let happen. Incredible! And we stumbled.

...and a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the Word, because it's easy to think, "I'd never react this way to God, I'd never react this way to Jesus Christ, I wouldn't do that before them!" But yet when we're put to the test in life, because this is what it's about and our own physical lives with God's spirit in the Church, this is exactly what God looks at to see whether or not indeed we're going to stumble, depending upon how we respond to His word, what He gives to us. **...even to them who stumble at the Word, being/by being disobedient:** because that's how you stumble, that's how we stumbled, disbelief, disobedient. We don't do it; we have a hard time accepting it. It's like this attitude of mind that it's just too hard! ...that's too much! Whatever. **...whereunto also they were appointed.** The word meaning 'placed'. They *placed* themselves in that position – it's their choice, their response in life.

So again, if through disobedience, disbelief of the truth, someone stumbles, then the lion indeed can attack. He looks for those opportunities, it's his spiritual nature. Truly is. It's just the way he is; he wants you, but he has to wait until you stumble.

So again, some things can try us as to sometimes what we really believe, and that reflects our relationship to God Almighty and to Jesus Christ and to this thing of stumbling and what we do. And so there are examples like Pentecost of 1974. A lot of people stumbled at this stumbling block, stumbling stone at that time. Not a few, a lot in God's Church back in 1974 stumbled. Ministers, churches, brethren into the hundreds, stumbled during the year 1974 in God's Church. And I think of other things then; we can go through all the different truths, 50th Truth, the 42nd Truth – that's going to be a toughie for some, that God the Father is Yahweh Elohim and He alone has eternally existed – people will stumble at that as time goes forward. They already are, they can't accept that. That gives them grounds to believe we've *really* gone out in left field when in reality we're closer to God than the Church has ever been through time on a spiritual plane.

So again, the subject matter that I addressed on the Last Great Day concerning May 27, 2012 was a good exercise to help everyone with introspection; circumspection, if you will, to truly examine yourself in your relationship with God, revealing the importance of constantly, consistently seeking to be spiritually alert and sober-minded. You can't let down, especially now of all times, where we're going, where we're headed, what's getting ready to take place.

I'll tell you what, I hope you're dumbfounded. I hope you *see it* from time to time, some of the news that's out there. Satan plays games; and the world plays games. The economy, at a time when there should be really great fear, people are making money by it going up and then it coming down. I don't know if you've seen the one example of the one individual that's gone around to different ones, being interviewed by the man on BBC (I think it was BBC), talking about how he's been waiting for this time, for a crash, and he's looking forward to making a lot of money. He's talking about the 1930's and what happened back then. He said not everybody lost money back then; if you know what to look for, if you

know where to go. The only thing is this time it's the very thing that's the cornerstone of the collapse in the first place. Sick world!

People talking about war. ...war in Europe? I mentioned here recently and now Angela Merkel herself – they know their history. They know what's happened in Europe through time; and to comprehend, to realize that “...if we don't get our act together over here, if we can't turn this around what the outcome is very likely to be...” – war. How long was it before people began to wake up before WWII was in full steam ahead? People chose...*people chose* not to address those things. They chose to believe that things would continue on, that we would come out of this, or that we wouldn't have to get involved; and then finally just like the United States, an appropriate comment made by, I believe it was a Japanese admiral who made the comment, “We have now awakened the sleeping giant.” Powerful! We were asleep because we chose to be. We didn't want to be a part of what was happening over there knowing what it would mean in the loss of life and so forth. And this time around it's far, far worse.

Incredible what's taking place out there in the news. And what's taking place in the economies of the world? You see things about Italy now? So they put a band-aid on Greece but a great rupture is happening in Italy that makes all the rest look puny in comparison because it's so massive, so great, the debt and the payment on the debt, and the escalating cost of it and the unrest in the country because of things going on because when you're in that big of trouble and you have to start taking away benefits and things in life from people, from your population, and how they respond... Europe has been notorious for responding in a certain way.

It's all coming brethren; it's coming a whole lot faster than what you might think. Being set in place and when the time is right it'll be here. We really live in incredible times, we truly do. To witness...*to witness* these things as they come about – really incredible.

So again, this matter of stumbling at the Rock, of stumbling on the Word of God, is an important part of the context and area of scripture that we covered, again, on the Last Great Day in that particular sermon ‘A Time To Be Sobered’...and it was. And it concerns another part here that we looked at during the Feast and an example we're going to look now is an area that concerns the account of Jesus Christ. Again, I'm amazed sometimes at how some of these come back and we're able to build upon them. It's kind of like Mr. Armstrong, I think about how many times he went back to the two trees and people just shut off because... and I know we're not that way. We're learning. We have learned that God just continues to give us things so we can build upon more and the picture becomes greater and greater and the focus becomes more powerful. And so it is in this example here, of the example when He told the disciples “...you're going to have to drink My blood and eat My flesh.” What an incredible thing! That really was. What an *awesome thing* that took place at that time, because they had *no comprehension* of anything having to do with the Passover service yet. That was quite a ways down the road yet.

Let's go back there and just be reminded of a little bit of this; John 6:60. Because this is what we're talking about when we talk about stumbling. It has to do with what we're shown, it has to do with the truth, and sometimes it means that we *don't always understand it!* Sometimes we may not have the full picture yet! Sometimes we don't see everything, *but we better have a strong enough record*, like the disciples did by this point, *they KNEW who He was*, that they weren't going to leave. And though they didn't understand it yet they were willing to wait until they did. And that's the mind we must have as God's people, even for a date. Big deal! We know this is God's Church. But again, I know why these things are before us and why they're being addressed – because it's introspection. It's so that we can become stronger. It's so that we can be better prepared for what's ahead. We're not there yet. Thank

God He's had such mercy upon us and that we have this opportunity to still come together like this, for everybody to hear Sabbath by Sabbath by Sabbath, because you know what? It's not going to come until we're to the point that God has prepared us to be fully ready. That's what's exciting, inspiring to understand.

John 6:60 - Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this, said, This is hard! This is hard, what He's saying; who can hear it? How can this be? They were questioning it, questioning the Messiah, the Christ! And so everything they'd experienced to this moment in time, many of them just couldn't anymore, they stumbled at what He said. Two different mind-sets, as we talked about during the Feast. And they made the decision this cannot be of God, even though they already had the proof that it was of God before this.

So it goes on to say, **When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said to them, Does this offend you?** The word meaning, 'does this *cause you to stumble*?' That's what the word means in the Greek – stumble. The lion? He's there. He's there pushing people, wanting them to come to this moment in time, wanting people to stumble at things that are said.

Verse 66 - From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. And Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away? We're reading this again because it's *so important* to understand! It's *so important* for us to be so deeply convicted in what we already know, what God has given to us. I think of John the Baptist. To come to the point, because of the pressure and the stress and the trial that was upon him and knowing that his life was on the brink there, sent a message, because he was so distressed, so distraught because of what he was suffering through, "Are You the one or should we look to another?" Powerful what was said. And He sent word back about all the things he had seen with Him, that he'd seen Him do. "Where do these come from?"

It's like the truths – those are *our* miracles – they truly are. Awesome, powerful, mighty...as I went through them on the Last Great Day I thought how that these are so much more powerful than we can even *begin* to grasp and comprehend, what God's given to us, because I think of the scattering and the people who are out there and this giant chasm. You know, when I used to read 'Lazarus and the Rich Man' it was a distinction between those of the world and those in God's Church. And today *it's greater than that – that gulf is the Church and those who were a part of the Church*, after the apostasy, and that chasm, that gulf has just gotten wider and wider and wider. How incredible what we've been given to hold onto, to give us strength, to give us life, living/lively stones, and what God's building.

These things should make us bolder. What we've gone through at this Feast should actually make you bolder, should make you stronger. I don't know what's coming exactly or when it's coming...oh I know some things that are coming but when they come exactly I don't know. Made comment about the ministerial meeting we are going to have...I am so (how do you use the word...) pumped up! I was thinking about not using it, but *I am*, because of what we're preparing for! It is the *final* preparation for what we're going to do as a Church and the ministry especially, and the Church that's a part to support and be a part of this – all working together to do an incredible work at the end here, and God's giving us the last portion of it to focus upon, because we're changing some things, we're getting ready to change and alter some direction here, some course that we're following now, that's going to become different in the future, that's going to affect *every one of you* as we go forward, as God begins to call and draw people. It's going to affect every person in the Body; and the example you set, and the boldness you have and the confidence you exude and show forth because you're close to God, and *so close to God!* ...to be a strength and a help to them.

So yeah, I'm excited! And ever since Atonement that process is growing in me more and more and more. We have some advertisements going out to radio and TV stations again; whether we have them when they come, I don't know, but they're going to come. We're looking at December right now with the possibility of beginning some of those things. It's going to be some interesting interviews compared to the first phase that we went through. Truly going to be interesting. I'm looking forward to that, truly am, because all *that* is going to be is a preparation for a final work we have – truly is! We're going to be so focused! And God does the training, God does the preparing and He gets every one of us ready and we become so focused that the work we're going to do ahead of us is going to be the *greatest work* that has ever been done on this earth to this time and date. And that's hard for us to grasp and comprehend. The greatest event is about to take place, that God's prophets and people through time, the Church in the last 2,000 years, have been looking forward to for the past 6,000 years...looking forward to this event that's coming, the return of Jesus Christ, the establishment of the Messiah, the establishment of God's world.

And then having that being we're talking about in this sermon *finally* being put away. All the bondage and the corruption and the things you have to fight in your own life and in your mind that is intensified because of that being. He has made it so much worse, the world around us, and today he is able to use a tool he's never had in the past, because he has been losing power through the centuries. You know those great kingdoms and the power in them, and the power it talks about at the end, the clay and the iron, but the power of destruction is greatest... What an incredible thing – technology. Now, the technology is there. He's going to try again, his last big hurrah. Incredible the things we're witnessing, a culmination of 6,000 years of Satan's influence on mankind and of mankind's influence on the world coming to a screeching halt. It's exciting, it's inspiring, moving, motivating, exciting to God and He's sharing that with us.

And so He said, **Will you go away also? And Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.** We have been given powerful, powerful words of eternal life. That's why we talk about them so much and focus upon them so much, because they are your strength. The truths we've been given, they are your life. There is more life that has been given to God's Church now than in any other time in history. And sometimes it's hard when we live through it *to grasp that!* Truly is! We have been so richly, enormously blessed. I hope you see that, I hope you grasp what God has given to you, and understand your place with Him. *You* are precious in His sight. He loves you with an incredible love. He always has loved His people, but the more He gives...you know what that means? The more love you're able to experience. It's the way it is, because He's had to limit His love through time. I hope you understand that. He couldn't give everything of Himself through time because it's a progressive revelation through time and it's a progressive revealing and receiving as well of Him and His life in us. Truly is! **You have the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.**

Let's turn over to Romans 8, another area we're going to be spending quite a bit of time and examining some of the things inspired through the apostle Paul here; this thing about stumbling and the context of these things, that we be spiritually alert, spiritually on guard, that we be sober minded, that we understand where we are and how God's working with us in that relationship that we're so blessed to have at this time in our life, and because of that there is more - how do I put it – more expected, more required because to whom more is given, indeed more is required of us and how we respond because we have been given so much. But we have the ability, the capacity, not because of us, but because of God's spirit to do more, to accomplish more, to candidly, love more. And that's why we experienced the

kind of Feast we did this year. I hope that everyone experienced that in ways that you're able to look back and understand that in a greater way, how much we've been blessed.

Romans 8: so again, there are aspects of what we're covering in this sermon that Paul spoke of here throughout some of these chapters we're going to look at. **Romans 8:14 - For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.** To be led means that we follow. Wherever God leads us, whatever He gives to us; the disciples before they even received of His spirit started this process. They were blessed to be drawn by that spirit over a period of time and to be present *with*, something that goes above and beyond as well, to be present with the Word of God, the Word of God made flesh. And they didn't grasp everything but they remained there until they were able to learn more and grow in it and they hungered for it and realized something very special was taking place here and that He was the Messiah, the Christ. And indeed, then, as things began there in Pentecost 31 AD, a Church began, this part here has become more powerful.

For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Because to remain in that process and be a part of that process and a part of the Church means we're impregnated with God's spirit, we have that living within us, but it's a matter of always following God, *putting God first*, understanding above all things – not trying to separate everything in between, because it's not about God in us. Because I've seen so many in the Church having done that in times past. It's like God and I have this relationship. Okay, well, that's good, we all should have a relationship there. But sometimes it's, as an example in times past when I lived during Philadelphia, with Mr. Armstrong not being in the middle, because he's a part of that process. It's how God's spirit works. Or the ministry that was there and it was like...No, not this minister...

For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; after all we've gone through now and talking about it at the Feast, **You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;** this is what frees us, what God gives to us, **but you have received the spirit of adoption/sonship,** is what the word is about, **the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.** Isn't that an amazing process we go through? We begin crying out to God and we begin to develop a relationship there, and as I mentioned, how long it took me to come to a point in time where I could tell God, "I love You." Took me a *long* time. Pretty hard rock; ordained in the ministry already, the mercy of God. I have learned things about *mercy* in ways that I can't tell you how valuable it is, because that's God. It's *God!* And so as we begin to learn what God is like, how He works with us, and we can begin to see that toward others, it changes life, it truly does in a very powerful way, mightily so.

We all have baggage. We all have baggage! You have baggage, I have baggage, we all have baggage, and we're looking forward to getting rid of the baggage. And we're going through a process of getting rid of it, but it doesn't happen overnight, does it. It's an ongoing life long battle, but as you get rid of it, you draw closer to God, you understand God, you see God more, what an awesome relationship He's blessed... **Abba, Father.** Personal relationship.

The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: we learn that by visiting with each other, talking with each other. When we travel around we are excited because we see that 6 months at a time, maybe a year, maybe like Hawaii, it'd been almost a couple of years since we'd been there, and you see the changes in people and one who was able to be ordained in a newer group of people, and you see these changes as you go from one area to another and the growth! Does that mean we're perfect yet? No! Does it mean we have problems? Yes. Do ministers have problems? Yes. Do I

have problems. Yes. We all have human nature. Do I get stressed out at times? Yeah, just see if the internet doesn't work well and everything else is going wrong; if I don't have some stress up here and maybe you come up and want to talk to me or something, and see how the conversation goes... "Oh, I'm glad to see you too! ...just not right now..." Because I'm under stress! And I understand that and people know that about me. "When he's up there – wait." Because we don't do things perfectly in our responses to things, because I can't multitask. Men don't do a very good job of that. I have a hard time 'tasking' at all sometimes, so to multi, that's out for sure!

So when we learn that about each other, when you know that someone isn't judging you, condemning you, what an awesome thing. If something is wrong and it has to be dealt with... yes, it has to be dealt with but not for the sake of condemnation, not for the sake of tearing down. What an awesome relationship that we have then. See, I can look across this congregation; I know that there's been problems, battles and things we've done wrong, and things that have come up, and things that have happened in the ministry, and the longer you've been in God's Church and that history that's back there...but it's gone! It's *gone!* That's what God does, He buries it. It's *gone!* What a beautiful thing in God's Church!

If only we could always see that; but sometimes our relationships are hampered because we're still growing in that, we don't grasp it to a degree that would free us. Bondage! Bondage, bondage, bondage – being made free from bondage.

Verse 17 – And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; reminds me of Wayne's sermon. I haven't heard it yet but I know the title of it, 'To Be Elohim'. That's what it's about, becoming Elohim, becoming a part of God's Family. **...heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;** I don't fully understand yet.... *I believe it with all my being*, but to grasp it? It's a little surreal sometimes. To grasp what we're about to head into? It's a little surreal sometimes. I believe it and that's what faith is about. You believe what God has given. And that's what it's about, that *hope* that you have, that *belief* that you have; and we live by it! It's a beautiful thing.

And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, Spiritual sacrifices, and it means you have to suffer, self has to suffer, and the more we learn how to do that you know what? The suffering isn't so tough. The suffering isn't so bad when you understand it's a good thing when you can step on the head of your human nature and just squash him down, and just, "Yah!" It feels so good! But you know, when we first start doing that sometimes it's like, "Oh, it's exposed and everybody sees it." Big, big deal! You think it's a secret that we have human nature and we react badly to some things sometimes and we say things that sometimes we shouldn't; and we grow and we fight until we have those things conquered and it's a constant thing in our life. The patience and the mercy of God - live that toward each other. See, that's what it's all about. We can't just be on the receiving end from God. The greatest lessons we can learn in life is to receive that from God, receive it from Jesus Christ, and *to live the same thing* toward each other. That's what it's about.

...if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Whatever you're going through, whatever you're going to experience in the next few months, no matter how difficult, how much stress it might be around you, always understand that, keeping your eyes on the finish line. That's what it's about – getting there. Because all of this is going to be gone. All this is not going to amount to anything. Anything we want to hold onto in this world is going by the wayside and please understand, we're starting all over. Everything as a whole we're starting all over in

this world. No dollars, no Bank of America, no Chase, no MasterCard, no Visa; it's just no banks – nothing! They're not going to be there! See, when you die you can't take it with you and in large part, in this age, you're not going to take it with you as a whole. We're starting all over. Things are going to be re-apportioned. We're going to start all over, things are going to be divided out in a way in people's lives and we're going to start working in big ways setting up a new world. Everybody! And it's hard for us to grasp that. Nothing in this world can you have your hope in, your confidence in. It's all going by the wayside, as a whole.

Will you still have your car? Hmmm, don't know. It may not run. Could it be fixed? Probably. Me, I'm not going to worry about one. ☺ Bad joke. I look forward to not having to get in line waiting for 2-4 more hour delays in airports. Got to be somewhere –[snap's fingers] – “Man this is great!” No jet lag. No re-adjusting to time. No worrying about my metabolism. No worrying about all the garbage food sometimes you have out there in different places and having to watch the water and everything else you watch. Whew! Very physical things but you know, they all add up.

Verse 19 - For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.

To grasp where we are! How great is it? All the Holy Days we were able to observe together this year in peace; Thought about Passover... may not make it to Pentecost.” We took an extra suitcase to Australia and New Zealand. We normally carry two, on this occasion we carried three. We didn't know if we were coming back because we don't know the time – God hasn't shown it...and we came back. Good, this is good... Pentecost in Europe, the extra suitcase again; because this is our life. We *believe!* We *know* it's coming! When? Don't know. But it's coming! So we take an extra suitcase and you realize – WOW, the next Pentecost - the next Pentecost, that's going to be a day! Whew!

Can you imagine being able to look down on this world and not be in a space shuttle? ☺ ...and not have to worry about that? I don't comprehend any of that; I really don't comprehend it, but I believe it, I know it's true.

Then we come up to another period of time coming into the Feast of Trumpets and leading up toward Atonement, and before that we're in Europe again – extra suitcase, a few extra clothes just in case they need to last us until the end. And I know God can make your clothes last. If they have to last, you can go maybe buy some more, but hey, I like the ones we have and why go buy some more when you already have the ones you need. So we took an extra suitcase and went around the world this time. Went from Europe down to Australia for Atonement, over in New Zealand for the Feast and back to Australia for the last half of the Feast – with that extra suitcase again that we started out with in Europe.

And each time we come to some of these Holy Days you think about the next one that will happen after Christ's return. Trumpets... what's it going to be like? What's the next Feast of Tabernacles going to be like? I don't know! How's it going to be organized? Well, with 144,000 out there who don't have to sleep and can work 24 hours a day, they can get a lot done. We're going to have some Feast sites, things are going to be arranged, things are going to be made possible. We're going to know where to go, what to do, and how to do it and it'll all be there for us. The world is going to be there. A lot of work to be done but as a whole it's going to start. It may not be perfect, obviously, as far as communications and everything else, but it's going to be a start.

And you think about some of those things...maybe you don't, but I do! What are we going to do? How are we going to do it? I don't know, but it's going to come together. But see, I don't have to worry about planning any Feast sites this year. I'm not worried about going out and booking halls or anyone

having to worry about it in different areas and anything like that. Not wasting my time in it. 2nd Tithe? I don't know! You just obey God and keep it right now and we'll figure this out as we go along, when God shows me. If it's a matter of sending it in again or maybe something else... I don't know yet. God will reveal that. We're not there yet. I don't know. We live in awesome times don't we?

For I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the expectation of the creation waits, because it's the word for 'creation' here, it's about God's creation, speaking of mankind, to become Elohim. It's all about that. ...**for the expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.** An awesome beginning for this world! **For the creation was made subject to vanity,** mankind, subject to vanity. Oh, we are indeed! Not subject to God, subject to 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' because of our carnal human nature, so that we could learn what Satan's nature is like. Do we understand that? That's why we're made this way. So we can come to understand a spirit that is the opposite of peace, so that we can understand the mind that's inward and selfish and how ugly that is, so we can come to see when God gives us His spirit and see what He is and what He has, of how ugly then that which is inward and selfish is – when we can begin to see this that we want to get rid of. Because unless you want to get rid of it you won't fight it! And so if we see it then we're able to fight it because *we don't want it, we don't want it in us, because we recognize it produces bad results!* 'Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' leads to SIN...and we don't want that in our lives and we become more deeply convicted of it. But if we weren't made this way then *we'd never learn it!* Because to become Elohim *we have to learn that!* ...deeply so.

For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope. What an awesome hope we have that becomes stronger and stronger, especially of where we are now. You know, it isn't like when I was first called and the concept of mind was, "Well maybe we need to plan 10 years ahead because it could happen within that timeframe." In 1950 'The Plain Truth' was there in Europe when the common market was being discussed and being formulated and being brought together; and so because Mr. Armstrong knew about those things 'The Plain Truth' was there recording about it. And so we knew that that revival of the Holy Roman Empire was going to come. When? Don't know for sure, but we're going to be ready because we know that's where we are in time. And what an amazing journey of where we've been. Hope! Knowing it's there, knowing it's in front of us, it's going to happen.

That's why it doesn't phase me one iota if it were not that date. If God has a purpose in that so be it, but I am convicted with all my being He does not, thank God. Okay? Thank God. But if He did, because you have to ask that; What will you do? What *IF*... What would you do? And we have to ask that, because if you don't and you don't know then *you really don't know* your relationship with God, and you have to know. You have to be deeply convicted. That hope! It ought to be so clear!

It should be so clear to all those who are scattered. If they're receiving any reports whatsoever about the struggles in Germany and France right now to *save their banks!* That's what it's about! And truly, can they really even hold on to the Euro? Don't know yet! Will they go to war to do it? What's going to materialize? Will they form something else? *I don't know, you don't know;* we don't know. But we know it's coming.

For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope; Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. That's where real freedom comes, finally. And so we begin

to experience it in God's Church as we continue to go through a process of being made free, made freer. And we're not fully freed until we're there, but the process begins when you're drawn to baptism and you start a process of coming out of Egypt, coming out of bondage.

It's a beautiful theme that we had during the Feast this year, one that I resisted for a while...*one that I resisted for a while*. Wasn't tuned in as well as I should have been. Thought it was too simple. Thought it wasn't *big* enough. Came to see it was much bigger than what I grasped. And that's what it's all about, we're always growing as we yield ourselves to God.

Verse 22 - For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. How much more until *now*? That was 2,000 years ago, nearly.**until now** - been a lot more groaning since then. Look at all what has happened, since Paul wrote this, in the world. Look how sick this world is today. Because of technology, this world is a sick, sick, sick, filthy, filthy, cesspool. It truly is. It is disgustingly despicable in every light. Everything in governments, everything that people do and justify, everything that's taking place because of how man uses technology, it's a sick, sick, filthy world, it truly is.

Verse 23 - And not only they, speaking of the creation, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the sonship, to wit, the redemption of our body. And so that was their life, not knowing when Jesus Christ would return, not knowing when this would happen, believing and knowing that time goes on, they die, and they know that there will be that moment in time when they'll be resurrected, they'll be changed 'in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' all those who sleep. Paul wrote about these things. He knew as time went along. He didn't know right here, but he knew later on more fully what God was giving.

Verse 24 - For we are saved by hope/by the hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: you know, once something is seen, once you've experienced it, it's not in the front anymore, it's behind you. And so we're always forward looking for what God's building, for what we're a part of, because it's not going backwards, it's always moving forward and building on that which is forward; and that's what this is about. ...**for what a man sees, what does he yet hope for?** Again, different word for 'hope' here, but trust you're expected to have. In other words, if it's already happened then that's gone by the wayside, that's in the past and something's been fulfilled.

We used to look forward to, because we were warned, about a great falling away. Oh, that was a toughie because we weren't ready when it finally came even though we were warned. We were told. But was there a hope? Yeah, there's a hope that it's not going to happen to us, that we're going to be a Philadelphian because you didn't want to be one of those Laodiceans. So if there was motivation it was to be wise, it was to draw close to God, it was to fight against our human nature; and that benefitted us at that time for that portion. But it wasn't the whole story, was it?

But if we hope for that which we do not see, then we with patience wait for it. Likewise the spirit also helps our infirmities: What an awesome thing here to understand, that there are things we deal with, we don't fully grasp and comprehend, about God's spirit that's in us, and what we're going through. God always knows what you're going through. So often, candidly, I know what you're going through, because of God's spirit. With different ones the more I know about you in some cases, the more I know what you're going through, because there's a process we go through and I understand.

Likewise the spirit also helps our infirmities, our weaknesses, and oftentimes then having to do with things we don't see or we don't know. God's there. His spirit helps us through those things.

...for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought: in other words, there are times that we're going through such things that... Have you had moments like that? I know you have. If you've been in the Church any length of time at all you've had moments where because of life and the pressures and the stresses of things around you in life and things that come upon you that catch you off guard... because, see, things try us to see if we are watchful, are we watching, are we striving to be of a sober mind and stay close to God? Because those are the things that will give us strength to go through, and weather those kinds of battles and struggles and so forth. There are times when you go before God and be candid with Him, "I don't even know how to pray about this, and to be real honest I don't even *feel* like it right now and I'm ashamed of that." Have you ever had moments like that? I've had some of those moments this past year...trying to think about how many months ago; I don't have to get too specific do I? We go through spiritual warfare and battles that are out there – all of us do. We're a Family! 'That these same things that I go through are accomplished in my brethren' around the world. That's what we read earlier. That's what it's about. We're all going through battles and we're in this together.

..for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, sometimes there are moments like that, that there are just times... It says, **but the spirit makes intercession for us with groaning's which cannot be uttered**. You see, the point being is God knows your mind, He knows your heart, and you're truthful to Him and you just put it out before Him. That's a mark of wisdom, candidly. It's a moment of reality. "God, I don't know what to do."

"That's what I've been trying to tell you!"

We learn to rely on God more... we learn that we don't have the answers and we cry out to God for help, for direction to know where to go, where to turn, because the reality is our best state is when we're on our knees and oftentimes speechless because we don't know and it's a matter of a *total reliance on the One who brings us through it all*, God Almighty, isn't it! Candidly, those are some of our best moments of life, if we can grasp it. They're not fun moments, they're hard moments, but they're some of our best because it's a matter of a complete surrender to God, it's a matter of absolute humility before God, it's void of pride and haughtiness.

Verse 27 - And he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. In other words, God's spirit works in our mind and our being and it is God's spirit that's working in us and knows what's in this mind, each mind that that spirit is working with, and works to work things out in our lives.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, and so if you love God, if you're growing in that, everything works out. It's a matter of a trust, it's a matter of growth and a relationship with God and an ability to *stay close to the trunk of the tree, to stay close to the Word of God, to not deviate, not stray away from it*. And the closer we are to the Word of God, the less you're going to stumble, the less you're going to fall. The more you want it in your life...and that being will have no power, no impact upon you, because you can repent quickly. So you can sin, but you can repent quickly – and the faster we learn to repent in certain situations and really repent genuinely so before God, loathing the sin, loathing what created it, what caused it, and placing ourselves before God's throne of mercy, the more and the faster we can grow.

And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. No matter what we go through in life, no matter what the hardship, no matter what the difficulty, there are answers and we have to be patient before God, and candidly do what it talks about here, and the reality – just humble ourselves before God and let God know, “*I need help! I don’t know what to do – you do!*”

For whom He did foreknow, I’m amazed sometimes even in God’s Church, how these scriptures have been distorted and misunderstood and people haven’t grasped and comprehended what it’s all about. Sometimes people talk about predestination, not knowing we don’t teach predestination. What’s wrong with you? That’s never been a teaching in God’s Church. Presbyterians have it; we don’t!

To whom He did foreknow, who did He foreknow? There are people in the past, some ministers, who thought and believed somehow that God knew every human being who would live into the future in time and that it basically doesn’t matter what you do, your life’s going to turn out the same way anyway. That’s predestination, in large part. So why try? It’s going to be what it is. It is what it is – *c’est la vie*. No, it isn’t! It has to do with our response to God. It has to do with change. It has to do with becoming something different. It has to do with burying the old self and something else coming up out of the water and beginning to grow and change and that transformation that has to take place in the mind. And we have choice in the matter all along the way, indeed.

For whom He did foreknow, meaning *His Family*, meaning the future and what He was offering all mankind in time to become. Not all would choose it through time. There are many people through time who will never be a part of God’s Family; already determined and judged. Some who were never a part of God’s Church because their minds are so bad, so defiled, so wrong, so ugly, so evil, that even with God’s spirit there is no desire to change. God knows the mind. Incredible!

For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, has to do with that which is predetermined. **...predetermined to be conformed to the image of His Son,** that’s right! To become a part of God’s Family, God predetermined it before anything was ever made, created, that there’s a way that we can become a part of His Family, a part of Elohim. And as a part of that process here He predetermined that we’d have to be conformed to the image of His Son. There is that which would have to take place in our mind and in our being to be conformed to the image of His Son... **that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.** And so the rest who are the firstfruits and then those who come in after that during the Millennial period.

Moreover whom He did predetermine, to be a part of His Family is what it’s talking about here, **them He also called:** So you have to go through a process. God has to call you out of the world in His time. It might not be until the Great White Throne. So that’s when a person that’s predetermined, that they’ll be those who are called then. The vast majority aren’t going to have the opportunity to be a part of 144,000; that’s been predetermined that they’ll be in a Great White Throne, and then all those in between, they’re predetermined that they’re going to have an opportunity to be resurrected at the end of the thousand years to be in the Family of God. It’s a beautiful picture.

Moreover whom He did predetermine...to be called, to be a part of His Family, **them He also called and whom He called, them He also justified:** How? Through Jesus Christ; bringing them to repentance. He brings us all to repentance. You had to go through certain things to come to a point in time where you would listen to this way of life when God began to give you knowledge and understanding of the truth. And so He took you through whatever it was you had to go through to be able to receive what He had

determined to give to you. I hope your journey was a little bit smoother than mine. I had to have my best friend killed in Vietnam, and within a period of just a few weeks different things happened. Had to roll a convertible over 2½ times end over end. You know, there are things we go through sometimes; we get smacked between the eyes. Had to be told that a dream I had since I was a teenager, to be a jet pilot, was spoiled because I don't have 20/20 vision to go into the air force as a pilot, but they would accept me as a navigator because I was good in those tests. Different things that happen to us sometimes, trauma, traumatic things, and then all of a sudden things so change in our life that we're so torn down by our haughtiness and pride that we're finally ready to listen to God when He comes along. A spirit changes, an attitude changes and all of a sudden, "This is it! I see it! The Sabbath! The Holy Days! This is awesome! We start making changes and we start repenting and we're justified because we've been given a Passover.

...and whom He justified, and that's a *lifelong process*, isn't it? We have to have the Passover for the entire duration of our time being begotten of God's spirit, because during that whole time we have to repent of sin, and so through this process of being justified, **them He also glorified**. What a beautiful thing!

What shall we then say of these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Sometimes we don't realize the power that's there to help us to succeed. Sometimes we don't *grasp* the reality of the *power* that's available to us. It may not come in the way we *want* it to, or we don't have the answer we would like to have then and there, sometimes there are just things that He works with to give us a portion to bring us on through because this is the process of something happening up here, a transformation that maybe there's just no other way we'll get it, but He wants to give it to us. And so we have to go through many difficult things in life, and so much of it has to do with examining ourselves.

Brethren, I don't know about you but it's a beautiful thing! The suffering you go through, the things you *don't* want to go through are the *very things* that if you yield to them are the *very things that make you a part of the God Family*...and without it you *can't* be there and you *can't* become a part of it *and you can't have the opportunities at the beginning of that Family!* We *want* them! *I want* them! It's an awesome thing for when it's offered later on, but to be offered it now and not to yield to that? What a horrible thing that would be! ...and yet that's happened to thousands.

What shall we say of these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He who spared not His own Son... Think you don't have to suffer at times? Think you don't have to go through hard things? Think that God doesn't love you because you're going through some hard things? ...because there's stresses and difficult things you have to address in your life and in your own mind? ...and in your own battles of things that have you in bondage still because you haven't been able to overcome them? ...whatever those weaknesses are? *Whatever they are!* How you think. How you do certain things, whatever it is you yield to that you fall down on once in a while or maybe just often even. *But what makes you different is God's spirit in you! The world doesn't have it!* And so we learn to respond to it then and cry out to God for the help to indeed change, and to recognize indeed that God loves us mightily in ways that we don't even begin to comprehend! Hold onto those things! Hold onto those things, because I know that people out there listening, whether it be here today, or in what is heard next Sabbath, there are battles. *There are battles!* And you get up and you fall down. Repent quickly, because it's when you fall down, when you stumble that you're at great risk. And if you grasp that you'll want to get up quickly, you'll want to repent quickly, and you'll want to try to become more sure footed. And that knowing of those things can so often help you in the battle you're continually falling down in. What is it you've got to do to change certain habits in your life? What is it you've got to *change* so you

don't keep stumbling at the same thing? What *changes*? What *has* to change? Where does the beginning of it start? What do you address? Cry out to God! If it be many times a day, continue to cry out! You don't quit fighting!

He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Because we can be forgiven. It's a beautiful picture. But you've got to fight. You can't give up. And as soon as you fall you better repent quickly, because if you wait, and the longer you wait, if you don't repent and don't change the circumstance at that time, don't strive to make it right, you're in dangerous area.

Verse 33 - Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. That's why we learn in the Church we don't *judge* each other, we don't *condemn* each other in judgment. So, so and so could have done something more wisely...are you above that? [Gasp!] "Did you hear..." It's so easy sometimes to see the fault, to find the fault, to talk about the fault of someone else and not see ourselves and that the very fact we're focusing upon those things in someone else is the greater sin. The condemnation, the judging, the lifting up in pride... It's one thing if it's a matter of dealing with a matter in order to pray about it or in order to serve, to give. It's another thing if it's a matter of doing it because we have some kind of weird enjoyment in a perverse way talking about someone else in the Church and something they've done. You know what true Family does during these things? Just what God does. He's there to defend. He's there to defend. He's there to help out...with something wrong that's wrong? Absolutely need to address it. But the willingness to put it behind, the willingness to let go should be very, very great. The willingness to bury? A desire to bury it for others? Should be very, very great! Not to dig it up, not to put it out there before anybody else. We're God's and we should be there to protect God's. Cover up something? No. That's not what we're talking about. ...in a wrong way? No, not talking about that. There's a balance in those things and we should know those things, but again, we know ourselves, we know our weaknesses, and again, it's a matter of compassion we have on each other because we know our battles, we know what we have gone through to get where we are, and if we understand how God's been merciful to us, then we learn to be merciful to one another and we love each other and we want to see each other succeed. Is that the thing that burns the most in us?

Without exception, I look across a body of people, whom I know in different ways and different degrees and some I don't know as well as others, some who are new, but there are many degrees here because some go clear back to the mid-80's, 84, 85, in through there. Incredible! And candidly, the longer I've known the more desire I have for your success, truly. For you to come through all these things – rooting for you.

Can we look at each other in the Body and have that great desire that your life be full, that you come through the battles that are there, that there's nothing against you in any fashion or form, that there is only that which is *for* you? Truly! That you can genuinely look around and see that in each other and mean that with all of your being? Because, see, that's what I have for you. God gave that. And everywhere we go that's what's there, ready to defend, ready to protect *quickly*, no matter what's happened. See? And if we have that spirit and that attitude toward each other what an awesome thing! And that's a Family. And that's what Family does...in a right way. Address the difficulty? Yes, and then go on from there, help to pick up, help clean up whatever it is, because we've all had things in our life, hate to use that term this time of year – skeletons.

Who is he who condemns? See, judging is a matter... we all have to judge. We learn through judgment, but we'd better strive to learn to do it the way Christ did it, not by appearance and not by being lifted up

to where we look down upon anyone else, not to where... you know sometimes we may even feel like we've got to get involved in someone else's life or do something in someone else's life so that they don't do this wrong. God doesn't do that to me all the time in any fashion or form. It's like the concept we had in time's past about the Millennium. "In the Millennium you're going to have a tap on the shoulder, "That's not the way to go, don't walk in it."" In other words, you don't even have the ability to sin. Understand the difference here. In other words if you ever start to sin you're going to hear this voice behind you, "No!" ...and it's keeping everybody from sinning. And so the 144,000 are going to be really busy in the world tomorrow because... I can't even imagine...because they're always going around tapping people on the shoulder or hollering, "Don't do that!" It's not what it's about. God allows us to sin. He doesn't try to prevent it. Now, if it hurts someone, if something is hurting someone else there are times when we have to perhaps intervene or say something; but as a whole you just learn to back away and let people go through what they have to go through in life and pray for them, that they be able to conquer and overcome whatever it is they're battling until it's conquered! Do you understand what I'm saying? ...the difference in some of those things?

Sometimes we might want to change someone else, we don't want someone else to do this or that – perhaps our own children! Sometimes you have to back away and let them make certain choices – to a point. You know, some people I've known have gone so far in times past in the Church to let them make decisions about the Sabbath when they're 10 or 11. *Oh no you don't!* No, they're not mature, *that's why you're called parents and they're called children*! ...because you're responsible for what they do then. So we learn the difference.

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. He fights for us! Makes intercession for us. His work is not done, it's ongoing in a very powerful way in the Church, truly.

Who shall separate us from the agape of Christ/the love of Christ? It's the love of God and it's the love of Christ and as we grow it becomes our love to each other. That's what it's all about – my love toward you is not my love, it's God's – but I'm blessed to have it live through me, to have transformed my mind to where I think the way I do today.

I'm not the same person I was a year ago, or five years ago, or ten years ago. We should be able to see those things in our life, the changes and the transformation and how we think toward each other. And that reflects so much of that then. I have learned things about mercy that are about God and God's love in the last year - actually the last three years – that are incredibly awesome and exciting that I never had before to the degree I have now. And that's what we should look back upon, to see the changes, to see the mind and the way we think toward each other.

Who shall separate us from the agape/the love of Christ? ...shall tribulation? Thankfully, when we talk about tribulation and the terms we used to use in the Church, thankfully it hasn't even been around yet, as a whole. Spiritual? Yeah, we've had it. Those who lived through the apostasy, man, we've had some horrible tribulation to go through, that's really made us stronger. If I hadn't have gone through those things that I've gone through there is *no way on earth I can begin to be here, standing here today*, saying what I'm saying. God has made me who I am. He moulds and fashions. It's just like that stone, He moulds and fashions us. We yield ourselves to it and incredible what's up the road and what's prepared for us, of things we can't even begin to comprehend.

Who shall separate us from the agape of Christ? ...shall tribulation? ...distress? What's going to come along to where you're going to do something wrong before God? *What distress in your life is going to cause you to stumble? ...to sin? What's going to come along that could possibly be so traumatic in your life that you won't swallow your pride and go through it and say, "Father, help me to go through this and judge rightly and put you first! You're first in my life! Nothing else and no one else... You are first!"* That's something only you can live by and judge, but that's some things that as I look around and realize that's what some of your trials have been in the past year and I know that's what they're going to be in the months to come, and we need to become stronger, and God's giving us that opportunity to realize how important it is that we shore everything up a little bit more now because there's a being that's on the rampage.

I hope you understand that. I hope during the Feast period and leading up to it that you've seen some of that, spiritually. There's a being and beings that are very stirred up out there. It's not going to get better. They're *going down*, and just like nations in war, when they see themselves losing, what they will do to try to... It's horrible! Not a time to let down, a time to become strengthened.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ...shall tribulation? ...or distress? ...or persecution? Persecution? How far will we go? What will we do? **...a famine, nakedness/without, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long;** It's about self and it's about fighting this battle, of putting the old self and keeping the old self dead. **For your sake we are killed all the day long;** whatever we have to suffer through, *so be it! So be it!* Are we ever going to tell God that's just too much, You're asking too much of me? That's too hard? Never! Because we know what we have and we have our hope. That's where our hope is. That's what He's talking about, this hope that we have and this calling we have and the love God has there and what should outweigh everything else, so we don't stumble, so we don't fall down and are destroyed by a being that wants to see you fail.

For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Jesus Christ was; why should we be any different? ...and He lived perfectly – Passover, Passover lamb – **accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** You see your life was one of a sacrifice before God, that you put yourself there before God?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us/that has loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor spirit beings, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love/the agape of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's our life. That's our strength. It's about God's love and how we live, and sometimes everything really boils down to that. We have all these truths, but what it comes down to is how we live within that framework toward each other, toward the Body and toward others around us.

It's an amazing thing. I am just dumbfounded sometimes how God just gives us more and more and some things that just come out more and more like the beginning of chapter 9. Some of these verses are so mistranslated because they *don't understand* God's plan, they don't understand how God works, and the words they use are so distorted and confounded that it causes confusion and changes so much.

Seek to be sober minded – *seek* to draw closer to God. Sobered indeed, it's a good state to be in!

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