

Last Sabbath I mentioned that today we would be exactly half way through this final period of ‘a Half a Time’, by this Sabbath, or symbolically 3½ days through our seven days of marching around Jericho.

We’re going to continue with *Part 2* of this new sermon series entitled *Preparing Ourselves Spiritually*, and we’ve begun by focusing on how Jesus Christ has been leading us over the past year, actually longer than that, but we started by looking back to Passover a year ago, and of course the focus of the message on what God is doing at this particular time. It is an intensified focus that God has given to us in the Church that truly began right at a year ago on Passover of last year, just before Passover actually, the Sabbath before – where He is leading us and where He is leading this world.

I can’t give it justice in the sense of the excitement that God Almighty has and His Son has for where we are, for the timing of events in this world and what it means. God has witnessed things, seen things in mankind for 6,000 years, that He anxiously desires with great desire beyond anything we can comprehend, a desire to see us come to the end of this period of time, the end of 6,000 years. And so to convey that, I can’t adequately do that, and so all we can do is pray about those things, ask God to help us and certainly talk about it and focus upon it in sermons like this and strive to grasp the excitement that God Almighty has that we’re able to share in, that we’re blessed to be a part of. And that in itself is awesome!

To understand we live in an *incredible* age. There is no other age...I’ve mentioned this so many times – there is no other age, if I were able to choose something through history that I would rather live than this period right now, for what we get to witness, because everything in the prophets, everything in the Bible, everything in the focus has primarily been about getting through this period of 6,000 years and into the next period, the Sabbath, if you will, the seventh day, God’s time, God’s government on this earth, no longer man’s, no longer the rule of man. Man does a *lousy job* of ruling himself and governing himself.

And the audacity of mankind to thumb his nose at God – his finger on his nose to God – because that’s what man does! As I mentioned last week, the obelisk in Washington, D.C. – that’s the attitude of mankind! Incredible! And to see that attitude, to see that spirit come to an end, to live through the things we live through, that mankind has lived through in 6,000 years, the injustices of mankind, how mankind has governed himself, it’s an atrocious story, it truly is.

I can’t help but think of Afghanistan right now; all the people who’ve gone there and died! And you think, “For *what purpose?*” And war is glorified and man doesn’t understand there’s no glory in war and killing! You can’t give peace to people who don’t want peace, who don’t want to live like you live! You try to take your brand of democracy, your brand of thinking to them and *you can’t do it!* It’s a horrible thing that man has done through time, conquering other nations and trying to get people to follow *their* form of government. It’s really a *sick* world, and the problem is *none of it works!* Every form that people have tried to foist upon others, none of it has worked because man cannot govern himself properly, because he doesn’t obey the laws of God, he rejects God! So simple, so basic.

And so the excitement that God has about where we are and the period of time we're about to enter into is far above and beyond our ability to grasp it, but He gives us a little bit depending on where we are in our growth. And where we are in the Body in time, in our spiritual growth and maturity through time, the more we're able to receive. We're going to receive this in different ways, that's just the way it is. Any portion that you can receive is exciting, is inspiring, is moving.

And so, as we've been doing this starting with last Sabbath, we're preparing for an upcoming fast on the last Sabbath of this month, *and* we're preparing for one of the most memorable and meaningful Passovers and Feast of Unleavened Bread ever, ever observed.

As you get closer and closer, we observed the last Feast of Tabernacles in 6,000 years and now we're getting ready to observe the last Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread in 6,000 years, and that carries with it such incredible meaning because of where we are. You think about that. The end of 6,000 years, what a better way than what we're talking about and preparing ourselves spiritually, to be focusing upon something that God is doing – leading His people out of Egypt – finally! Not just one nation of people but all mankind – finally-finally-finally – leading everyone out of spiritual Egypt and ignorance of His ways into a beautiful land, a Promised Land far more important, far more meaningful than where the Israelites were led. That was physical. This is physical AND spiritual; far above and beyond.

The meaning contained in the period of time we're about to observe, the last of that period of time, shouldn't escape us in how important that is to God – shouldn't escape us how important it should be to each and every one of us, that we enter into this period of time with a stronger focus than we've ever had. Ever how long you've kept the Passover, ever how long you've kept the Days of Unleavened Bread, this focus that you have this period of time should be far, far greater than at any other time, in your desire to prepare yourself spiritually.

I think of the meaning of the name God gave to us - Preparing for the Kingdom of God – it means so much. As we've grown through time it's grown in meaning and importance, and especially of where we are right now.

The original Passover and Unleavened Bread when Israel was being delivered out of Egypt was obviously an awesome observance. Then the Passover Jesus Christ fulfilled, an awesome occasion indeed. And now this coming Passover and Unleavened Bread, these are the three most meaningful observances of their kind in 6,000 years.

Sometimes when you live through something and you're living it it maybe doesn't seem as important or as great, but it is as great as those other two times in meaning and in importance to God, some of it more so.

Last Sabbath we were looking at the message, the actual theme of the sermons that Christ gave to me to deliver at the Feast this past year, and it was all about coming out of Egypt. I think back about preparing those sermons! When we came to that period of time last year and of everything else... you go from Feast to Feast to Feast, and I have always marveled at how we haven't had to go back in time. I have known of...even the moving of ministers around at different times, about every seven years, a lot of the reason for doing that in times past was because *after seven years you're drained! Everything you can give you have given*, if you understand. Everything that you have learned, you have poured yourself out in that length of time if you've done your job.

I think of how God has blessed us ever since the apostasy and we have never had a time like that, we've always grown; we've always been given more and more and more. And if anything is focused upon, as you do, because of this book, this Bible, you're going to read some things similar from year to year to year, but we have been blessed to add to it *over and over and over again!* That is, to me, an awesome thing!

So when it came up toward the end of summertime when I begin focusing and thinking about all the sermons to be given at the Feast I'm always at the Red Sea. I always come to the Red Sea because I don't know what to give. Because if I give it, if I give something that I just go through a routine and go back to something that's comfortable or something that's been given in the past *it doesn't mean anything* unless God gives it, unless it's God's doings. So, asking God again, what are we going to focus upon, what are we to do this year? And then all of a sudden He starts showing you, and then after you've gone through it and you go back and look at it and putting it into the context of what we are now – coming out of Egypt – because that's the focus God wants us to have because that's the excitement of where we are in time more than any other time!

When you live it, when you go through it and you're able to focus upon it more you grow more and more and it's exciting, it's inspiring, awesome what God gives to us. I hope we're all deeply *thankful* for that and much more as we approach the Passover of thankfulness. One of the elders mentioned last night how that it seems a little strange when you talk about thanksgiving and a fast. 😊

We began looking upon that theme from last year, from the Feast and going through some of that because it was all about coming out of Egypt, being freed from captivity, from slavery, to bondage, because that's the way mankind has lived for 6,000 years. He *thinks* he's free. This country *thinks* it's free and it isn't! *This country is not free!* What a *horrible thing* when people walk around and they don't grasp the captivity they're in, they don't understand the blindness that covers their eyes, they don't grasp God, they don't grasp Jesus Christ even though they think they do in traditional Christianity, and they have *no concept* that everything they believe – Christmas and Easter – clouds their understanding to what is beautiful about God and about His Son. They don't understand Passover! The *Jews* don't understand Passover! They keep the Seder in the wrong time period because they've tried to wipe out the meaning of Passover, because if they acknowledge certain things that Jesus Christ did some might just have to come to a point where they have to acknowledge this is just a little too close to all those scriptures back in Isaiah and other Old Testament scriptures that talk about what the Messiah would fulfill, about what a *Passover* would fulfill for mankind. And so people don't understand they're in bondage!

What a beautiful thing for all of you when God opened your mind and began to lead you out of bondage. Sometimes you came kicking and screaming along the way, like that scripture 'being called', 'to be drug'. Because there are a lot of changes you have to make in your life about when you work and when you don't work, what your family knows or doesn't know about what you believe that you are going to have to share with them maybe the next time you go to eat with them at a big family dinner and they like to cook a pig and have the head stuffed with an apple.

And you have to tell them, "Sorry, I can't eat that."

"What do you mean you can't eat that?"

...and people don't understand the bondage they're in. What a sad, sad world. And then when you began to be freed... don't you want that for all of mankind? You do, obviously. You want that for your family, you want that for your neighbours, you want that for everyone you run into. What an incredible thing, it won't be too long that everyone you run into – I don't mean with cars... but even then, won't it

be better when you back into somebody and they're merciful to you because you're in the Church, they've got to practice being nicer when you make a mistake. ☺

So again, we started with those sermons. First we'll begin with the statement that set the stage for all the sermons at last year's Feast, and it was in that very first sermon that was given ['An Historic Feast']; we're going to start there again today, I read it last Sabbath.

We are NOW at a time when God has determined to begin working with a spiritual Israel once He has taken everyone out of spiritual Egypt and into the greater fulfillment of His promise to Abraham—to a promised land [or a promised]/grounding...

...if you will, if you understand the meaning of the word in Hebrew.

...that is not one of dwelling in bondage/enslavement, but IN freedom, and even more specific—IN God's free spirit as the true “prevailers with God”—Israel

...because that's what Israel means, 'prevailers with God'.

### **...a spiritual Israel.**

So we're going to pick up from that and continue on with the second sermon where we left off last Sabbath. So I'm just going to read some of the things, different excerpts from that. Then in the second sermon ['The Truth about Israel'] it was stated:

Yesterday, in the first sermon I have given at this year's Feast, we covered how this is indeed **a most historic Feast**.

Just as these Days of Unleavened Bread and the Passover coming up are *most historic in time!* And going on with that sermon...

And God has begun to share more fully with us the greater significance of delivering Israel out of Egypt.

We are to grasp—understand—the significance and deeper meaning of “Israel” [the name]—of the purpose and meaning of the very name that goes FAR beyond a limited, narrow view of a physical people. This sermon today is entitled: **“The Truth About Israel.”**

Jumping down a little farther...

Toward the end of yesterday's sermon, we focused upon the deeper meaning of “Israel” concerning this time that is now upon us, as God leads people “out of spiritual Egypt” of bondage into the promised land of the Millennial period... into a new nation... “spiritual Israel.”

This message is only intensifying as we go forward, and where we are now God is intensifying that message of the Feast even more so now because we're living it more and more the closer and closer we get. Continuing in that sermon:

The first Israel, the first nation did not “prevail with God”...

Their example wasn't good! It wasn't right! That was the whole purpose of it! A physical people that would not obey God, *could not* obey God, except for a few who were called out to be worked with in a very special way through that period of the first...even the first 4,000 years of man God individually picked out people to work with, but when He worked with a nation they weren't all being worked with on a spiritual plane just a physical one to teach powerful lessons – that you can't prevail with God without His holy spirit, which He gave later on when the Church began. Anyway, going back to that...

The first Israel, the first nation did not “prevail with God” – did not live up to the name given them. So as we discussed yesterday, Israel and the whole world must be brought face to face with how their “ways” have ALL failed and that their ways only bring oppression, suffering, and eventually – destruction.

This means that they will be brought to see that only with God can they truly triumph, succeed, become truly effective in living life fully, to gain the mastery of life...

Isn't that what you want? ...to gain the mastery of life, not for life to control you? Because that's what's out there in the world, that's what's out there in the communities. People *think* they're in control – they're not in control of their lives, they're in bondage, they're in slavery! Only when you know the truth can you begin coming out of it.

We're going to turn to those scriptures again in Isaiah 42, just going to read a few of those that were from that particular sermon.

I look out over this group here and there is another overflow room we could meet in today as well; one of the largest gatherings, I think, that we've had in a long, long time in one location like this. It's good to see that. I was going to mention some of the states everyone is from but saw that quickly here that there's kind of a central area right down through the central part of the United States and some areas that aren't here. It'd be easier to mention a few of those States and I know I'd miss someone if I started trying to mention them. But again, what an awesome thing that we have, to be able to share in this Sabbath after Sabbath as we draw closer and closer, and the excitement that God is giving us, and a lot of it is to be able to hold on.

I mentioned last night to everyone gathered together, the elders, that the closer we get, depending on what God does, at what point it begins, because of the Trumpets that God has not revealed to us when they're going to begin, and depending on when that is, the longer that goes the more you are going to be tried...and not everyone's going to make it. Okay? That should be a very sobering thing as we go through this sermon today, to understand that not everyone's going to come through this. I've given sermons like this year after year after year, and even as we draw closer to the end, to warn, to admonish. It's a part of preparing yourselves spiritually. It's about being spiritually watchful. You need to apply that to your life in ways far greater now than you have ever done since you've been in God's Church! I don't care whether it's one month, one year, two years, twenty years, thirty years, forty

years...whatever it is – now is the time more than ever before. It isn't much farther but it's going to become harder to hold on. You're going to be tried in ways you've never been tried before and not everyone's going to come through it. That's what's the saddest thing of all.

Ever since I've been in God's Church, I've made these comments so often, from Feast of Tabernacles to Feast of Tabernacles there will always be some who have left, no matter what size the Body is; always-always-always, without exception, every year. And the thing that boggles my mind, blows my mind, astounds me more than anything else in all the scenario of all this is that even at the very end before He returns, and not *too long* before He returns, that we can be in this period of time (as I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon) half way through the seven days of marching around, to see the walls come crumbling down, to see *Babylon* brought to an end, to see *Egypt* come to an end and true freedom being given to this earth...and it becomes harder to hold on for some, and it all comes down to how spiritually alert you truly are and how determined you are.

**Isaiah 42:5-8** Thus says God the LORD [ETERNAL], He who created the heavens, and stretched them out; He who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it. He who gives breath to the people upon it...

Gave us life! What an incredible thing – God giving human beings life – and to live the kind of lives we do. Just to have life, the experience of life, and then to have an opportunity to learn about the *quality* of life, that there is a quality of life that is to be lived, that mankind can live if He will obey God, that that is truly the thing to hold onto with all of your being. Wisdom, as it talks about in Proverbs, that is of God... and yet we demand more from God and don't realize how blessed we are to have the experiences of life we do. But they are only good and they are only something to be looked upon in that frame when lived right before God; morality that's becoming less and less in the world.

He who gives breath to the people upon it, and the spirit to them who walk therein [**God has given all the same**]...

Not meaning His holy spirit but rather a spirit essence that gives us the ability to think and reason, to experience relationships, to experience things in life.

[Verse] 6 - I the [ETERNAL] LORD have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for **a light** of the Gentiles [**nations, (ALL) people**].

That's what God's plan is for; it's for all people in time, in His plan.

7 - To open the blind eyes...

That's what it's about, people who can't see. You couldn't see until God called you, unless you were blessed to be able to grow up in the Church, in the environment of the Church, but even then, by choices and so forth there was that which you couldn't fully see until you began to make your own choices of this way of life, that this is what you wanted, then God gave you a keener eyesight and ability to see on a spiritual plane.

To open the blind eyes to bring out the prisoners [those bound] [is what the word means];

Everyone around you, everyone you run into out there, the grocery store, wherever it is - it doesn't matter where it is - at the gas station, in your neighbourhood, whatever, they're in prison, they're bound.

...to bring out the prisoners [those bound] from the prison, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison house [**habitation / dwelling "in" confinement / restraint**].

...of where they are.

**Vs. 14-15** For such a long time now I [God Almighty] have held My peace. I have been still, and refrained myself...

He has watched what man has done century after century after century, knowing full well what man would do all the way through till we finally came to a period of time at the end of 6,000 years when finally He could bring mankind out of this. He says:

...but now I will cry like a woman in labor.

Awesome! To bring us down to the end is not a pleasant thing, it's not an easy thing to deliver this world. It's not an easy thing for God to bring us to this point in time and to finally bring mankind to a point where *He, and only He and His Son* can mould and fashion things in *such a way*, and in such a timeframe to bring people to such massive repentance and to such a low period of time.

Johnny and I were talking about some of this this morning here – it doesn't take very long! It doesn't take very long for just a few nuclear weapons, just one to go off and what transpires after that and what nations will do. There is such *hatred* out there today and such *power* at the fingertips of people who are just totally insane; to think about doing something like that. To think of why we have such things in the first place? ...and that they all get used in time. *No matter what you believe, it's coming!* No matter if you were a hundred percent wrong about this *it's coming, it's at the doorstep!* But what I believe and what I believe you believe and why you're here today is because you believe this is it, this is the time, this is what it's all about and it's coming! ...and it doesn't take very long to destroy a lot in a very short time.

I have come to believe with all my being that the vast *majority* of the destruction happens after I'm dead. Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear? Do we grasp the power that's in this world that doesn't take very long to destroy so much? So much so that even God is going to have to do something, because once that's unleashed - you want to talk about a nuclear winter and things that happen afterwards - that God's going to have to intervene to prevent some things from taking place... or we would just totally annihilate ourselves, but God isn't going to allow it. He's going to stop it. He's going to have to do more because what would be left behind from what it says happens at the very end with the very 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet, that they destroy a third of all the earth? And that's just a beginning, because once you push that button more is going to be destroyed. If you're able to do it in that length of time, in a short length of time, one or two days, whatever it takes to destroy a third of all the earth.... *You think mankind can do that with nuclear weapons? You think people can die that fast in such a massive way?*

Do you understand the *power* that exists when they go off en masse? *Do you grasp and comprehend that man has the ability to destroy this earth forty, fifty times over* with all the nuclear weapons that are there?! Does that mean anything? Is that real? It's hard to grasp, isn't it?

So to destroy a third of the earth in a short length of time with a *few* weapons? God has to intervene to keep it from spreading, to keep it from just engulfing and destroying the earth and what starts right there. Truly!

**Is. 42:14-18** For such a long time now I have held My peace. I have been still, *and* refrained myself, but now I will cry like a woman in labor. I will destroy and devour all together. I will make waste mountains and hills...

Prophetic – great nations and small nations. That's what it's about; governments.

...and dry up all their herbs [**green plants, green grass**]...

Interesting! That's *exactly* what it means in Hebrew.

...and I will make the rivers islands [**turn river valleys into dry ground**]...

Again, having to do with their prosperity and literal things as well.

...and I will dry up the pools of water. And I will bring the blind...

This has to happen in order for the next to happen...

And I will bring the blind by a way they have not known.

It's beautiful! It's beautiful...those who are blind in the world, so many hundreds of millions who believe, who have a belief that a woman has to hide her body, totally in some cases, her eyes can only peer through and see, men who believe that that's a righteous thing, women who believe that's a righteous thing, to free their blindness so they can begin to see, to enjoy life the way God says it's to be enjoyed, with a sound mind.

To free people in this earth who think that they have to work up the holy spirit, that they have to cry out and cry down the holy spirit, that they have to roll around on the floor, they have to speak in 'tongues' and do others things and work up this, a way of life. No, you don't work it up. It's something that God desires to give freely to people, it's how you live! It's not something fake! It's not about a false feeling – and sometimes that engulfs some of the people in God's Church because they've come out of that background, that what I call this protestant attitude and background in the world that's an *abomination* to God, this 'feel good' thing, about things you can do that somehow you're better with God, you feel better with this touchy-feely emotion... Anyway, I *loathe* the protestant spirit because it keeps people in blindness. They talk about, "Don't you know *Jeesus*?" Well, it just makes you sick inside if you know the truth.

Now, if you don't know it, that's all you know, what a shame! And talk about '*loooove*'; He just wants love, for everybody to *loooove* each other, if you know *Jeesus*. What a sad thing that they think it's in

how they talk, that it's something you have to work up to feel a certain way about, nice platitudes. You go to a store and you can look at some of these nice platitudes, religious cards especially, look at some of these platitudes, and sometimes driving down a road and you see them on a billboard or something and these nice little sayings, this feel good thing about God. That's not what it's about! It's about how you live your life! It's about how you think! It's about obeying God! It's about not committing adultery! It's about not stealing and taking advantage of other people! It's about not *lying* to people! That's why God talks about *hating a lie*! And people lie! And you tell one lie, you know what happens, you've got to tell another one to keep backing it up and *you can't keep track of all the lies*! That's the way the world is! I don't care where you look, it's a sick, sick, sick world.

What a blessing to be able to be called out of that like you've been, and whatever weaknesses you have in those areas I have just mentioned you learn to fight them and you learn how to have a better life, a happier life in right relationships, because the only way right relationships come about is from obeying God. It's not these 'feely-good' things that you go to church once a week, or that you speak a certain way to people, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ?" "*You haven't?!*" You know, horror of horror. Not *your* Jesus Christ, thank God! And you say the truth and they hear you? Oh, that win's friends and influences people doesn't it? They just embrace you, they have warm, cuddly feelings toward you, and they forget all of a sudden about love, if you love each other. That's all you're going to get in the world, especially when you're living what's right.

What a blessing that what we've been given God's about to give to the whole world. You think God's excited about that? The reason Jesus Christ died was to start the Church, was to begin a Body of people who could be worked with by the holy spirit, that could be taught and trained Sabbath after Sabbath, Holy Day after Holy Day, to learn this way of life, for a spirit and a mind to grow inside of you that in the first, especially during that period of time more than any other, is where most of the 144,000 come from, so that that government can be there that is going to work with Jesus Christ, that's going to minister and teach on the earth *so we don't have a REPETITION of what happened in Worldwide!* *Because MAN CAN'T GOVERN HIMSELF even WITH God's spirit!* What an *awesome lesson!* That was a *horrible* thing to live through, but what an *awesome* lesson!

Mr. Armstrong couldn't keep track of everything; he couldn't keep control of all the ministry. He couldn't even do it at Ambassador College! You have evangelists up there teaching things that are *opposite* of what he taught them...and then they come along with some different ideas; 14/15<sup>th</sup> Passover and begins to teach students about it. And then ministers go out and they teach their own thing! Won't happen in the future because there are 144,000 who've been trained to teach, to lead mankind. And those who become ministers who are in the flesh, they'll be working under spirit beings in the God Family who are spirit and will know *exactly* the moment they teach something that's of their own attitude and mind in thinking, and they'll get a visit, a fast one. Seriously! Very quick! And they will repent mightily!

And then I think about the next step... What an incredible thing! The next big step; those of you who live on in that age, you have an opportunity for the *next* big step in God's plan, to become a greater part of the greater Family that God's going to prepare in just that 1,000 years – possibly billions to become a part of the God Family, to work with the billions who are resurrected in the Great White Throne. You talk about an awesome God; organized, planned, has prepared everything in such a meticulous way. All about the blessing as it says here, 'to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners all out of prison'.

And I will bring the blind by a way they have not known.

Now they're going to be able to know it. Everyone's going to be able to know the truth around the world; it's going to be there Holy Day to Holy Day, Sabbath to Sabbath.

I will lead them in paths [**roads, ways**] they have not known.

It's not about a literal road, it's not about a literal path, it's about that which is spiritual, the way. That's why we have the word '*high-way*'. We see it physical; in the scriptures here it's about a way of life to follow, like a highway, the one you travel on, you don't get off course, you follow it.

I will lead them in the [**ways/roads**] they have not known. I will make darkness **light** before them, and crooked things to become straight.

Finally! Everything is crooked out there today; criss-crossing mazes, confusion, messed up. So, God's going to straighten it all out.

These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

God has been quiet for a long time; only at times working with individuals here and there, with a nation of people, individuals, that they didn't 'prevail with Him' in. Held His peace for a long time waiting for this period of time.

So far we've covered just an overview of the first two sermons that I gave at the Feast. Awesome! There was that theme that ran throughout, but now we're getting closer and God wants us to focus upon it more because this is becoming more of the message, especially at this time of the year – Passover – the *purpose* of Passover in a greater way. It *magnifies* the Passover because in the past 2,000 years only those who've been drawn into the Church have understood Passover, been able to receive Passover, the ability, the blessing of being able to forgiven of sin, to have a relationship with God so that God the Father and Jesus Christ can dwell in them. Haven't been a lot of people if you want to look at the masses of people on the earth but now we're at a point in time where that's going to be multiplied so many times over and it becomes greater then, more awesome, more exciting, more inspiring.

What an incredible time we're in and what a meaningful time we're in, to be able to observe the final Passover and Unleavened Bread in the age of mankind – that which pictures everything that God is now doing, coming out of Egypt, being delivered, being freed. It's exciting to God, it's exciting to His Son, it's exciting to me, and I believe it's exciting to you.

The third sermon at the Feast was entitled 'The Bondage of Abraham'. We went through step by step by step; God had us focus upon different aspects of what's happened through time in this world and things He's excited about seeing coming to fruition, to an end. Promises given to Abraham that no one else was able to follow – his children – things that were passed down through time that started then; the reason why there's a group of people out there that's more finicky about pork than the Jews are. *It came from Abraham!* That's where it came from, because of how he lived his life, passed down from generation to generation to generation. They didn't keep everything, obviously, by any measure...and neither did the other family, did they? It's only because God had a purpose of working with them, of taking them to Mount Sinai after they'd gone into captivity, that they were worked with in a unique way and given *more* information than what was given to Abraham. Awesome history, brethren, truly!

John 8:31, we read this in this particular sermon:

**John 8:31** - Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed on him, If you continue in my word...

Which He said wasn't His but His Fathers.

If you continue in my word, then indeed you will be my students. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the **truth shall make you free**.

As you grow that comes to mean more and more and more in time. Means more to me today than it did a year ago; it grows in its magnitude, if you will, in its greatness of a purpose and meaning of what God is doing. The truth is what sets you free. We hear people in the world quote it; they don't have any idea what it really means because they don't know the truth.

**...the truth shall make you free.**

The more you learn about God the freer you become, if you make the choices to follow what God gives to you.

33 Then they answered him, We are Abraham's seed...

Whoop tee doo! 'We're Abraham's seed...!' Pride! Haughtiness! It's like just because of that, boy, you're special. You're special if you're Abraham's seed. What about those who aren't? They're just not special, huh? Not like you are! You're gifted! It was an attitude they had toward Christ. *Incredible!* So, "Who are you to tell us anything? We are of Abraham's seed!"

...We are Abraham's seed and have never been in bondage to anyone.

That's the way the world thinks. That's the way this country thinks. "What do you mean we're in bondage? Are you nuts? You must be *stark raving mad!*" Well, they're pretty convicted of that – stark raving mad, you need help. No, they're the ones; they don't understand they need help.

So how can you say...

As they spoke to the *Passover*, the Messiah, the one who will bring *them* in time into the God Family if they will listen, in their time.

So how can you say, You shall be made free?

They think they're free. What a shame. So again, they didn't grasp what they were, who they were, the captivity, the bondage, not free as they supposed. And the Jewish people embrace Judaism to this day. Even 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ condemned them, in essence told them they were not of God. So, incredible scriptures there that we read at that particular time, and Jesus Christ making it very clear to them, you're in bondage, you're not free. *Incredible!*

And so the thrust of that third sermon was, and what was stated mid way...

Yet, all are the seed of Abraham, but to be free from bondage that they do not yet recognize, they must become the children of Abraham [per Christ's instruction]—and do the works of Abraham.

See, it was how he lived, and that's the point Jesus Christ was making; it's *what* he lived that made him who he was, and that's what they were going to have to do in time. And so we even talked about Islam, those who are going to have to do the works of Abraham, let alone Judaism, because they're not doing the works of Abraham at all.

Then the fourth sermon was entitled, 'The Bondage of Christianity'. Again, we talk about this often in this age, obviously, and all these are a focus that God gave us at the Feast. Reveals the purpose of the final end-time thrust of God's own work to deliver mankind out of Egypt, what it's all about. It's a focus that we had at the Feast, obviously, and have right now in an intensified way.

Let's turn over to 1 Corinthians. And again, we've talked about this so much because of the bondage. We understand they don't understand they're in bondage to Satan when you talk about the trinity, when you talk about Sunday worship. They don't understand their history and what happened with the Catholic church in 325 AD and on and on it goes, things about Christmas and Easter, etcetera, etcetera, and how the Passover became hidden. They kept it hidden because of their beliefs and their choices. They're in bondage. I look forward to the day they're freed, to where we don't have this syrupy type of stuff that turns your stomach, that doesn't turn theirs yet, they think that's about a relationship with God. What a beautiful thing when they come to understand, no, that's a *repulsive* thing!

Then the fifth sermon that was entitled 'True Freedom'. Again, here in 1 Corinthians 2:

The ability to understand “**why**” mankind has been in bondage—in slavery—in captivity to spiritual Egypt is indeed a matter of GREAT spiritual understanding. God's deliverance of freedom gets to the heart and core of one of the greatest “mysteries” of all time. Mr. Armstrong wrote the book entitled “Mystery of the Ages,” yet the heart and core of understanding it—in its greatest fullness—is a spiritual matter of grasping “true freedom.”

We went through that. I can't help but when I talk about this, sitting in the refresher program there in Pasadena, all the ministers and elders wives who were brought in over a period of about a year and half, and we had the opportunity of hearing him that day. He wasn't able to make it to all of the programs, he did a lot of travelling, and he couldn't come in sometimes because of health and so forth, but he was there that day and he had the book. I think that's where they were handing some of the books out at that point in time as well, and just at the very beginning of it, he'd just finished it, and he was so excited! He was so excited to be able to talk about it.

After seeing fifty plus years in the ministry, and finally being able to write a book that brought together a picture from beginning to end of what God has been doing through time. In those chapters, one after another, talking about the angelic realm, the purpose of mankind, and so forth, and gave greater meaning and ability to understand things that God had placed in this book [Bible] so long ago but that He'd blessed Mr. Armstrong in putting it together in *plain terms*, easier terms, to understand and grasp. And *because of that* God has blessed us to be able to build upon it and grow even more. What an incredible thing!

And so again here, reading some of those scriptures that have to do with about things of this matter on a spiritual plane, true freedom, where it comes from.

**1 Cor. 2:7-11** But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [Why a mystery?]

What an incredible thing! Something you can see at the very time you begin to be drawn, that God all of a sudden opens up your mind to understand about seven days, the purpose of the Sabbath and you begin to see a picture of 7,000 years. That's *incredible knowledge*! If we're not careful we can begin to take some of that for granted. But when you first hear that, when you first receive that and you understand where you are in that plan, you're at the end of the six days – it even becomes *more awesome* and *more exciting* as you begin to understand things that are simple and plain with God's spirit but are hidden from the world.

We can talk about it, we can share it with each other but you can't share it with others, yet.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom* [**“even that which is hidden”**], which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Again, how *awesome* is that? It shows the magnitude, the power, the might, the planning of God, of how things are mapped out so meticulously! I think of being back there in college in that first year of Bible class and having an evangelist in the Church teaching the class, and we were talking about Adam and Eve and the very beginning of time there. The attitude being taught in the class was like when they sinned it was like God hit Himself in the forehead and said “What am I going to do *now*?! ...they *sinned*! That just wrecks everything! Where do we go from here?!” You think how narrow minded we were at that point, to not be able to see a fuller picture. God knew full well what His creation would do. He knew *exactly* what they would do and how they would do it! He knew *exactly* what it would take for them to be able to come to that point in time where indeed they did sin. It wasn't a shock to God by any measure!

He'd already purposed and planned that mankind had to have a Passover. He purposed and planned the Holy Days from the very beginning to the very end, of what it would take for mankind to come to the point in time when we'd have *billions* on the earth, where He would hold back the ability for man to learn certain things, and candidly, would even have to *give* that to mankind. Sometimes we think, “Oh, Einstein, he was a *genius*!” Some of these people out there in time, in the modern history, “What *incredible minds* to *dream up*, to *come up with these things they have!*” Wow! Well, where were they 6,000 years... where were they 5,000 years ago...where were they 4,000 years ago? Where were the smart people back then? They still don't know how they accomplished some things...some of the things with mummies that they did, how they built the pyramids with such meticulousness - they still don't understand some of those things today! How could they have done those things back then?! Well, they weren't morons, you know – very *skilled* – there are some things that have been *lost* in understanding. Incredible!

God had to *give* man the ability to receive more, to know more, to have more. Wasn't it Einstein who bombed out with math in school? And sometimes we don't grasp that God gives spiritual things to mankind to learn about Him and He has also given to mankind things in the mind when the time is right to increase knowledge and technology to bring us to where we are today. It was *God* who gave the ability. It was *God* who gave the minds and the ability to do the things that were there, things that were *God* inspired in knowledge and understanding...and yet man takes it to himself. “Oh, look at how great

we are! Look what we can do! Computer age? Whoooo-eee... we are great! We are living in great times!" You don't hear about that God's the one who gave it to us. And how do we use it? All for the purpose, to bring us where we are, so that China and Russia can do what they do at the end, and Europe and those ten nations, so they can get in this conflict in the end so that God can usher in a new world, a new age. Awesome!

... which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Before the world was ever there God had a plan and a purpose and a means whereby we could be forgiven of sin, that it would be through our Passover, that in time the Passover would come and die who was the Messiah but not yet time for Him to come as the Messiah. *What an incredible plan! All laid out before man was ever put on this earth!* God knowing *exactly* what to do and how to do it. You know, if He put the universe out there how foolish to think that we would be put here and that somehow He would kind of work with us as He went along... "What am I going to do now?! What am I going to do now - look what they're doing here! Look at what Israel's doing!! I gave them the law on Mount Sinai – *why* aren't they doing it?" Stupid! He *knew* they wouldn't do it. That's their whole purpose, to show that they couldn't prevail with Him, they had to have the holy spirit.

And so God determined long ago, to our glory. What is that glory? The glory you have in your life? Do you know what it is? It's *God's spirit!* It's *God!* That's the glory! That's what he's talking about here, '**Which God ordained unto the world until our glory,**' so we could receive a portion of the very being of God Almighty! So that God the Father and Jesus Christ could *live* and dwell in us and we could dwell in them! *How awesome is that?* You know, *if you're not careful sometimes you can begin to take it for granted!* *Don't!* *Treasure it!* *Thank God for it!* Understand you don't work it up, it comes from God by the blessings of God, and the more you receive what comes from God, God receives the glory! But we receive it into our lives! To think that God could dwell in us? ...and live in us? ...and then we sin and He doesn't. And we as a Church sin and He spews us all out of His mouth so we could learn a lesson – "*That if you don't do what's right and you're only lukewarm and you're not hot for My way of life and you don't desire My way of life with all your being and you fight for it every inch of the way I'm going to spew you out because I won't accept that which is lukewarm. If you want to be lukewarm, that's not going to be in My Kingdom.*" And so we learn a lesson from that; you've got to *fight!* You've got to *desire* what God gives you with all of your being, with all of your might! And that's something you have to cry out to God for help to do because you can't do it. I can't do it. And so we cry out to God to have mercy upon us, to help us in our growth.

We are approaching a Church wide fast with thankfulness and gratitude to God in a way that we never have before as God's Church. I believe that with all my being – that's where God has brought us to, so we can focus on thankfulness and gratitude to God for where we are, for what we have, for what He's doing in our lives, in a very powerful way, because God has matured His Church. Do you grasp how blessed you are? This isn't Sardis. This isn't Philadelphia. This isn't Laodicea. The final period of a period of time since I began doing what I was doing in a magnified way for a period of 3½ years that it will last, is a work that Jesus Christ has been doing in His Church to share with us (to share with the world, but in time), to share with us now a completion of something He began a long time ago. And we just read about it in the book of Daniel recently – 'strengthening the covenant with many' - for the final 3½ days (equaling 3½ years). That's what we've been blessed to live through – strengthening the covenant - of something that's getting ready to thrust us into a new age with understanding that we have now, of something God is going to magnify more and more and more as we go into the Millennium and throughout the Millennium.

And we're blessed to receive something... I didn't grasp the significance of speaking of a time when it was stated "Laodicea is over. The period of Laodicea is finished; we're in a new period of time." I didn't grasp what it was. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know until we just went through the book of Daniel here recently that it was this period of time that Jesus Christ is finishing. He's finishing a work, something that had to happen before He returned, the final period of that one segment of time of one week, if you will, one day for a year, seven years, the 3½ years cut off in the midst of the week as we talked about. Incredible that we've been living it.

And so again, all 'ordained before the world was, unto our glory'.

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known *it*, they would not have impaled on a pole/stake the Lord of glory.

If the people, the religious leaders and world's leaders at that time in Rome, those representing Rome, had known who He was they wouldn't have done what they did. But they didn't know; they didn't grasp.

9 But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man [**mankind**], the things which God has prepared for them who love him.

And you come to learn in time that you can't love God until He calls you, until He opens your mind to see Him. You can't love that which you don't know. That's why we must have that compassion and understanding, hate what is taught – we know who it comes from – but to understand the mercy we're to have on others who are caught in that, because they're in bondage, and how we treat them, and how we think about them, because they're in bondage and they don't understand what they're in bondage to and they can't love that which they don't understand. That's why they talk in syrupy terms or other kinds of terms, because that's all they know. I look forward to the time they're freed from that so they can talk like you talk, so they can share what you share.

10 But God has revealed *them* unto us by his spirit...

Then we begin to grasp, then we begin to understand, then we can begin to receive the love of God and we can love Him.

...for the spirit searches [**examines, seeks to know**]

How much do we examine? How much do we seek to know? How *deep* is that inside of us?

...all things, yes, the deep things of God.

And the more we grow, and the closer we get, the more that God shares those things with us – the deep things of God He gave to us at the Feast. We talk about coming out of spiritual Egypt and if we're not careful it doesn't have the impact of what it means for this world, with the *excitement* of everything that God has been planning and preparing for so long that we're blessed to be a part of. And to grasp that more deeply you have to focus on what it means to be thankful for all that you have.

You know, sometimes by just focusing on gratitude and thankfulness it has a big impact on the mind, because human beings don't tend to think that way, we tend to think on the things we don't have. We tend to think on the rough things that are happening to us and the bad things that are happening to us and the things we're having to experience that aren't much fun. But what's the other side of that coin? That if you weren't going through those things, if it weren't for the process that God is working with you, you wouldn't be able to see and grow and understand. It's through those things we become stronger, our response to those things that happen in our life that you can become more thankful. The more you recognize the gratitude and thankfulness, for what you are going through and why you're going through it, it gives you a different perspective of life indeed.

And to do so with fasting, what an awesome opportunity we have, *because this is from God*. This is from Jesus Christ to you, because of His excitement for where we are and because of the meaning of *this Passover more than any other Passover!* The *last Passover* that had such great meaning to Him was the one He died for and died in to accomplish, to fulfill something, but He did it because of what it means for us *now*, and what it means *for the world now*, and what it's meant for the last *2,000 years* and for the *4,000 years* before that – because everyone has to come in through Him. The ability, the blessing of being forgiven of sin comes through a Passover – but *this* is what it's about, where we are now because it's for the *whole world* not just for a select few through time. It's for everyone!

... yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man [person] knows the things of a man, save **[except by]** the spirit of man which is in him?

In other words that ability that we have because of thinking and reasoning and talking and just because of the spirit essence that God has given to us, not the holy spirit.

Even so the things of God no man can know, but **[save, except by]** the Spirit of God.

I love these verses! Because I've seen so many go astray in these, so many in the Church, so many of the ministry, because it's not too difficult for human beings to begin taking upon themselves the glory that God gives them, the ability to see and know and understand things when it's fully of God. Because you can lose it! You can lose it quickly! I've seen that too. I've seen people, I've seen ministers, the moment they began to accept a false doctrine and begin to teach it their minds went off on a tangent so quick it's staggering. I saw people change overnight and people change in a week from one thing to another – witnessed it over and over and over again – one day talking to someone on a phone about the apostasy that was taking place, and thinking you're of the same mind. And a few days later, because they had a long conversation with someone out in Pasadena, all of a sudden the next time you talk to them it's like the 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers'. What happened to your mind? *Who ARE you?* I don't know you anymore! What a horrible thing to live through! I went through that with several people too. What a horrible thing!

And sometimes, if you're not careful, you think it can't happen to you. The reason I'm telling you this is because it's happened to a lot and it can happen to you and me and everyone else. And only by the mercy and the grace of God it didn't to me fully – it started and I had to repent of it because I was the cause.

Never – never – never take anything to yourself that's spiritual that comes from God. Because *everything* spiritual comes from God – it *doesn't* come out of you. It can come through you, you can be

blessed to share in it, to partake of it, to eat of it, to drink of it, to grow with it, to have it become a part of your being, but...it...comes...from...God. The source is God; never - never - never from us. What comes out of us is not a good thing and that's what we have to come to understand, and embrace that which comes from God because we want to be fully like God. What a blessing! What an opportunity! What a crazy awesome thing that God offers to us.

The sixth sermon was entitled 'Freeing Men and Women'. Since we started in this and started seeing this this has come to mean more and more and more and more to me, I become more and more excited by it through time. I am far more excited about the Millennium because of just seeing this truth alone and seeing what God is doing here *after 6,000 years* with what started with Adam and Eve is being addressed by God. Something that God has *great desire* in, a *strengthening of the covenant with many*. You want to talk about *strengthening the covenant with many – this is a powerful thing that God has given to His Church* because the world's going to be different in the next thousand years, the next 1,100 years if you will – *totally different focus – even with the CHURCH, truly!* Because we never knew this, we didn't understand these things, because it wasn't time and because He wasn't strengthening that covenant yet, because it wasn't time.

Just like Christ and the disciples before he died when He taught for the last time and told them, "There are things I can't give to you because you cannot yet bear them; you can't bear them right now." That's what it meant. "You can't bear them right now. The society around you cannot bear them right now. They're going to have to address other things in life that are going to be big enough as it is." They couldn't address that one yet. Now it's time to be addressed!

How incredible! I hope your vision of this and your understanding of this is growing more and more and more, because it's all about that which is *spiritual* that's important to God – government that is spiritual, that comes from God, and a *respect* toward everyone in the Body, toward one another, no matter where it is. Full respect and appreciation and understanding – a part of the Body – *no* haughtiness, *no* pride, *no* 'better than' attitudes, because that's fully against God's way of life, it's fully against God's government, it truly is.

And so this truth here alone is one of the most powerful that Jesus Christ has given to us, it truly is.

And again in the introduction the challenge was before us to examine ourselves in order to more fully grasp the deliverance God and His Son are beginning to give even now to the Church, and then to the world, to strengthen the covenant with many, as I mentioned. And so from the introduction it was stated:

One of the greatest areas of revelation and potential places for the magnification of this truth—of our ability to “see” ourselves...

Prepare yourselves spiritually? Something you're still to be doing, and even more so now with even a stronger focus in looking at these areas in your life. And this is one that needs to be looked at deeply because this is the one where people have been held in great bondage. People in God's Church! I marvel! I think of *all the counseling* I've done through time in God's Church and the *frustration* sometimes in life, in dealing with certain situations and coming to understand and see in a greater way, yeah, you cannot give this to anyone. The ability to resolve differences in life between people is in their hands, between them and their God. And sometimes you get in there more as a kind of referee and it was not meant to be that way. The reality is it's upon each and every one of us, expedient upon us of

how we deal with things and look forward to greater and greater truth being given so that all will live by that truth.

And as we enter a Millennial period that's going to be the peer pressure in the future, and it's a good thing. And the knowledge and the ability to see it and understand it's going to grow. There's going to be a lot of changes take place in society as we go forward, truly. Whole society has to change in their concepts and their ideas about relationships just between men and women. Because see, both sides have been affected by all this, and there's a right way to do it before God and there are wrong ways to do it before God. Both sides.

So again, saying in that sermon there in the introduction:

One of the greatest areas of revelation and potential places for the magnification of this truth—of our ability to “see” ourselves in greater **spirit and truth...**

And that's what God's giving us, opportunity, greater spirit and truth in this one area alone.

...is contained in this sermon today. I will state at the outset that most of you will tend to think you have a fairly good handle on this subject, but I am telling you now **that you do not!**

I remember stating that at the Feast and it's still true today. You have more to learn. I'll just tell you, you have much more to learn, and the reason is because this is spiritual. You're just starting to see since God has given it to us, the ability to break through something that has imprisoned people for 6,000 years, and you do not come out of that overnight just as you do not come out of the things that have made you who you are overnight. You are fighting things and you will fight things into the Millennium because of what you are as a human being that you have learned, began to learn when you were a child, went through your teen years and on into your adult life, depending on when you were called that you begin to address some of those things in your life. It is a battle of the mind and how you think.

And this area here is a big one! This is *giant*! This subject is giant, gargantuan, because it's affected everything in society for *6,000 years*, and this is so deeply moulded in *you*, whoever you are, *this is so deeply moulded inside of you that it takes the spirit of God to begin opening it up so you can see what God wants you to see, the freedom and the mindset toward other people that is right and sound and balanced on a Godly plane THAT YOU DO NOT YET HAVE. SO DON'T THINK YOU HAVE A GOOD HOLD ON THIS SUBJECT, you are just BEGINNING to see something here.* I cannot stress this enough, that there is much repentance and change that still needs to take place in our minds, in your mind, in my mind. I hope you see that. I hope you see a glimmer of what I'm telling you today because this does not change overnight, this is something you have to fight for. You have to fight for it in your own mind.

And this has a lot to do with this subject, preparing ourselves spiritually. This is a big one. You have to work on this preparation on this spiritual aspect of it, see. It's so easy sometimes to somewhat placate, somewhat deceive ourselves into thinking we're okay. We're *never* okay, if you understand spiritually. We're always going to have things to grow in, truly. As long as you're in this body you have things to battle. As long as you're in this physical body *you just have things to battle*, to conquer and overcome. I'm so thankful I'm about to the end; the battles almost over in that respect. And the reality is, if I lived another ten years, another twenty years, another thirty years I'd still be battling things that I'm battling,

maybe becoming more refined in certain areas at times, obviously as we do through time, but this physical life is something you battle until you're through it. And it's through the battling that you grow in character and that God knows when He gives you His spirit, when you're a spirit being and when you have that life living in you permanently that He knows who you are and He'll give you that power and that different life, if you will, where those things... when you're no longer physical too that changes a great deal, no longer the pride of life, 'lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life'...they leave you because you're no longer physical.

What an incredible thing to be blessed with the mind of God always! ...to have total unity! ...total unity and agreement with God always and no longer a battle. See, that's what it is in God's Family. You have arrived. You are at one with God, no longer struggling like we have to struggle now. But as long as you're in this human flesh you've got to struggle and you have to grow and you have to cry out to God to help you to grow, to conquer and overcome the wrong thinking of the mind, the areas where you're still in bondage, in Egypt. Nobody leaves Egypt overnight, it's a lifelong process. But we make great strides at times, and that's why God's excited about this time of getting ready to go into and give to everyone in the world what you have already started – they get to as soon as they'll receive it.

I'm going to go on with another statement made in that sermon:

You will have a powerful pull on you to be tempted to “think” you have a good handle on this...

...on this subject, freeing men and women.

...but the **truth is** that you will literally fight at this battle—if you are willing and desirous of fighting God's way, in spirit and in truth—...you will literally fight at this battle during your full physical lifetime, and as you do you will grow.

That's how you grow. And so we've been blessed to be given something by Jesus Christ, and I hope you see it in this picture, in this frame, in this understanding – 'strengthening the covenant with many' – to finish a ministry that He began in His first 3½ years with the disciples. They didn't have the holy spirit. What an awesome thing! Now, they were able to take that and filled with God's spirit and grow and push forward and learn and see the things that He gave to them, but how much more for us now because we're receiving it *with* God's spirit in our lives as He's giving it to us. This is far more awesome, far more exciting, and we can actually begin to implement it more quickly because we see it. What an awesome thing!

Let's turn over to 1 Peter 2 and remind ourselves of just a sampling of verses covered in that sixth sermon and ask how much we received from that sermon as we're preparing ourselves for the upcoming fast before Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. And this is in a context, what we're going to look at here, indeed it is about men and women but it's about relationships, and it is that which reveals God's spirit in a far greater way than anything else, not going through the motions of sitting in services, going to Holy Days, going to the Feast, listening to sermons during the week, reading things in the PDF files and whatever it might be. Those are all needful and important, prayer and everything else we do, but the spiritual part of it is what we are able to put into practice in our lives by the help, mercy, blessing and the power of God Almighty, through the power of His spirit, through understanding and through fighting and working at these things.

And the most important has to do with relationships because that's what family is all about, it's about relationships, how we think toward each other, about each other. And how much more important can this be as we approach Passover season? And when you take Passover and what God admonishes you of, which we will get into probably next Sabbath.

**1 Pet. 2:19-20 – For this is thankworthy;** now I love these verses too because hidden within the meaning here is something that reveals the meaning of grace. This word is 'grace'. Everywhere else, as a whole, except right here in Peter, it's translated grace. This is the grace of God, something we receive from God, His mercy, His patience, because of His love being shared with us, the forgiveness, the mind that is there toward us to help us along the way. **For this is grace**, if you want a definition scripturally, this is what it is! This is what grace is all about as it lives in our lives because it's not something we just receive selfishly from God, it's something that God (as I've said before)...God desire to live in us that others benefit from the same thing.

**For this is thankworthy, if a man**, in other words **a person, for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully**. It has to do with relationships and how someone may be treating you. **...and yet you endure grief, suffering wrongfully**, willing to suffer for the benefit of someone else. What do you think Jesus Christ did? Jesus Christ set the *height* of example for us, **enduring grief** of mankind, enduring the hardship, the attitude, the spirit of mankind upon Himself, **suffering wrongfully** – wrongly accused, lied about. Incredible! Beaten! Beaten so much that it says, in essence, His face, His countenance was so changed by the beating He received, by the flesh hooks and the cat-o-nine tails and the things that ripped skin off His body, that He couldn't be recognized for who He was. If you saw Him before and afterwards you couldn't recognize Him afterwards as being who He was.

But because of why He was doing it He was willing to go through it, for you, for me, and for everyone. We have a tough time doing that sometimes just for one person that *supposedly* we love, that we *say* we love, that we *claim* we love, but selfishness, pride, can be such an ugly – ugly – ugly – ugly - hideously ugly thing, and it is; and that's the way we have to see it if we're to conquer and overcome it.

20 For what glory [Gk. – **credit, what real good being done**] *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted [**literally means to “strike” but carries with it the meaning of being corrected, chastened, told where you are wrong**]

If you're told about something when you're wrong, just as an example, on a job. So **what good is it if you're buffeted**, corrected, chastened for something, **for your faults you take it patiently?** So if you've done something wrong, you have a fault and you take it patiently, what good is that, because you should! But you know what? People don't! On the job, especially, today, employers, that's one of the toughest jobs, correcting someone for something they're not doing right, because they think that they're not doing it wrong! They're doing it right, you just don't get it! "It's your company and you've made it into the huge company that it is but I know a better way of doing it." Well, if you do, go out and start your own company. If you're so intelligent, you're so sharp and you have nothing to learn from your employer, go out and start your own, go out and show him how great you are. But if you have something to learn, shut your mouth and learn it.

But see, we don't have that attitude of mind in this world and people who go on a job and work someplace, sometimes there's something's you have to take because there's the old expression? 'The Boss may not always be right, but the Boss is always the Boss.' So even if He's wrong, he's still the boss and there should be that respect. We don't have that, that work ethic in the world, in society, it really is bad. I hope you all see that, and I know that people who have people working with them or for them, if

you've ever been a foreman, if you've ever been over a job, if you have a company and you have people work for you or you have people come and do things for you, you know what I'm talking about.

And so **when you're buffeted**, if you're corrected for your faults, **and you take it patiently**, *but...* so in other words that doesn't mean anything because you should, but the reality is that with human nature people seldom do it. So a parent telling a child – where do we learn it? We learn it... it's our nature, very young we don't want a parent telling us we're doing something wrong, it's just our human nature. We think we're doing the right thing and we can do that and it's okay to do it and we have our reasons why it's justified, and "You just don't understand!" or "You don't care! You don't love me!" Or a mate talking to a mate, especially if a woman talks to a man - but boy oh boy if a man talks to a woman... That's our society, I'm just telling you that's the way our society is. It is! Especially in a marriage, that's just the way it is in the world! It is the way it is!

My experience has been in God's Church since '81 working in the ministry, and before that in working with some people that I was told to do at times by the ministry – but as a whole, starting in '81 up to this period of time, over and over and over again in people's lives, my experience has been that there's an expectation of a husband telling a wife something, to be done no matter what, and rarely-rarely is it good when the wife tells the husband something that is not being done right and needs to change. That's my experience in God's Church in the ministry, counselling with people. Sad – Sad, sad, sad, but that's the world we live in, that's the world we're coming out of, we're coming out of Egypt, and the more we can see that and understand that and learn to respect each other in God's Church, men and women... and it starts in marriage to teach those lessons in a more powerful way, and children then will learn from that, what they see, or they become what they see, or they react to what they see...and it's never good and it hurts and it carries much pain and it carries scars that are there for the rest of their life that become their battle. So the more you can do it right and yield yourself to God the more blessed everyone will be, and can be blessed by God even more so.

But if, when you do well, and suffer [**endure suffering, as to swallow your pride and go on with the task before you**] *for it*, that you take it patiently, then this *is* ...**"grace"** with God.

That's what grace is. So, let's say that you are able to do that which, as a whole, people don't do. Someone corrects, chastens, reacts to something you have done which is *wrong*, you shouldn't have done it, you shouldn't have *said it* and *you can't even take that* from your own mate? Male or female, it doesn't matter because it goes both ways and both sin in that. And if you have so much pride you can't listen to something that is in error or wrong or sin before God, that was wrong to be said, that shouldn't have been said in that tone, and you can't take it?! And that's normal, sadly, in this world. That's just sick! And so how can you go to the next step and live God's way of life? If you can't even do that which is so basic that *should be done* anyway in living in the Church of God, that we should receive – and maybe you can't say it right away.... "Thanks."

My wife and I talk about her Father that endeared us to him by something he began to practice a long time ago, when he'd get to that point and he'd say, "Would you give me another chance?" "Give me another chance." It was his way of saying, "I'm sorry. I was wrong." That's good, see, humbling yourselves if you've done something wrong. "Yeah, I'll give you another chance, obviously. You accept that responsibility, you're going to change, you're wanting to do what's right, you're wanting to make the relationship right." But so often people can't do that. It's very hard for people to say, "I'm sorry." It's in your nature! It's hard for you to say, "I'm sorry!" Now, if you have that blessing and that ability

*you are unique* and thank God for it, but as a whole that's something you have to pray to God about for help to do, to be able to say, "I'm sorry." To be able to tell your children, "I'm sorry." To be able to tell someone on the job, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that that way. I shouldn't have handled this in that manner." Even if the situation is right, there are ways of dealing with things.

But the next part is the part that's so important. We should be able to do *this*, God is saying, because that's just the way it should be in how we treat each other. But the *greater* thing, the *spiritual* thing is the next phase, is the next level, is that which goes above and beyond that, because that's already expected by God of us. That's what He's telling us. That's just the way we should live toward each other that we're incapable of doing as a whole until we begin to address it and begin to have the ability to say and humble ourselves when we're wrong. When you're wrong you're wrong! You know, pride is an ugly thing when you want to justify wrong! But this next part is what's so beautiful here, it truly is, when it says, again...

But if, when you do well...

You've done the right thing! You haven't made a mistake! You haven't said things in a wrong way. Maybe it's something you've addressed and it's true and you've done it the best way you know how and even though you handle it in the best way you know how it still comes back at you and you're the one at fault. Sometimes in life when people get into a dispute it's amazing how all of a sudden it can be back on you, you're the person who's done wrong, you're the bad one. Some people get really good at this. Some women get very good at this. It's a defensive mechanism. Some men become very good at this. The point is men and women become very good at this. And the reason I said it that way is so that both will take a look at themselves, because human nature can become very good at this, turning things around on somebody else. "You're coming at me and... if you had done *\*that\** in the first place." And so the tables get turned.

**But if when you do well, and suffer...** Christ lived a perfect life. And that's what we're to see, even if you do that which is right, the attitude of mind, you have to understand, that not everyone is going to receive it all the time from you, not everyone's going to embrace it from you when you address something. Because it's about addressing something and in this case if it comes in your direction and something has been addressed toward you, accused, whatever it might be, then you're tried as to your attitude and your spirit toward them, truly, and it'll put you to the test. And you're especially put to that test and it becomes far more important when it's someone closer to you, your own mate perhaps, or your own parent, or your own child, or whatever it might be and how you address it then. Are you willing to suffer, maybe to give them some time so they can begin seeing what they've done? Maybe to address it in such a manner, to back away from it, because a lot of times what we do as human beings, you just add fuel to the fire.

All of a sudden there's this abrasiveness coming and "I did what's right!" ...and *I'm going to show you!* And then there's this argument, there's this big old clash that takes place rather than resolving something out of love, backing away from the situation to give time, perhaps the atmosphere or whatever it needs to be; a willingness to suffer wrongfully and take it and a willingness sometimes to just acknowledge, if nothing else but to say, "Yeah, I could have handled this so much better." And you always can! You can always improve. You can always say that and be true. "I should have handled this in a better way." Take it upon yourself and diffuse the situation, suffer wrongfully if need be to help someone else. That's what it's talking about here, and it goes far beyond that.

**But if you do well, and suffer for it;** You know, I've talked about this so often, about love, agape, what it is. It's a willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of someone else. That's the sacrifice that's pleasing to God. That's what true, meaningful, Godly kind of love is. Because just to love someone else, to be close to someone else, to enjoy someone else in life, if it's just fairly natural there's no test in that, there's no challenge in that, there's nothing above and beyond human life. That's partially what it's talking about here. And you're tested in those sometimes when someone finally comes along and says something that you're not doing so well and tells you. How do you receive that? Not good. But how much more when you have done that which is right and you're shown, told you've done something wrong and you're willing to suffer, sacrifice for their benefit to give them time, to give them whatever it is to change, to do whatever is needed.

**But if when you do well and you suffer, you take it patiently... *patiently*.** I think of the example of Jesus Christ and it's powerful in how it states it. When He was reviled He didn't revile back. When He was threatened He didn't threaten. Again, that's not the way God is, that isn't the way Jesus Christ is...that's not God's spirit. Jesus Christ didn't act that way, He *took* what was given to Him, kind of like a sheep to the slaughter, because of love, a willingness and a love toward others, a willingness to be taken advantage of, in that respect, in order to help someone else. Incredible!

**But if when you do well and you suffer for it, take it patiently, then this is grace with God.** Same word as thankful above, that's what grace is all about.

**Verse 21 – For even unto this you were called,** this is a part of our calling and what we're to learn and grow in, **because that Christ also suffered for us,** so we should be willing to suffer for others. This is what love is all about. ...**leaving us an example that you should follow His steps.** True service, true giving to others is about sacrifice. Do you realize that? I love it when I see people who are willing to sacrifice in order to help others to more fully enjoy something. I saw that last night. Incredible! Just jumping in and helping out where people can to help others, because that's their excitement of life, that's the enjoyment of life. It doesn't matter what it is, a willingness to help, sacrifice your time, your energies, whatever it might be, that you might want to do something else and yet doing it to give to others. That's what life is about in its richest form.

**For even unto this were you called, because that Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth:** and that's what we're to follow, no guile, no harsh language, no raised tempers, no ugliness. You know, that's something I really hate, when ugliness comes out of someone's mouth toward some other individual, a parent to a child, a child to a parent, a mate to a mate, it's just an ugly thing when things like this come out.

**Who, when He was reviled,** abused is what the word means, **did not revile/abuse back, and when He suffered, He did not threaten,** threat as in turning it back on the other person, **but committed Himself/delivered Himself to Him who judges righteously:** That's a beautiful thing. When you do something because it's right before God. You know that's the most beautiful kind of judgment in life, when you deal with the situation and you strive to remove from it your prejudices, your feelings of whatever it might be in judgment, especially if it's something that can be... you might dislike and be angry with what was done, but never, never, never should that come out in attitude toward a person. I'm guilty of that, I'm guilty of that as a minister. I've done those things. I abhor those things when they come out of me in working with others.

Always a right way and a better way of doing it and that's not the right way of doing it, to take that which is done wrong, if something's been done wrong, even if it's very wrong in God's Church, and a mate, or whatever it might be, whatever your experience is...what is your experience? Someone else in the Body? ...and someone else has sinned and done something toward you that's sinful and your reaction, if you haven't separated the anger, the resentment, or something of that nature from that, then you're sinning in a big way, because we have to do things because it's right before God. It's a matter of righteousness, because it's a right way of dealing with something. And when you get to that point in time you end up having to address things and do some things, and you really don't want to do it. When you have that attitude of mind, of I really don't want to do this - now, there's two sides to that coin too - but you don't want to do it but you do it because it's right before God. Does that make sense? ...because it's the right thing to do in dealing with a matter, and dealing with it without prejudice, without feelings are stirred up inside that affect your judgment. If it's right with God, if it's just with God then that's the way it should be done - without selfish human emotion involved in it that so often tarnishes things.

Again, things we learn and things that God's had us focus upon, and things that if we can grasp and comprehend it, that in these sermons we've gone through at the Feast, a focus that God is giving to us of coming out of Egypt, of things we need to change in our lives as a part of coming out of Egypt, things that we're held in bondage to, and just like we've addressed, things in relationships. That's a matter of coming out of bondage, of wanting to do things the right way before God because it's right with God, and getting rid of that which hinders that course, that action.

And so again here, finally, that's covering six sermons at the Feast and then finally we came to the last one, the seventh sermon that Jesus Christ had me deliver to you at the Feast that was entitled 'A Time to be Sobered'. Now, as I was looking at these sermons and going through them thinking about some of this, very clearly a particular message that was going on through all the previous sermons, but this one here, 'A Time to Be Sobered', and the point is *we are still IN that time*, a time to be sobered.

If you understand how the word 'sobered' is used, especially in the New Testament over and over again, this sobriety of thinking; we talked about that at the Feast, sober-minded, that's what we have to have. To continue to go through the things we're going through as a matter of being sober-minded on a spiritual plane, understanding things that we've just gone through and addressed as far as relationships, these need to be focused on *mightily so, especially* as we approach Passover, and even *more so this year* than any other time in our life because of where we are in time and because of what I mentioned earlier in the sermon, not everyone is going to come through this.

It's already been happening in the Church, Sabbath by Sabbath. I hate that. I *hate* it when I see us so close to the end, the fulfillment of *all things* in this age. I think of going back to the time I first came into the Church in 1969 and all the experiences and all the opportunities that I've had to grow, to be moulded and fashioned; a lifelong process, 19 when it started. I won't tell you how old I am right now. Just kidding! Still young, well, my body doesn't feel like it all the time, but I look out here and see different ones, they have hair but it's grey, people who are older, people who've been in God's Church longer. How many of you have been in longer than 1969? ....*baptized*, not just attending (my wife), shame on you! I'm not going to let her get ahead of me on this one here, okay! She's been attending a lot longer than me. Her family came in when she was six. (I'm going to get it!) ☺ Other than my wife, is there anyone here that has been baptized in God's Church longer than 1969? 1965... 1959... Whew! 1970... Anyone beat... '74?! We've passed '69! I said longer! So, what was it? 1959. Anyone beat 1959? I didn't think so. Oh, there is? 1963... well, I asked if anyone could beat 1959. 1959 we're talking

about! Now that's '60's, and 50's – awesome! We have a few scattered around who have been baptized since the '50's, later part of the '50's.

I think of a man up in Oregon that died a few years back here. He just hit 100 didn't he? Amazing in his stories going back to the early 50's and visiting Mr. Armstrong, working with Mr. Armstrong at different times there in some of the things, projects that he...cause he had the opportunity of working at the college, and his wife was anointed for sickness by Mr. Armstrong who later died as time went along. She was very sickly and had things happen to her and he started another life then and I think he had like three full occupations in his life. He worked for a long, long time. Awesome stories about people!

And then I think about people who have been called in the end-time here, three years ago, or four years ago, or two years ago, and one year ago, and I think, "What a horrible thing..." I can't help it, but I think since the apostasy, I think about different areas like Toledo and Detroit and all of us, even then, we weren't very many. Because we were accustomed to getting together on High Days; I think of Findley and Erie when we were first transferred there, around 550 people on the Holy Days in Toledo and Findley. And when we'd come together in the Toledo area there for services and it was so awesome having that many people in a place together like that, and then area to area throughout the country. I think Cincinnati had what, 1500 all together at the Holy Days? 1600... he would know! He counted and got in trouble for it! ☺ Some know about the story. Anyway, 1600 people, and you think, that's just Cincinnati, five churches by that time before the apostasy. And what an awesome thing to have that many people in one city come together and some of the areas having to drive a little farther.

But area to area across the country, Dayton and Columbus, Cleveland, and just talking about Ohio alone, huge congregations came together on the High Days, the Holy Days together. And after the apostasy people came together and it was a beautiful thing. You know when the song talks about 'walking to God's House side by side and council blended sweet', and then the stabbing in the back that comes when people betray, when people turn from God, when people turn from the truth...and where do they go? And the expression sometimes is 'a dog going back to its vomit'. It's just a sick, sick thing. It's like Israel coming out of Egypt and they talk about, "Oh, were to God that we were back there in Egypt! ... that we were back there with the flesh pots and we had *all* the food we wanted, when the water was abundant." See, they're out in the desert there and now they've got to rely on God and attitudes change. Now they've got to go out and pick up manna. What a tough life. Anyway, God took care of them, but attitudes sometimes of people, they don't know the wealth of what they've been given.

Who of you listening today is going to turn against God. You're not going to think you're turning against God, you're going to justify it. You're going to *justify* why you can leave this Body! And what a *horrible lesson* it's going to be when if you just could have waited two more months, two and a half more months! Whatever! ...to see it through – *just to see if it even happens!* Can't you just wait that long? Can't you hold on for *just that long?*

Been looking forward to this time – God has been looking forward to this time for 6,000... well, He's been looking forward to it a lot longer than that, but just with mankind for 6,000 years, holding His peace, as He said, we read in Isaiah, and we can't hold on for just a little while? Where in the world... what do we believe?

'A Time to Be Sobered' – the sermon at the Feast – we're still living it. And that's the admonition to everybody. You don't have it made. You're not in the Millennial period until you're there. You don't go on into that period of time until you're actually there. God doesn't owe anyone anything, but I can tell you the people who turn their back on the truth and turn their back on God at times like this is not well

received. And if people can come through it by the mercy of God it will be merciful indeed. Hopefully some can come to repentance and stand up for what's true and what they know is true...for just a couple more months. Isn't that amazing?

The problem is it's not just a couple more months; it is a commitment for your life, all your life. That's what you told God at baptism. You made a commitment to God at baptism and we're to keep it. Cry out to God to keep it.

So, prepare yourselves spiritually for this period we're going into, because it's not going to get easier. **It isn't going to get easier.** See? I think of the period of time that Noah and his family entered the ark. My wife and I talk about that often. And the door is shut...and the family that's in there, not all in agreement, not one hundred percent by any measure, and it didn't rain the first day and it didn't rain the second day – but they worked for over a hundred years to build this thing and now they're shut up inside and they're cleaning things up. That was a lot of animals. They were busy...busy-busy-busy-busy. You think doubt didn't enter their mind? Do you think they didn't have battles?

That's the point in all this. The closer you get, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet, you're going to have battles that are going to come your way regardless. You can't help it. And so more than ever you need to become stronger spiritually, draw closer to God on a spiritual plane, take advantage of the teachings that God gave us about Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread and what it pictures, to have that focus. Because *that* is what God is using as well to stir you up and to strengthen you to do exactly what those days picture – to take you out of this age into a new age. Fight for it! Fight for what you have! We don't have long to go.

~~~end