

A Fast with Thanksgiving

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Today is a unique fast and before we go any farther I wanted to remind everyone that this is not the same as Atonement. Sometimes when we fast in the Church it can almost be taken as Atonement. Atonement is an annual Holy Day; we're commanded at that time as a holy convocation not to eat or drink anything. This is not the same kind of fast, but sometimes we tend to treat fasts in that manner. And those of you who haven't been around for a long, long time, going back into Worldwide it was so much so that I think most people fasted from sundown to sundown, they didn't think you could fast at any other period of time. It was a difficult thing to break because of that mindset of how we learned how to fast in the first place and it was through the annual observance of Atonement.

But again here, this is not Atonement, this is a voluntary fast, it's one that many actually shouldn't even be fasting at this time, candidly, those who have health problems, some children. Our son had a tough time with fasting as a child, our daughter didn't have as difficult a time, so different people have different makeup, they have different metabolism. Some people have a more difficult time with the process to where people throw up as a result, just does something to your body, some people get horrible headaches, some say it's because of drinking coffee. I love Starbucks and I don't know that I've ever had a headache per se, but again, it's different metabolism. I know some people get off of coffee two weeks in advance because it helps them. So everybody's different and you need to judge it accordingly. The purpose of a fast is not to do your health in, it's not to make yourself sicker if you have health problems, it's not to put your life in a difficult position if you're a diabetic or all the other kinds of things out here that fasting can hurt you, if you're doing it.

So again here, some of you who are elderly, your metabolism's changing, you don't have to fast for the whole period. The reason I'm mentioning this is because some of you I would candidly encourage as soon as this service is over to go ahead and start drinking something. It's not a purpose of doing yourself in! Some of you that I just referred to here, some children – parents, be merciful to your children - it should be totally voluntary in large respect for them; some want to do it, some are just excited about being able to join in with them, others aren't quite as excited. My wife has been saying this, kind of like an oxymoron, calling this the Thanksgiving Fast. ☺ They just don't seem to go together.

I wanted to mention all of that here at the beginning because we need to understand the spirit of it, why we do it, and for those who are able to do it, that's great, if you're in the spirit of it, it's a matter of the spirit, it's an attitude, your desire to do so, but to realize you have other things in your life to deal with and not everybody is able to do it in the same respect.

Today is, again, a unique fast, even as the fast a year ago on Passover day was such a unique fast for God's Church. And that fast a year ago has been a great blessing to God's Church, it truly has, in that it's helped us to more fully focus on what God has been doing ever since. It's God's focus! Everything that God gives to us in sermons, everything that we're taught, it's what God's focus is for His people, what He's doing in large part and how He's leading and guiding and directing the Church through His Son. His Son is the one who gives this to us then, He gives the sermons to us, He gives us the content of those things that God wants us to have; and so that's why oftentimes I go back to see how God's been leading us because I learn from that. You can learn from how you see a pattern of things that God is doing and be inspired by that as well, not just *as* the sermons are being given but you can actually learn from the pattern. And this is a pattern!

God is excited about where He's led this earth after 6,000 years of man's self rule and what man has done to this earth! God's had *great patience, awesome patience* because of His plan so that the earth could be populated generation after generation after generation; not a time of saving humanity but of *populating* the earth. He told the first two to go out and basically *populate*, have children! It's a matter of a life that God desires to be able to grow through time, and *then* to begin saving mankind.

That's why in the first 6,000 years He's only had a small amount in comparison if you want to look at the total percentage; 144,000 isn't much over 6,000 years but it's God's plan, it's how He works, everything is awesomely organized, the creation of what He's doing.

So again, God is excited by this and He's allowing us to become more excited by it as well, of where we are, of what it means to be coming out of Egypt. We've taught these things forever in God's Church, we understand these things; the coming out of Egypt symbolically at this time of the year, and reality of what took place back then, the *awesomeness* of what God did in bringing a nation of people out of a great nation and bringing that nation down to deliver them; and all that we can learn from that that God is doing with mankind, and we refer to those things during the Days of Unleavened Bread, of coming out of sin, of coming out of spiritual Egypt. It's a process that God is taking us out of sin, the Days of Unleavened Bread, because of our Passover, that's why it starts with Passover.

But *now* more than ever everything that all these things picture in an even *greater* way, we're at that moment in time where God is taking the *entirety of the world* out of spiritual Egypt! *Finally*, all of mankind is going to have the opportunity to see God, to know God. That hasn't been the case in the past 6,000 years. What an awesome time of liberty, of freedom, of deliverance that God is bringing. And so He's letting us share in that excitement and we're inspired by that, and that's why today we're fasting as we are, to *thank God* – to *thank* God we see where we are, to *thank* God that He's blessing us in being able to share in what He's doing. I mean, this is awesome, it truly is, that we can humble ourselves before God and ever be so *thankful* for what He's giving us to share in.

What a *blessed* people we are of 6,000 years of mankind to live in this moment of time *in* the Church of God! We can try to appreciate that but to fully grasp it we really don't.

So again, I mentioned that God has been blessing us, helping us to see that focus, and so we look at that fast a year ago on *Passover day* of all times and because that's when God is focusing on and that is intensifying more and more, of bringing us out of Egypt. It's an awesome blessing of being able to be a part of it!

So that was the focus of His Feast last year as we talked about in past sermons here and we just got through with the series. We were able to be more prepared for that period of time. I still marvel sometimes in how God leads and guides and directs sermons, because when it came to the Feast of Tabernacles, before the Feast of Tabernacles, I thought, "What on *earth...What on earth* can we be given *now?*" A lot of Feasts have been like that. But anyway, without repeating a lot of things, without going back and just repeating things we've had, which is fine, because people have had to do that in God's Church from time to time, that there's certain things, certain focuses, things you want to mention anyway, to talk about; but thinking about that, "What are we going to have?"

Of all the things God has given to us, of all the doors He's opened up, and then all of a sudden to open up what He did, showing us all the things that Jesus Christ has been doing, at that point in time, the past

2½ years and the year and a half still ahead of us. We can look back at all this and think about deliverance, all the deliverance that God is getting ready to give into the world.

Today's sermon, if you want a title for your sermon, is *A Fast with Thanksgiving*. We have so much to be thankful for, especially in the midst of our fasting, to consider these things I've just mentioned.

We're going to consider some verses focused upon the fast of a year ago, going back and looking at that, because it's hard for me to give a sermon about fasting outside of the Day of Atonement, because the Day of Atonement has a unique focus in itself – Leviticus 16 is a very powerful thing showing the work of Jesus Christ, our being atoned, reconciled to God and that process we go through. But during other times of fasts, this is a difficult scripture for me not to be able to address, because it's everything about fasting in the Bible, it truly is. It's in Isaiah 58. We're going to go back there and we're going to build a little bit more upon what was given about a year ago during Passover at that moment as a fast, because that Sabbath that followed the Passover we discussed this and talked about some of these things.

There's a little bit more being added in the sense of our understanding because God wants us to understand this on an individual plane, to understand what He's doing on a worldwide plane with the world right now. This is what it builds up to, this is what it leads up to, but it's something that everyone needs to live in their life in order to receive what God wants to give.

Isaiah 58:6 – first of all He chastened them, previous to this. He chastens them for their wrong approach, because for most people, when it comes to carnal human nature; when it comes to a fast the attitude oftentimes in human beings is if we do certain things, we pray so much, we study our Bible so much per day, we do this so much in our life, and then if we add on top of that fasting then it's like this formula that we *get* something from God. We're going to *get* something from God because we do these things; that's how you *get* things from God in the sense of being blessed in your life. That's not the right motive, that's not the right purpose of doing those things. We don't study our Bible to *get* something from God. Now, we know we are, but the attitude of mind is a gratitude and a thankfulness, of a desire and a hunger to be fed from God, but not to *GET* something from God as almost that God *owes* something to us because we do that routine – if you understand the difference.

So there's a difference in attitude of mind there and there have been many fasts and many ways of fasting. And some of the things that sometimes happen in some of the scattered groups of fasts that have been called in order to *get* something from God; it's with a purpose and a motive of if we do this as a body and this is our petition, that this is what we want out of this.

The purpose of fasting is to *humble* yourself before God. The purpose of fasting is to draw closer to God so that indeed in our petitions we have a closer relationship with God, and that what we pray about won't be selfish by nature, it'll be with a perspective and a view of what God is doing, to pray according to His will in our life. And so that's why I think about scriptures sometimes that are so misunderstood when people think about what Christ said, "If you do this..." How does it state it? It's to the point almost that...just a moment, if I can find it quickly here, find a phrase that's used along those lines. It basically has to do with this attitude of mind, "Whatever you ask in My name I'm going to give it to you." It's not understanding *how* you ask. In other words, "If you do this and you ask in this specific way, whatever you ask in My name," basically is what it's saying, "I'll give it to you." Human nature can ask for a lot of things! Just because it's in the name of Jesus Christ and we're in God's Church, that we can ask anything and God just wants to give us everything? That's not what that's about. It's all about God's will, asking according to God's will! The reason for being closer to God, being more at one with God is

so that when you do pray, and things you do, are within an *unselfish* motive so we can *grow*, so we can be a *part* of what God is doing in a better way, in a richer way.

And so again here, **Isaiah 58:6 - Is this not the fast that I have chosen**; not the one for most people because of basic human nature, how they fast to get something. In other words, **isn't it for the purpose to loosen**, a word that means to open or undo **the bands**, the fetters, the cuffs, the shackles, of that which holds captive – that's what it's talking about here! That which holds you back, that which keeps you captive, imprisoned, if you will, to let go the shackles, to let go the fetters, whatever is around our neck, around our wrists, around our ankles – to be free, isn't that the purpose of fasting? He says, **Isn't this the fast that I have chosen; to undo the things** that hold you back, that hold people back? But He says here specifically, **to loosen, to undo the bands of wickedness – sin!** Because that's what keeps us captive! We're held captive because of sin! We're held captive because of not knowing God's law and God's will and living by it.

So the world is in captivity because they don't know about the Sabbath, they don't know about obeying God in those things, in the Holy Days. They don't understand the purpose and the plan of God and what He's doing, of how we should be living life, that indeed we should live by the 10 Commandments and the spirit of those things – and so they're in captivity! And we're coming out of it! And you're not out of it until you are *out of it*...and that's when you're changed from mortal to immortal – otherwise you're still coming out of Egypt.

Your whole life is a long process of coming out of Egypt and you're not out of it until you have completed the trip, the journey. And so He's showing here the purpose of humbling ourselves before God, of drawing closer to God, and learning a great lesson just in the physical plane alone. Part of my prayer today, just reiterating it to God, the purpose of fasting – I see quickly how we don't go very long, we don't do well without food and water. Can we not learn that spiritually? It doesn't take very long without a relationship with God, without close contact with God, you can't go very long. And yet people deceive themselves oftentimes into thinking they *can* without crying out to God, without looking at their own lives and seeking what they can conquer and overcome.

So, again, we can't go long...and yet people have deceived themselves into thinking they can. Being cut off from God's spirit, you can't afford that. So, **to loose the bands/fetters/shackles of wickedness. To undo** – again – **to remove the heavy burdens**. We allow ourselves oftentimes to be burdened down by things because we're not sound-minded yet, and so there are things God has to show us in our own mind, of why we think the way we do, of what our motives are. You know one of the hardest things for human beings to see is why they're motivated to do the things they do. Sin helps you see that. When something happens in your life you can cry out to God, "*Why* did I do that? *What's* in my mind? How can the mind think that way? What is it in my mind? What is it in my thinking that needs to be changed?" Because that's what has to change. Yes, the sin has to change and we have to repent of it and get away from it, but we have to ask and find out why; where does this come from in our thinking in the first place? Because it's of the spirit, of the mind!

That's an awesome thing to understand; it's of the mind, it's of the way you think that leads to certain eventualities in life, and if you can spot those and see those and the more clear they are the faster you can conquer and overcome.

...to undo the heavy burdens; so we not only put these things on ourselves, we put them on others. We put burdens on others! We weigh others down, our children down, our mates down, our employers,

our employees, because of the way we think and because of the way we treat others. So often we put a heavy weight on others and a lot of that is because of this natural thing that all human beings have to one degree or another, even if it's in a passive way, to control, be controlling, being in control, what we think is control, which means to do it my way. Human nature is an incredible thing! That we think we know the best way if there's something to be done and we want others to follow or to do that way. No, there's only one way to follow and that's God's.

But again, that's a part of a process, and fasting is a matter of ourselves drawing closer to God and asking for help so that we can see these things of what we're doing to ourselves and what we're doing to others, so that we can be freer, free, freed from that, freed from Egypt, and also to be a part of helping to free others from Egypt. How we treat each other has a great deal to do with helping to free others, truly does. It's a beautiful thing what God is showing us here at a time that God has given us something, a tool whereby we can actually draw closer to Him, being more at one with Him, being atoned to Him, with the desire, actually of what it leads to is being of the same will, the same mind. That's what it's about.

...to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, It's not just about ourselves – the oppressed. This doesn't mean that we see others being oppressed by certain things out here and we pray about that – that's good. But who do *we oppress*? *Who is it that you oppress*? *Who is it that I oppress*? What do *I do* that oppresses others? This is what this is about – **is this not the fact that I have chosen?** To free you, to help you become free, to help you become more at one with Me, and to help you in that process to free others that this can spread. It's what it's about!

...and to let the oppressed go free; and that you break/tear down as the word means in the Hebrew, that you tear down *every* ...it says 'yoke' here, but the word has to do in the Hebrew with 'oppression', **that you tear down every oppression!** That says so much here. This verse alone is a very powerful verse on a spiritual plane in what it reveals to us, of what we need to bring into our life and be a part of our life.

But do you begin to see here a desire that God has for all mankind? Because this is what it's all about; it's about freeing everyone, and so He takes us through this process of delivering us out of Egypt, and now we're at that point in time where this is a part of what He is going to help bring to this world. By removing, especially, the one who has caused the greatest oppression through time – the adversary, Satan the devil. He has caused more oppression in God's realm than any other being by far, obviously. He is the one who led it. He is the one who spear-headed it all. He did it, first of all in the angelic realm, led nearly a third of the angels from what we understand in scripture, a third of the angelic realm away from God! Their minds became perverted and distorted and they followed him and they *chose* a different way, which is any other way but God's. You can have billions of other ideas of different ways of life to live (and they did amongst themselves) than God's. It's just to fully reject Gods – “We don't want that way! We don't want the Sabbath! We don't want the Holy Days! Don't want someone involved in *my* life telling *me* how to do it! Who does He think He is? Oh, He made me... duh!” You think, how stupid angelic beings or man can be to reject God! And yet it happens, doesn't it. It's the way of mankind. You think, how dumb for the creation to tell its Creator, “I don't like the way You're moulding me!” Especially when He's the Righteous All Mighty Righteous God – just, perfect in His ways, wants *nothing* but happiness and fullness of life for us. And to reject that? Well, it's insanity, the human mind, to reject this!

So again here, this is what God is leading up to, a point in time of freeing the world even more so. So this spirit, this attitude, this mind...we're talking about the mind of God because this is the way to peace, this is the way to Jerusalem, this is what He's teaching us, teaching the way of peace, giving the way of peace. That's what that word is about, that's what that City is about, it's about what He's leading us to, to a spiritual rest. Sometimes we have to think about some of these things and what it means.

I think about some of the things that God has revealed just in the past year alone about Satan's own destruction. He's not a happy camper right now. There are things that God has given and gives through the Church through time, gives through teachers, prophets through time that He has given, but it's been very progressive and as it gets closer and closer to the end God has given more and more and they learn more and more. There are things in scripture... We were having a talk this morning in breakfast...yes, while we were eating, which all of you are waiting for. We were talking about this very thing and about how there are things in scripture – Satan knows what's written in the Bible but he doesn't know what it all means. He still doesn't. God has to reveal it. Just like what's written in the book of Daniel we recently went through. Satan hasn't known all those things, what they really mean. They know that they have a certain amount of time, they know what that time is, but they don't know what it means exactly, they don't know exactly the dates, the periods of time and so forth until God gives it.

And so there are things they learn. That's why they desire to learn from... Where do you go to learn what God is giving? Every Sabbath, every Holy Day, that's where they want to be, they want to hear what God is saying. They won't obey God but there's a belief about God that they have and they know when God says something God does it, even though they don't agree with it, don't want to be a part of it. Unsoundness of mind in a way that's hard to understand, and frankly, you can't understand it.

So again, I think about some of those things – just toss it out there a little bit, just a little bit, because I think it's coming in time - that there are things about the two witnesses that aren't going to happen the way we thought they were going to happen...all because of a war...all because of something of a being who's very much involved – if you read those verses in the middle of it; there's a reason for it. There's a battle that's going on, a *war* that's going on and there are things that are going to take place in ways that are unique – always have been – because when it's all said and done God wins. He doesn't just win but with awesome victory, with awesome power, with incredible glory, to see how He brings everything together to where everything that works against Him He says, "You mock Me? I'll mock you." In the end they're made to be seen for what they really are and it's pitiful. Anyone who fights and resists God, they're made to look pitiful when it's all said and done. They're mocked, their ways are mocked. Thankfully for human beings, if they will, they can come to repentance at least...if they will do that. Some won't even do that.

Do you realize there are human beings that would choose that they don't want God's way of life because of how they see God working certain things out - just because they become so eaten up with envy, with jealousy, with bitterness inside that it destroys their own thinking? That's what happened to Satan, he destroyed his mind. God said, "You've perverted your mind!" It's a precious thing! But He offers us the ability of repentance through Jesus Christ where the mind can be changed, but some don't want that. That's, again, something that is insanity.

I think of other freedom that God is about to bring – the rightful place of women in the family and in the world. This is awesome to me, it really is. I am excited about it because there is so much prejudice in the world in these areas. And there are people in God's Church that I know to this day think they have a pretty good handle on this and they are barely-barely-barely-barely-barely-barely cracking the

page on this. That's just the way it is. You'll come to understand that in time. If you think you have a fairly good handle on it that ought to be the first telltale sign, 'He who thinks he stands... like we read here recently, 'take heed lest he fall'. In Corinthians, I think we just read it last Sabbath even. "He who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall." Think you have a pretty good understanding of where you are spiritually in this situation, especially if you've only been the Church for 2-3-4 years? Because I can tell you what, there are people who've been in a lot longer, even before the apostasy, who are barely cracking the page on this. It's going to take some time!

And after Jesus Christ returns there are going to be far more powerful sermons given and we're going to understand in a more powerful way what this freedom is all about that's being given to God's Family, of a way of life to live, of a *mutual respect*! It's about *respecting* one another and that's something that's so sadly is lacking in human life, people striving to respect one another. There would be no prejudice if we had right respect toward each other! We're *all different*, we *all think differently*! Do we all have problems? *Absolutely*! I have problems, you have problems, we all have problems! Until you're out of this body you're going to have problems! So how do we judge each other? What kind of freedom do we give each other? What kind of shackles and fetters and unburdening do we do that we put on other people because we hold them in this cage, or hold them in this little box and we won't let them out in our thinking, in our unjust thinking? Well, God wants all that to change and we're blessed to be a part of that.

So again here, things that God has given us just since that last Passover, that Passover fast, with more and more and more doors being opened up, things of understanding in a greater way, we're building upon it, we're seeing it... I am seeing it clearer and clearer. I have been in the Church, baptized since 1969, been a minister since 1981, and I am still learning things on this! I'm still seeing things in a greater way! This morning leaving the restaurant a car came up and they weren't driving the way I drive, and I made a comment, "Must be a woman driving..." Prejudice! Ways of thinking! It happened to be a woman, but... I'm sorry... yeah! But there's prejudice there, still something of my past, still pops up. You think you've got it controlled, you think you have a fairly good handle on some things and you realize, "Uh oh, I did it again! That's not fair, that's not right! Where did that come from, you moron!?" Just talking to myself! Anyway, those things are deeply imbedded in us and sometimes we don't realize it because it's a part of society, it's the way people think, it's the way men think.

Have any of you men ever thought that way? Someone driving down the highway? Do you think women are as good of drivers as you? Pshew! Give me a break! I know you don't as a whole! Men tend to think they're just better drivers, and sadly you're different drivers but you're not better drivers. We're all different. My wife tends to be more cautious. I tend to be more reckless. I mean, they put that pedal there for a reason, to use the power that's in the vehicle. I like the use of the power when I need it, when I want it. But you know, I've had to learn over the years, and I notice as I'm getting older I'm learning it mainly, probably because of age and not because of smarts, not because of learning, but because of age and learning that there is a mixture of the two, that there's a balance. We can go too far to one side, we can go too far to the other, and yet there's a balance in there to learn from. Sometimes being hesitant can be just as dangerous, obviously, as the other side of the coin of being too aggressive and that being dangerous. And indeed there are other people too, if you understand what I'm saying. There's a balance in life.

That's one beautiful thing about men and women, we *should* be able to learn from each other. Really! That's the beauty of marriage, is that you *learn* from each other, you *respect* each other, you learn there are other ways of thinking and doing things and there are blessings in that all the way through. There

are things that I, men, that I need to change in life, that I've had to change in life, that I've had to address. There are things that she's had to address and change in life. She learns from me, I learn from her. I think about how we came in the Church even – to learn from each other – I came into the Church having to be, well, it's the way that God did it, I guess I really needed that. I talk about a 4 X 4? I had to get slapped upside the head a few times *hard* with one before I'd even listen to God. And so she can learn from me – she has learned from me how it is to be called out of the world into the Church. Now, on the other hand, I had to learn from her what it was like to grow up in the Church. It's different!

There are differences there in what you are like, what you have, and it gives you wisdom that you can learn from these things, from each other. And if people could look at life like that, not as something that's threatening, not as something of jealousy, not of something of envy, not of something that's threatening, as I mentioned, not something that with different kinds of human emotions that sometimes people have because of the way they judge, but as something you can learn from another person. But so often we shut people out because we've already judged that we have the best way of doing things – and we don't.

Verse 7 – Isn't it to deal, this word means 'to divide' or even 'to share' **your bread with the hungry**, isn't this more of what life is all about? Isn't it about giving? That's what God's way of life is. God's love is about giving; it's not about getting something, it's about giving - it's a different mindset. And so He's showing this in a process of humbling ourselves, of fasting. So He says, **Isn't it to deal/share your bread with the hungry?** Whatever it is you have. You may not know it but whenever you come to a point in time where, especially in the Church - we tend to look at this physically and we should have that kind of a mindset of a willingness and a desire to help others who need help - but how much more the bread of life if you have it? How much more a desire to share this way of life? So when those opportunities come your way, and we understand you can't just give this bread to anyone, you've got to be careful, but with someone who's receptive, to be able to share this way of life? Isn't that an exciting thing *when* you can do it, whenever you've had that opportunity, and those of you who haven't – you're going to get them, especially before this is all over with in a powerful, powerful way, more and more as people become humble you can share, and you're *excited* about sharing what God has given to you with others! That's what it's about!

And so this is a focus, a desire that God has for us, to have that kind of a mindset. **Isn't it to deal your bread to the hungry; and that you bring the poor**, a word that means 'the weak', 'the afflicted', **who are cast out of your house?** I think of a desire I've had for the Church, of looking to a time – but I know God's will in this as well – I look forward to people coming back, I look forward to people I know and people who I don't know who were all a part at one time, who walked to God's house side by side and council blended sweet as the Psalm talks about, as the song talks about. And I look forward to people coming back that I knew in times past and being able to share in this way of life again, *whenever* that is, in the Millennium or in the Great White Throne. I look *forward* to that time when they come back. And again here, isn't that the desire we should have, a desire to see others brought back, if they're not able to be a part anymore? That's a beautiful thing when we're able to be a part with God and share with God what God is giving us.

And so when people have a time of weakness in their life, or when they're afflicted in life, whatever it is that's caused something that's come upon them, and if you're saved out of that it's not because you're better! We have to be careful how we judge! It's not because you're better!

So it says here, again, **and bring the poor, the weak, the afflicted who are cast out of your house...** Do we see others in the world as a part of our house, as a part of our family? We're all family! Go back and you can't deny it, we're *all* family. That's an amazing thing! I was listening to that thing about *ideaCity* here the other day, just a part of it talking about going into Canada and seeing that sign up there driving from Seattle into the Vancouver region, going across the border; and talked about this sign up there as you enter Canada, talks about our being brothers. I mentioned that in that particular thing. And that's just the beginning of it. Yes, that's of a physical nation of people, understanding the ten tribes and where they were scattered, but you go back farther and we're tied together, close, as one. Go back to the flood – we're all tied together.

So again here, it's how we see each other, it's how we think about each other. It's a matter of whether we respect each other, or do we judge each other, are we harsh on each other, do we judge improperly because of whatever...and we do as human beings and that's what God wants us to get rid of. That's what He wants to free the world of. That's what we're getting ready to do in the Millennium, to break all this, these differences with people, and make us one. One Family! Isn't it an exciting thing when all of us of all kinds of backgrounds come together and we're one Family and we know it? In the Church of God – because the Church of God is a Family. It's one thing that we see quickly, early on. **We are a Family.** We're closer than a physical family. The longer you're in it the more you understand. You're closer than any physical family. And then when you're blessed as well to have physical family in the spiritual Body that makes it even stronger, the potential is far greater than in relationships.

Isn't it to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor who are cast out of your house, so that when you see the naked... Who's naked? Well, in the world today you don't have to look very far do you? It's spiritual, it's not something physical. We tend to think physically! This is spiritual! The world is naked, they don't *know* God's way, they don't *see* God's way, and even within the Body sometimes if somebody does something that is hurtful to their own life and don't realize what they're doing and are spiritually naked for that moment – you may be able to see it and they maybe, obviously, can't, or are having a battle with seeing where they're making a mistake. And you don't want them to make that mistake! Every so often I have to pull back as a minister because I know the process that people go through when they sin. I know the process of when they repent, and you can't prevent it and really the job isn't one of always preventing things.

Talked to the ministry about that not too long ago and letting them know you've got to be careful about *inserting yourselves* into other people's lives! God doesn't *insert* Himself into our life all the time, instead He stays back until we cry out to Him. It's a part of His moulding and fashioning of us in our life so that He can work with us, because we have to be able to see ourselves. And it's like children, you can work with and mould and fashion your children but in time you can't be with them all the time. When they leave in their teen years and they get up in their teen years you can't be with them 24/7. When they're younger, as a whole, a lot of times you can be with them a whole lot more; when they get older you've got to let go, you've got to start letting go. And they're going to make mistakes and you can't protect them all the time.

And that's the way God works with us. He doesn't want to do that all the time because there are things you can learn in no other way but by sometimes kicking your foot against a stone, on a curb, putting your hand on a hot plate, sometimes you just have to learn that way as human beings and sometimes you have to just stand back and say, "Okay, I told you, but if you want to try it out and see what it's like..." and hopefully they learn, because a person has to become... it has to be of a *conviction* and not just because of do's and don'ts.

Do you know that's how God works with you? It isn't a matter of the Jewish way of thinking so often, that it's a matter of do's and don'ts. The 10 Commandments, you do or you don't. You don't agree with them but you don't do it because God says don't do it. You don't want to do it because God said don't do it.... really, if you understand what I'm saying. That's not what God wants! He doesn't want us to do it basically because it's a matter of do's and don'ts! He wants you to because you're *convicted* it's right, because you *learn* that if you put your hand on the stove it's stupid. He said don't do it!

He said don't commit adultery, you commit adultery what happens? I think of this world, how stupid and insane it is sometimes, that someone gets married and one member cheats and so...or maybe they cheat with somebody else, as an example, during the marriage, and what does this other person think now? They're not going to cheat on *me*...! You have a relationship with somebody, they were married, but they'll never cheat on you because you have this *special* relationship that they didn't have, they just never had this right relationship... and the same thing happens to them. Oh, boo hoo... I thought he loved me! ...or she loved me. Do you understand what I'm saying? How stupid can we be sometimes? But that's what happens – 1-2-3-4-5-6 marriages, when are we going to learn? ...in cheating, when I'm talking about in the midst of cheating alone. Aren't human beings stupid?

And yet, sometimes that's the only way we can learn, and you *hope* that after a while people start learning. And with God's way of life, when He starts calling us, He helps us to begin to see so we can begin to see what we're doing to ourselves, because we really can't see it until He starts working with you and helping your mind to begin to see why you get in these pickles. It's because of the way you think, see, and it's because of the way others think. God's leading us into an age in a world where all of a sudden the lights are going to be strong! Not like it is today where it's just darkness in the world. Freedom – *freedom* – deliverance! That's where we are!

So that **when you see the naked**, when you see somebody in trouble, whether it be in the world, that you understand that we're not so quick to condemn, to judge, to kick them out in the sense of not having any care for them. Now, sometimes in the Body we have to do that. That's painful to me; I hate to do that, but it's something that God says to do, and I understand that's the best way because I've seen it work. I think of the individuals in Corinthians, the one guy, the man that had this incestuous relationship with his father's wife, and the whole Church knew it and Paul wrote them and condemned them for what they were doing and said, in essence, "Do I have to be there for you to put them out of the Body? ...that you're tolerating something! ...and that leaven will leaven the whole lump and you have to get this out of the Body; and hopefully they'll come to repentance to see what they had in the Body. The man did repent and the woman didn't. The man repented! And then he had to write in another epistle to receive him back, that you need to have love and forgiveness; that you need to be able, when someone repents, that they're brought back into fellowship again and you're at one again within the Body. This is the attitude of mind we should have, not one of judging and condemning and looking down upon, but one of rejoicing and thankfulness that we're back together again! That's a beautiful thing!

I've experienced this over and over and over again in God's Church. I've seen the other side of it where people aren't able to come to repentance; I've seen the other side where people were able to come to repentance and those are some of the most joyous times. Just like those who are cut off right now who are blind, who are naked, who are separated from the Body, that I mentioned earlier that I look forward to the time they're brought back because they're asleep right now. Only by the grace of God...I know that I'd be in the same place, because He has a purpose of something He's doing in my life, otherwise I'd

be in *exactly the same place* because I'm no better than any one of them! ...and neither are you! We have to understand and be thankful for the grace and the mercy that God gives to each of us.

So that **you see the naked and that you cover them**; that's our desire! What does that mean? A desire to cover sin. What does that mean? That our desire is to see people come to repentance, our desire is to see them blessed. I've prayed many a prayer for people that they be brought to repentance so that they can see what they've done, so that they can change their life and live a better life, a right life before God. That's what our prayers need to be more of, because that's what God desires...and then we'll be merciful to them.

I *can't tell you* in the last couple of years alone how much about mercy that I've learned, that if I hadn't have gone through the things I did that I wouldn't see it like I do. It's amazing what we go through in life, the things we experience so that we can learn attributes and qualities that are beautiful and right that are God's, and that He lets us share in those things. But sometimes we have to go through different things in a very powerful way to learn those and we can just grow in those more and more and more. And the more you grow in that one the more beautiful life becomes; the more you can grow in mercy, not quick to judgment, but rather quick in mercy.

That's why I love the scripture that talks about 'the weightier matters of the law'. It's not about just do's and don'ts; it's judgment, mercy, and faith. It's how we judge! So we better seek to be able to judge according to how God says to judge in life – judgment and mercy – that attitude of mercy that needs to override the whole thing in how we think and how we treat others, to be merciful. God is so merciful to us, that's how you learn mercy. The more you see yourself, the more you know yourself, the more you can grow in mercy toward others. And then faith, how we live, believe what we do because of what God's given us.

So the attitude of mind is to cover sin. It's not a matter of spreading sin, it's not a matter of running up to someone and all of a sudden, "Did you hear about so and so, what they did... blah, blah, blah... *retches*..." That's what you might as well do, just go up and puke on the person... "Did you hear about what so and so said and here they did... *retches*" Just let it all out, let that stink come out. And how would you like someone just coming up and puking all over you. I don't like that. I despise that, I really do. I don't like it. God doesn't like it! It's something we have to get rid of.

Now, sometimes it may be in your job where you have to discuss certain things, but we have to be careful in the spirit in which we do it, because I've seen within God's Church.... This is the *biggest* thing I've seen that I'd like to see changed more than anything else going back to the time I came in in 1969, is within the congregations, is that when somebody does something wrong... people are just so ready! You have a congregation of 600 people and all of a sudden *everybody* knows something about it. It doesn't take long! Boy, things can spread fast – especially bad news about somebody. *Everybody* knows about it! Why? Don't you want to cover? Don't you want to, rather than spreading sin, hide sin? Not in the sense that you're hiding something from God, but in the sense that you're wanting to help someone, and not spread bad about someone. But sometimes to do your part in loving someone, everything doesn't have to be out in the open. Give someone time to repent, give someone time to change...and on...yada, yada, yada, it goes on and on and on, how we should think and treat people.

And that's what this is all about in fasting; it's a humble spirit to do things God's way according to His will.

Verse 8 - Then shall your light break forth as the morning; What an awesome scripture! The more we obey God, the more we live this, the more we look at ourselves and where we are oppressive in our own life or to the lives of others, and the more we get rid of those things that bind, and burdens we place on ourselves or on other people by the way we think, by wrong thinking, we're able to repent and then begin doing this in verse 7, to have this attitude, to seek this attitude of dealing and sharing what we have with others of this way of life. Sometimes...you do this sometimes – it doesn't have to be with something physical that you give someone or something spiritual you even tell someone. Sometimes it's just the way you treat them; you're dealing your bread to others – because of what God has given you.

He's given you the bread of life which is a way of life to live. And if you're able to treat others then, even if they don't like it or receive it, at least you're giving them a part of God's way by how you treat them. That's a lot of what it's talking about here. You can deal the bread of life and share it with others - it's about sharing – by just the way you treat them. People on the job that aren't in a part of the Church, in the world; by treating them differently... I'm amazed by this sometimes, by seeing this in motion, of seeing an interaction of people and how some people are treated. And when you get a hold of yourself and stop yourself from maybe responding in a certain way because you're striving to live in a better way, that you learn how to treat people differently, in a better way, and they respond in a better way. We learn laws that are in motion and we begin to live them and practice them toward each other. That's a beautiful thing – that's what this is all about – about dealing your bread to the hungry and so forth.

So when you start doing these things it says, **verse 8... Then** shall your light break forth in the morning; in other words, because of the change in your life that light that comes through your life to others that others can begin to see and to learn and that which you're growing in and seeing and learning, that you see and learn about God's way of life more than ever.

...and that your health spring forth speedily: spiritual health. Physical, yes – you know, sometimes the way you think, the more at peace you are the more your mind is right with God, the more at rest you are and able to deal with things. Now, we all have stress, but the more you're able to deal with that according to God's plan and purpose and put things in their proper place the more at peace you can be and that's actually better to your physical health. Truly! But this is talking about far more than that; it's about spiritual health, how we are spiritually, the strength we have.

...and that your righteousness shall go before you; and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Because God's your rear guard, He protects you; He helps you in this because His ways produce fruit. His ways will bring you through! His ways will give the right results. It might take some time! It might take your whole life, but you'll get there and the right results will be there, and increments along the way, you'll experience those things. So by drawing closer to God, individuals can receive this in verse 8, receive this from God, have this be more a part of their life.

And yet we're at a time now where God's getting ready to bring this to all mankind. What a beautiful picture! All mankind now! This is God, this is God's mind, this is what God is sharing with those He's called through time, when He told Israel, 'Isn't this the fast that I have chosen? Isn't this the way we should think and be and deal with others? Isn't this the purpose of drawing closer to Me and being more at one with Me?' And then He magnifies this for the Church, and then magnifies it *soon* in a very powerful way to all the world.

Verse 9 - Then shall you call, I think of all in this world that think they're praying - especially in traditional Christianity - they think they're praying to God. Now, on an individual basis there are things that God chooses to intervene and work with individuals in life because of a heart and an attitude of mind they have, because eventually they're all going to be brought into the truth – at least God's going to offer that – and there are things that God does intervene and do at times and has mercy on people in this world. He works with us in a very unique way because we, indeed, are a part of His Body now and that's something that happens constantly on a continuing basis. But I think as a whole in the world, as I see the world and I think about different prayers and things when they pray, and realize that God is not listening to those things. And they don't understand that. And so finally when they're called, finally when they begin to see what God's way is all about and they begin living it because the truth is there, then they go through this process like we do – **then shall you call and the Eternal shall answer**.

You know when our mind becomes more at one with God, when we're able to see self and repent of those things that need to be repented of; **you shall cry, He shall say, Here I am. When...** Beautiful verse! **When you take away from the midst of you the yoke**, in other words what *we're* causing, what *we're* doing that's wrong, what *we're* responsible for. **When you take away from the midst of you the yolk, the putting forth of the finger**; What finger is that? Well, it could be several, it depends on how angry you might be about certain things and attitudes of mind that people get into sometimes. I've been driving down the highway sometimes and people wave at me like that; it's happened in Europe a few times. I'm doing something wrong and driving different than the way they drive. But I'm talking about this one here – index finger – you point it at people, that accusing finger. Isn't that amazing how we do that? The pointing of the finger! Shame, shame on you! Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk! In other words "I'm saying I'd never do that – how could *you* do that". And it's that attitude...and I love the expression when it talks about how many more fingers do you have pointing back at you? You know, the one's going off in some other direction, but three pointing back at you! We're of far greater guilt, and far more to repent of in situations like that, but that's just showing human nature.

When you put away from you, wrong judgment, the pointing of the finger! Oh do we *love* to do that one! People just love to accept responsibility and fault and sin, don't they, in a matter. In marriage, it happens, "It's *your* fault! If you hadn't have said that...if you hadn't of *done*..." I've counselled so many people like this through time, that gets...sometimes that gets to the nth degree out there, you know. This attitude of mind of blaming others. I think of young people who grow up and they blame their parents, "It's your fault I'm the way I am. It's your fault that I'm in prison." You know, in the mind, maybe literally. You think, "When do you start accepting your own responsibility for your own choices, you fool!?" That's what God would say to us! Because they're fools in the Bible, it's called being foolish, being as a fool, to blame others for our choices in life. No, when you're an adult you have your own choices to make and you can't blame anybody but yourself!

This is why I say even when you become angry or upset *you cannot blame anyone for that! You're* responsible for how you react! Do you know that? What an awesome thing to be able to understand that – when you're upset. How many of you ever get upset? All of you out there – husbands, have you ever been upset at your wife? Wives, have you ever been upset at your husbands? Members of the Body, have you ever been upset with each other? I hope not very much. I know it happens but the more people tend to be around each other the more oftentimes these things happen to pop up, because human nature is just ugly. It's the way we are! That's why we want God's way; we hold onto that and desire that.

This attitude of mind that sometimes people have, and they get angry and upset that somebody didn't do something the way they wanted them to. Where does that coming from? Don't we see the selfishness involved there, the attitude of mind? And when someone begins to lose control of their own emotions and they're angry, there is no justification for that whatsoever – *none whatsoever* – and you can't ever... if you *ever, Ever, EVER* get upset with somebody else, or angry, always remember it's not their fault that you're angry, it's *your fault*. Be willing to accept the responsibility! You didn't have to respond in that attitude. You don't *have* to respond in that attitude of mind with that kind of thinking, of being upset with someone.

So have you ever done it? You don't have to hold up your hands... you've *all done it!* I'd say you *all do it* at some point or another in your life. It may not even be too long after services today you may find yourself doing it – doesn't take long. But you know what? There's great wisdom, instead of being foolish and a fool, God shows the other side which is a matter of wisdom, of listening to Him, of putting into practice that which is true and right, of recognizing the responsibility, of accepting the responsibility, that you cannot blame anyone else for your responses in life that are wrong, that are bad. Your wrong responses in life are just wrong and you have only yourself to blame.

I think of King David – the guy's name starts with an 'M', I can't think of it, it's a long, long word, the guy that came up and started throwing stones at David one time - and what was the captain that was with him, starts with a 'J' that wanted to whack off his head? Name starts with a 'J'... it's just not coming to me right now. Joab! I think it was Joab if I have my story correct. Anyway, "You're throwing rocks at the king?! You're throwing rocks at David?! You're hollering at him?! You're cursing at him?! Off with his head!" In most places, in most kingdoms, in most places that's exactly... "You do something like that, you have just done something pretty stupid you, where's your brain?" You lose emotion that much and you're just... it's going to get lopped off, literally, with a sword quickly; you're not going to be able to say too much. And Joab wanted to do that, that's a normal human response, "He's the king! You're not only hollering and cursing the king, you're throwing stones at him!" It just wasn't done back then!

What an awesome attitude David had. David didn't get mad and upset, didn't become indignant or self-righteous, "Don't you know who I am? Don't you know what I can do to you?!" That wasn't his attitude of mind at all. He stopped Joab. He said, "No. Perhaps there's something here from God to me that I need to listen to, that I can change. There's maybe something here that I need to listen to that he's saying, that I can do something better to be a better king." That was his attitude of mind, "...that I can be a better person, a better king." Now that is an *awesomely rare attitude and spirit* for a human being to have. It's a beautiful one; that's why God said he's a man after My own heart.

So again here, **Then shall you call and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry and He shall say, Here I am; when you take away from you, from the midst of you, the yoke, the putting forth of the finger and the speaking of vanity;** because this sums up human nature all the way through. This really sums up human nature, the way we are. The yoke, the burden that we place on our own life and don't see it, or upon other people's lives by this controlling spirit, this mind, this selfish spirit. The putting forth of the finger, the way we tend to judge others because it's easier to find fault with others and see their fault than it is to judge ourselves and find fault with ourselves. That's not a fun thing to do. It's not a real fun thing to do when God calls you and you begin to see yourself and He begins to open up that little...that thing on the road that they used to call the lid on the cesspool; but he opens up and lets you see a little bit of self and your human nature and you see how disgusting it is and it just kind of smells bad. Thankfully He doesn't keep our head there. Thankfully He lets us get back up and breathe again. But every once in a while it's good for us to be able to see ourselves and what our nature is really like, so we can be

repulsed by how we hurt others, what we've done to others – because we do as human beings. That's why we have problems in this world, because we're selfish by nature.

And then it says; **and the speaking of vanity.** Oh, I hate that one. I hate them all and I hate them all as a part of human nature, but that's what we're like as human beings. Sometimes what comes out of our mouth because we're trying to lift self up, we try to make self look better and be better in front of others and it's like.... Give power to some people and it just goes to their head, because that's what they want, they want power; they're going to let you know they have power. "I have power to not let you come into *this country!*" The last time I went across, I think it was into Canada driving, an individual asked me – he said, "How long are you going to be here?" And I said, "A couple days." Wait a little while and he said, "How *long* are you going to be here?" I said, "A couple of days..." He says, "Does that mean two or three? How many days are you going to be here?" I started thinking, man, to me it's a couple days, but what is it exactly? "Three days." And they sent me over to be... wasn't the last time I guess, wasn't that the last time you were with us? The Harrell's were with us. We had to go over to a special area to have a search done... well, we weren't strip searched but the vehicle was; and then they started finding Bibles and their attitude started changing.

But you can upset people because power can go to people's heads. It can go to individuals who think they have power. Husbands, be careful, who think they have power, and can think they have certain authority that's taken from the world and *not* taken from the Bible at all. Any authority that people thought they had in the past...it's *gone!* Things have changed! The Millennium is going to be different than the previous 6,000 years in the organization of family, because it's going to be one of *mutual respect* and love. That's what it's about! It's about love and we have to learn to love each other, and it starts so often right in the family.

...and the speaking of vanity. And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, it's what we're doing right now in large part as far as the Church is concerned; we're dumping what we can to be seen, to be recognized so that as things progress toward the end here that people are going to be able to find us easily and find answers. That's what we sacrificed, that's what we've given, that's what people have sacrificed for, that what we...that's why we...and even tithe for and obey God in, because that's just obedience.

...and that you draw out your soul to the hungry, because we want to see this world freed! We look forward to the more we can do right now, and what we're doing right now, we built up to this moment in time to where this is it; *this is it – by Faith.* I was thinking about that this morning, thinking, "You look at the world and if you look at it physically there's just no way... no way that all of this can happen in two months. How can this all come together in *two months?* How can *everything* happen in two months?? And by sight it just doesn't look possible – but I believe it. That's what faith is. I believe it, I'm going forward with all my being. This is it; this is what we've come to. I don't have an answer for it, just like when I came into God's Church and He let me see the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and the 'United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy' and it was just there in the mind – I believed it and I knew it! You can't prove it to anyone else; and especially by things in the world right now and we're up to the end here.

I think of Noah more and more – there was no rain, there was no water, and matter of fact before that to our knowledge they had never experienced rain. It wasn't part of the world; the world changed at that time. That's why I love the story in the Bible where it talks about the rainbow. They'd never experienced it; they'd never seen it because the earth wasn't watered in that way. Something changed

in the way the earth was taken care of. I don't understand it. Something in the atmosphere, things changed – even the lifespan of man began to change – something changed drastically at that moment in time and God said, “I set this covenant in the air for you to see – the rainbow. I'll never destroy man like this again.” That's what His covenant was. Every time you see a rainbow its God's covenant to mankind, “I'll never destroy the earth with floods again. This is the only time.” Awesome! Incredible! Interesting side story.

But anyway, this attitude of mind, because of where we are in time and a desire to share with God the excitement of a new age coming, Jesus Christ returning, God's government being established finally. One Church, one government – no Satan, no demons. What an incredible time we're at! You think God's not excited and moved with anticipation after all He's worked for? God has worked a long, long time for this time to come to pass – far beyond the 6,000 years.

And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy, in other words when you seek to satisfy the afflicted soul; the world is in hurt, the world is in pain; and the whole calling of the Church especially at this end-time is about being able to serve, being able to help. That's why I think about... I marvel at times, as small as we are to have as much as has gone out there – well over 600,000 to 650,000 guesstimated books that have gone out, been mailed out all over the world. Not very many countries that aren't on the list, candidly, where some books have been sent. Over 1.5M downloaded off the internet. Awesome! As small as we are, what God has done; with the ability, with the finances we have to do what we've done. God's done all that and we've been blessed to be a part of it. We didn't do it, God's done it. But it's this attitude of spirit of mind. This is why we do it; we're blessed to be a part of it, to help those who are afflicted, to give people answers as to what's happening on the earth and what's coming.

...then shall your light rise in, the word here in the King James says '**obscurity**' but in the Hebrew it says, **in that which has been darkened.** That's what it means literally in Hebrew. **...your light shall rise in that which has been darkened.** When has it been darkened? When Satan came on the scene, with Adam and Eve, and then man lived in darkness ever since except for the few through time that God has called out of the darkness. And so then **your light shall rise,** and I think of the time period in the last 2,000 years in the Church, for people who are called in the Church, then their light rises and at times there are not very many lights in the world, but what beautiful lights they are when God calls us and works with us and changes us to be a part of something so great.

...and your darkness shall be as the noonday: spiritually! What a powerful thing that God is saying.

I love **verse 12** because this is where it leads us... **And they that shall be of you;** who's going to be of us? Everyone who follows, everyone who comes in, everyone who follows after this. You know, those who are going to be a part of the 144,000 – what an awesome thing! And those who come in after that, those who are brought in will all have a part in that. We've all had a part in time in it and we're going to have a greater part in time. Those of you who have been called early, that have been going through a training process in the last year, 2 years, 3 years, whatever it's been now - you have truly been called in the most incredible time. If you'd been called in 1969, 1980, 1986 you most likely wouldn't be here today because the overwhelming majority are not here and will not get to share in. How blessed are you that you've been called and you have an opportunity to share in this new world, a new age? It's beyond what you can grasp right now, and even as you start to live it it's going to be hard to grasp, the magnitude of it all. But as time goes on you're going to see it more and more and become more and more excited with what God is doing, because God's doing it, we're just blessed to be a part of it.

And they that be of you shall build the old waste places and shall raise up the foundations of many generations; That's for this time period and where we're at now more than any other time, because this is talking about different ones that have been called, again, to be 144,000, but even those of you going into this period of time – this is what it's built up to – this is that time. **...you shall build up the old waste places;** everything that's in this world that's been destroyed through time – religions and things that have happened – we get to be a part of changing it all. We all have a part in this.

...and shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, God has called us, we begin the process of just like in the wall, the fortified Jerusalem - that's the example that's given in the Old Testament - a breach in the wall means there's part of this wall that's been torn down and the enemy can come through; and we're blessed to repair, be a part of strengthening the wall, strengthening the fortification so that no enemy come through. That's what it's talking about here, so we can be strong, so that the world can be strong in God's way of life, so that God's way of life is fortified and made strong and everyone in it is fortified and made strong, and no concern, no worry in the same way for an enemy come through. And you're at the focal point of all this!

...to raise up the foundation of many generations; you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths, in other words, **the ways** – that's what it's about here, **the ways to dwell in, to abide in.** Awesome! Beautiful, beautiful verse; truly is. We're blessed to be a part of that, to share with others a way of life to be lived. And you're in the beginning of it; you're in the foundational part of it. Awesome!

Let's turn over to Colossians 2. And that really is a sermon in itself, if we grasp and comprehend everything about what it is. But today is a unique fast because it's one of thanksgiving, as we talked about, it's one of thanksgiving to God for where we are, for what we are sharing in.

So again, understanding the moment in time in which we now live is an awesome thing; just as I was going through some of this thinking about it, talking about it, where we are, what we've been called to, and so much to be thankful for indeed, for what God has given to us.

But in this fast we are to individually focus upon, and it's not just in this fast but it's beyond this fast, because the fast is to be of a humble mind, to begin thinking about certain things in a specific way, and then God shows us the focus He wants us to have even more so on this so that in the following week and the time we have remaining that this is our mind, this is our attitude, this is what we strive to hold onto. In this fast we are to individually focus upon the many blessings God has poured out upon each of us since we were called, what He's called us to.

Sometimes what we've been called to, it's not always easy, it really isn't, especially in this age. Thankfully we're almost to the end of it.

Colossians 2:1 – we're going to focus on some of the very meaningful admonitions concerning the importance of being thankful. **For I would that you knew,** so Paul is speaking to the Colossians here. **For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;** So a unique thing here, Paul did a lot of travelling to these different areas and some had heard about him and they hadn't seen him yet in some areas as he traveled because he couldn't travel by jet and do some of the things we're blessed to do today. It wasn't as fast, it was very slow, and so he had this great concern for different areas, like Laodicea – Laodicea spoken of in scripture, that attitude and spirit that was there that was written about. Paul understood and wanted

to help them. And then he talked about those that haven't seen him face to face yet. They'd received some of the messages through the letters that had been sent to them but they hadn't yet met him, people who'd come in.

Verse 2 - That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love; What a beautiful verse! His desire - it's God's desire working through Paul – but as he was showing here that their hearts might be comforted, that they grasped the importance of their calling, of what's taking place, that as a body their hearts be knit together in love in how each person thinks of each other in the Body.

...and upon all riches a full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, again, Paul uses this term 'mystery of God' over and over again to discuss those things that are hidden from the world. You can't share with others; you can't share with family unless they're called. You can't share with the world unless they're called, being drawn. So as a whole you can only share them with the Body, in the Body, to be excited, to be inspired by, and that's what draws us closer together, because we can talk about these things amongst ourselves or know we're of the same mind and just have the comfort of that.

...the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We learn that quickly on – God has all the truth to give to us, and the more He gives to us of His way of life the richer life becomes, the more that we can receive and absorb.

And this I say, lest any man should beguile you, in other words, the word in the Greek means **reason falsely with you**, with great cunning, because that's in the world; because so much of that is a matter of something that comes from a spirit being, or those who are part with him. **In this I say, lest anyone, any person should beguile you/reason falsely with you with enticing words.** In other words persuasive argument.

That's why the internet is such a - I'd like to use a certain word but I won't – it's so disgusting, so despicable! And people who sometimes do certain things, they go out there and they try to find something in a trash can, a trash barrel. It's kind of like these big ole' pools that sometimes I've flown over certain cities and you come into certain parts of it and you see these great big ole' round open areas with these great big things that are turning around and around, swirling up something in there, trying to purify it a little bit, make it better so it doesn't stink so bad. And I think of people who like to go swimming in that, spiritually, to think they're strong enough to be able to. It reminds me of an evangelist who would invite people into his office in Pasadena he knew were possessed of demons to talk to them, to see, just to mess around with them a little bit and because he felt he was strong enough to do so. And it was spoken of as pride, that somehow he would be able to get certain things out of them that maybe we don't know. How *dumb* can you get? ...an evangelist in God's Church disobeying God! Incredible! Thinking he's beyond the ability to be led astray. He caused some of the greatest harm in God's Church of any evangelist ever out there!

In this I say, lest anyone should beguile you with enticing words, persuasive argument; be careful! I think of times past, of how people... I think of even in Worldwide during those certain days, that there have always been people out there who have written false things about the Church, about the leadership, about whatever it might be in order to cause doubt in people's minds with whom God *is* working. *Why!* Because Satan wants to get at you! He's got the rest of the world deceived but he wants *you*, he wants to *foul up God's plan and God's purpose in people's lives* so he works *overtime* to try to get people persuaded in some other direction, to do stupid things, to go off on some tangent, to

listen to something that they're not strong enough to deal with – because they're messing around with the spirit world and they don't understand!

So I think of times past, of what people would say, "Oh, I'm forbidden to read...this book... or that book. I'm forbidden." I don't remember anyone ever saying you're forbidden to read a specific book! You've been told of the stupidity of doing so, you've been told the stupidity of fishing around out there and thinking you're stronger – but you're free to do it! Nobody is making you do anything! No one is twisting... that's your arm there and they're twisting your arm up behind your back and saying, "*Don't do it... don't do it!*" You have the freedom to do it... but you'll destroy yourself. And I have seen tons and tons of people go by the wayside because they didn't do what they should have listened to God in.

Anyway, this is what Paul is reasoning with them in; be careful, it's a dangerous world out there. It's not just people trying to do this, know where they're coming from sometimes. Know that there's something behind them that's trying to get at you. I marvel sometimes... *even how in the ministry* people still go on some of these sites and try to learn something or try to get something and sometimes even pass it along to me, like I'm going to do something... I don't care for that junk! I don't want it a part of my life! I know what it is! It's feces, spiritually! That's a nice way of saying what it is. Its spiritual feces, it stinks spiritually; and anyone who wants that to be a part of their life then they're going to suffer for it because they're not obeying God.

Verse 5 - For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in spirit, joying and beholding your order in the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. It's a beautiful thing to obey God, to be steadfast in faith in what we... Faith is a matter of what God has given you to believe, the truth, and then our choice to live by it. And we seek to live by it, we choose to live by it and we become stronger and stronger and stronger. It's an awesome thing! What we're living through right now is an awesome thing. You're not just living through a time like we did during the period of Philadelphia where you would live out your whole life in a period of time. Because see, if you were called in 1950 and you were of a certain age, maybe you might die in 1960 or 1970, and people did, they were called and died within the Church through a period of time, and people lived 20-30-40 years in the Church and they die and they live through an era of time and time went on. We're not there; we're at a different time. We're at a time where, yes, time is going to go on, but not the time of this world, the time of this age. You're called at a different time, a unique time, and you don't have a whole... most of you haven't been around for a long time, it's been a short time. How incredibly blessed are you?

...and you're able to do so **with the steadfastness of your faith**. You just believe it and do it. You just keep going forward, something that God gives, just like He does the truth, the Sabbath, the Holy Days. It's just there; it's in your mind.

Verse 6 - As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him: so walk in this way of life. So again, how blessed are you to walk in this way of life? It's hard for us to grasp sometimes – nearly 7 billion people on the earth and how few are we to be so blessed to be called at this time?

Rooted and built up in Him, in Christ, in God; **and established in the faith**, that's what God's been doing with us, helping us to become established. That means grounded in the beliefs He's given, the belief of a way of life, the way of life to live, and also in the belief of where we are!

...**as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving**. In other words, being blessed in, abounding therein, understanding how blessed we are and responding to God then in a manner of

thanksgiving to God. It's an important thing for us to grasp what we've been given. It's an important thing to think upon those things – the word in the Old Testament is meditate – but to think upon, to pray about, or just to think about it at times the different things we've been given, what we have, how life has changed since we've been in the Church, for what we're receiving spiritually, relationships. Because that's the biggest thing that God teaches us, it's about our relationships that we have with each other, that we have in the Body, and that becomes the richest thing that God gives us. He wants us to know that this is what we're leading into and to a Family that has no sin in it whatsoever, where there's no judging, where there's a unity and oneness of spirit that we only sample of once in a while even within the Church! We can't sample it fully to the degree that is in the God Family, but that's where it's heading.

Beware lest anyone spoil you, you know what that word means in the Greek? *Take you captive!* That's what it means in the Greek language. **Beware lest anyone take you captive**; you can go right back into captivity **through philosophy**, and the word has to do with 'human reasoning', supposed wisdom of the world and the way people think. Well, the way that people think in the world, the philosophy of the world is just pretty screwed up, it's sick, it's distorted. It's not from God; it's not the way God thinks – it is man trying to solve his own problems. That's been a good one hasn't it? We've really done good there...**through philosophy**, in other words human reasoning, **and vain/empty**, is what it means here in the Greek, **vain, empty, foolish deceit, deception after the tradition of men**, because this is mankind, this is the way man has always done it – because that's all that man knows, it's the only way man can deal with things. He can't deal with what's true and what comes from God, what's of God's spirit. So he's saying, be careful, don't get caught up into that garbage, that swill, that cesspool out there! Don't think you're better than that, that you cannot get muddled down in it again.

... after the rudiments, it means here, 'the elementary things', 'the basic things' **of the world, and not after Christ**. So very shallow in this world and the way the world is, the traditions of mankind and how mankind thinks and deals with problems and all the garbage that's out there with it. So it says here, in essence, be grounded in Christ, understand what you have in Him, hold onto that, hold steadfast.

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It comes from Him, His source is, the light and power you have in your life comes from Christ, through Christ...which means, if we understand, the largest portion of that and such a great part, has to do with repentance, the ability to repent through Christ, to be forgiven. He's our Passover! ...to be forgiven of sin so that He *does* dwell and live in us, so we *do* have that strength of life.

And you are complete in Him: How thankful are you just for that? That you're able to dwell in Christ; that He died so you can dwell in Him. *He died* – that's what this Passover season pictures. He sacrificed His life so that each and every one of us could dwell in Him and in the Father on a spiritual plane, so that we could grasp in the mind the things we see. There is no other way to see what we see; the mysteries of God, as Paul talks about. That you can go and talk to others out here in the world and they might find an interest for a little while about certain things, but after a while it changes quickly, because they can't receive it. And the vast majority don't respond like that; we know how they respond, "You're a lunatic!" Because they can't help it, that's the only way they can think.

Going on to **verse 10** here...**And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom you are also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands**; What a beautiful thing here! He goes on to show the physical thing of circumcision, it wasn't about that; it's about circumcision of the heart – made without hands. It goes on to talk about it's done by God; it's

something that God does, the circumcision of the heart. **In whom you also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:** It's something done on a spiritual plane, of being able to get rid of sins, of getting rid of the things that aren't to be a part of our life.

Philippians 4: 4 – and this is all through the Psalms, things like this, statements like this - **Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.** You know that the only way you can truly rejoice in something is to have that attitude of mind of gratitude, thankfulness. The more attitude of thankfulness and gratitude – that means you see and appreciate deeply what God has given to a point that it stirs up, the ability to rejoice on a spiritual plane, to be excited, to be thankful. That's what stirs up our life, that's what gives us the life we have that is filled with the excitement of God's way of life. And so it's directly connected with thankfulness. Your ability to rejoice about something has to do with that attitude of spirit and response.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In other words, God is always there. Our moderation, we don't go to extremes – something we strive to live by led by God's way of life in moderation in the world around us.

Be careful, and the word means 'over anxious', 'deep worry'. We tend to do that as human beings, over anxious, deep worry, fretting about things, worrying about things to an extreme rather than just our life is God's and having confidence in that, and we obey Him and everything will work together for good. (Romans 8) If we see that, if we grasp that, the more we own up to that the more beautiful life becomes. But we tend to be weighted down with, burdened with, over anxious because of a lack of faith and confidence in what God is doing in our life and we don't grasp the depth and the magnitude that God is all powerful, can work everything... He didn't call you to miss out! He didn't call you to fail! He called you to succeed if you continue to follow Him; it's absolutely guaranteed! Absolutely guaranteed when you're baptized! You just continue to follow and continue to repent and seek to follow God and it's all there, guaranteed! But we tend to weight ourselves down. Again, going back to Isaiah '...be burdened by...' what we place upon ourselves and upon others, sometimes by our anxious thought and our worries we make other people's lives burdened, because of the same worries and concerns.

He says, **don't be over anxious for anything**, in essence, **for nothing; but in everything by/through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving;** that's a matter of understanding what you have with God, that God is your fortress, He's your high tower. He's there for you! Doesn't mean you're not going to go through some difficult times, some hard times – that's just a part of growth. I learned that in a magnified way after the apostasy and by going through it, that as I looked back at what I'd gone through I *hated* what I had to live through. I did not like what I was living through – it hurt! You talk about a stabbing with a knife. You know, sometimes physically you can get hurt; something like that, and you can recover a lot faster. Things that happen to you when you get stabbed in a spiritual way, if you will, or cut through the heart, it's like somebody putting a dagger in you and twisting it in life and the emotions that go with that. So again here, an attitude of mind.

Again...**by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; let your requests be made known unto God.** An attitude of mind, of a response to God of how we think, and so much of it is a matter of understanding what we really have.

And the peace of God, what an awesome thing here, something you're able to receive from God because of being more at one with Him, and being able to get rid of some of these things we read about

in Isaiah – freed from them, the weight! Christ talked about that, about the burden, ‘take on Mine...’ ‘My burden is light...’ in essence paraphrasing some of it, taking on God’s way of life, living it, having confidence in what He’s called us to, crying out for that confidence. That’s what you’re asking for. Crying out for boldness in spirit to live His way of life around others – not to let others, as we’ve read about in Colossians, that can get at you, that can weaken you.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So our strength is in Christ Jesus, our strength is in the Body of Christ, our strength is in drawing closer to God.

Let’s turn over to Psalms 100; I want to get through some of these Psalms. But over and over again, thankfulness, gratitude, what it’s all about, the ability to rejoice before God because we are thankful, because we have a mind of gratitude. You know, sometimes it’s good to just to even get a piece of paper, start writing on there what you have because of the Church, because of God, because of Jesus Christ, because of what you have in this Body, what you’ve received.

Psalms 100:1 - Make a joyful noise unto the Eternal, all the earth. A joyful noise unto the Great God of the Universe.

Serve the Eternal with happiness and come before His presence with rejoicing. You can’t do that by making it up. You can’t do that by working it up. On your way here today, did you say you’re going to come to services here, come before His presence with rejoicing and happy while you’re fasting; and maybe you had some kind of a conversation that maybe wasn’t the best for the Sabbath. I don’t know, I’m just throwing things out, things that happen to us in our lives. But the point being is there is something we live, it’s how we think – to **make a joyful noise unto the Eternal** is a matter of understanding what He’s given us, how blessed we are.

To **serve the Eternal with happiness**; what do you mean ‘serve the Eternal’? How do you serve the Eternal? How do you serve God? From the moment you get up until the moment you go to bed at night – one of the most powerful things is just respond to His calling, what He’s called you to, that you’re looking at your life and you kneel down in your room and put your hands up toward God and say, “Father forgive me, forgive me of my sins, forgive me. Thank you that I can come before you and be forgiven, that I don’t have to carry this.” ‘Remove the burden’? What an awesome thing! To me it’s one of the most awesome things that we’re given, the ability... because we all have it day by day in our life, things that need to change, the need to repent of something we’ve said and done wrong, whatever, and we go before God and we say, “Father, forgive me, and thank you that I have the Passover, that I can come before you and ask for this, and to know that when I leave this room I don’t have to carry this anymore.” Can you be freed like that when you leave in prayer? Sometimes because of sin you go before God, you feel more unworthy than other times. We’re always unworthy, but there are times you just feel pretty rotten, “Why would God even want to hear me?” ...and yet He does. And when you’re gone you’re free. Awesome! Something you grow in, that you come to appreciate more deeply as time goes on.

Serve the Eternal with happiness, and come before His presence with rejoicing. God wants us to be of that spirit and mind when we come before Him, and a large part of that rejoicing is to grasp what we have received and then we thank Him in our prayers. I hope a lot of your prayers are filled with thanksgiving to God, gratefulness to God for what you have, for what He’s giving you.

Know the Eternal is God: He made us, and not we ourselves; God knows what we need, we don't know. We have to go before Him and cry out for help. ...**we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.** That's a unique mindset. If you magnify these things we're talking about here today, that's a unique mindset to have. What an incredible thing to think in a certain way, to have an attitude of mind that God is God, what am I? I'm blessed to be a sheep in His pasture! He made, moulded, and fashioned me and I have the blessing of responding and becoming a part of His Family. We didn't make ourselves, and yet we live life like that so often by doing what we please, not what God tells us.

Verse 4 - Enter into His gates, in other words when you come into His presence. You know, that's what you're doing when you come before God. Do we see that when we pray to Him? **Enter into His gates;** we're coming before His presence. We come before His presence on the Sabbath in a great and powerful way. We come before His presence when we pray, obviously, and every time we do we have the guarantee that we're going through the gates to Him, He hears us! He hears you! He *wants* to hear you, to work with you. **Enter in His gates with thanksgiving,** see... **with thanksgiving;** sometimes when you're down and out, when you're highly oppressed, you feel rotten in life or whatever it is that is oppressing you. Sometimes you've forgotten the thanksgiving, sometimes you can come to a point where you have this anxious worry, you're letting things weigh you down. And yet God says you don't have to be, you don't have to carry that, you have freedom! You have freedom in a relationship with Him and that He gives you in this world.

...**with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise:** it's a matter of praising Him and thanking Him for everything you have. That's a different mindset, it changes the attitude. You know, when you have other things hitting you, oppressing you, woe is me, life is not going well, life is hard. Pshew – surprise, surprise! It is! We've been called in a world that's difficult because it doesn't live God's way of life. And sometimes we just have to go before God and start thinking about the things that we have, the things that He gives to us, the opportunities, the blessings that are there, and to realize He gives us the answers to what we have to have in order to conquer those things in our life. And that has to do with a change of mind then in how we think, and after a while you can leave prayer... You know, you can go through some of the Psalms of David. I've told people this in times past, a lot of times when you pray you can go through the Psalms of David and it's like things are bad out here, things are... woe is me, the world is bad...and you notice what David does, how he was inspired in the Psalms? He began to talk about things about God and what he had, and by the end of the Psalm it was this thing of rejoicing before God. Beautiful! It's a transition in thinking, and this is what prayer is so often about, to go before God because you're crying out to Him and thankful to Him that you can, and you're receiving these things from Him to change. Your whole attitude and spirit can change.... and that's what God wants to give you, this kind of spirit, this kind of mind.

...**and to come before His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and bless,** in other words 'as to kneel before', that's what this word means in the Hebrew, like in kneeling before Him, that you bless, that you respect, that you honour, that you magnify God in the approach you have before His throne, **and that you bless His name.** It's an attitude of mind toward Him. And this word here, this name means, 'known', 'renown', 'fame', 'reputation' – that we really elevate and magnify God in our thinking, to know who He is, or at least to strive to know who He is, to be thankful. Because we can't grasp Him very well, we're very limited as human beings.

For the Eternal is good and His mercy is everlasting; so often when you go before God that's what you're looking for in the first place, it's mercy; because it's going back to the same thing of repentance, it goes back to who we are and being able to realize we're responsible for our choices and decisions in

life and whether we're happy or unhappy. **For the Eternal is good and His mercy is everlasting; and His truth is from generation to generations.** That's what sets us free. That scripture, that verse of what Jesus Christ said on the day He died, on the night He gave this instruction to His disciples – one of the things He said that same night when He was talking to them was about how that the truth will sanctify you, the truth will set you free. It's the truth that sanctifies us, it sets us apart from the world, God's truth. And it's the truth that sets us free. It's a beautiful verse the more you understand what it means.

Psalm 117 – Psalm after Psalm after Psalm. Two verses in this entire Psalm: **Verse 1 - O praise;** it's a word that does mean 'to praise as into boast', 'to make ones boast or glory of'. We as human beings tend to boast about ourselves, want to talk about ourselves, to lift ourselves up, it's about self. So often we want to share that with everyone else – self. But God says, in essence, go before Him and make Him your boast, your praise, your glory. It's about God! We have everything because of what God's given to us.

And so it says, **O praise the Eternal,** make your boast in, your glory in the Eternal, not in self but in God; **all you nations:** in other words, people of all nations; **praise Him all you people, for His merciful kindness...** the longer you're in God's Church the more you come to understand His merciful kindness, His patience, His kindness to you to bring you out of sin throughout a lifelong process. He knows what you are! He knows who we are! He knows what we're made of. He knows how we think, He just wants to help us to see how we think so we can change and think as He thinks, to be more in agreement with His mind, His being.

...for His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Eternal is forever. Praise you the Eternal. When you think like this and you pray like this, sometimes it's good just to go in some Psalms and it helps to get your mind right, your thinking right, it helps to change a bad world around to where you begin to see the right purpose of what God is doing, why He called us. Because if you look at this world and you rub shoulders with this world too much the bad situations in this world can **pull you down.** There's a lot of burden out there, there's a lot of weight out there. It has shackles! It's not good! And that's why it's so good then when you focus on God and pray to God about some of these things that your whole spirit, your whole mind – because it's a matter of God's spirit being connected there – that helps you to be free of these things and to focus on your deliverance. It comes from God.

There are so many Psalms making this statement again and again, I'll just mention some here. You can just jot them down and look at them later on, pray about them if you want to.

Psalm 118:1 – it says this over and over and over and *over again* for a reason, for a purpose. It's something you have to *think* upon, *why* it stresses it like it does - **O give thanks unto the Eternal; for He is good:** now, I love it when Christ said there is no one good, that there's only one that's good, in essence, God, God Almighty, His way is good. And human beings? The only thing that we ever experience that is good is God and Jesus Christ living through us, in us. That's when we experience good. Everything else is not good until it comes into unity and agreement and oneness with God. It's a beautiful thing.

O give thanks unto the Eternal; because He is good, because His mercy is forever. God is so incredibly merciful. It's because of His great love. All the law is based on His love. He loves in a way that human beings *can't*, and that's what we can become more a part of, with that kind of love.

And it ends in **Verse 29** – stating this over and over again - **O give thanks unto the Eternal; for He is good: and His mercy is forever.** Again and again and again. Why would God want us to think upon something like this again and again and again? We're a little slow in learning as human beings, and so it's good to meditate upon these things and ask the very question, 'Why?' Again and again; what can I learn from this. Why? Why is this so important that God would magnify it so much?

Psalms 136:1 - O give thanks unto the Eternal; for He is good: and His mercy is forever. Again and again and again throughout the Psalms. **O give thanks unto the God of gods:** unique way it's stated here. You know what it's saying? It says **O give thanks unto the Elohim of elohim;** Now how do you translate that one? It's like in Exodus 20 when it talks about – uses the word Elohim – about God speaking of this world's families, because it's about families. Because so many, if you look through what Satan's done and duplicated and what he puts out there – families – god families. You look at different things through periods of time – it's about these different god families and how they interacted with mankind and did things with mankind and so many of the things steeped way back in time start with families. Amazing. And so that's the word that's used, because how do you describe a God Family.

But this one here is a unique one of itself, that the very fact of Elohim, the God Family, exists because of the first, when He says in Isaiah and different places that He is Yahweh Elohim, the Eternal Living God, the Eternally Self-Existing God is a better way of describing that, to understand that God is the Family, the God Family. "The only one," He says, "and there is no other." Beautiful! The very fact that the Family exists is because He exists. That's what this is saying; it's a beautiful thing!

Verse 3 - O give thanks unto the Elohim of elohim: for His mercy is forever. To understand God's purpose. That's why I get so excited. You can't help but be moved when you start talking about the plan of God and you start with a beginning of what we would think is time, when there is nothing but Yahweh Elohim. I can't understand it. You can't understand it. I don't know if we ever will or to what degree we really will. God is so incredibly powerful and great! Our minds are such little dwarves in comparison to anything that we can begin in thinking. Yet we lift ourselves up so high, so much – we're nothing and He is so incredibly great; the way He moulds our lives....

The more I learn about what God is doing I can't help but think about the universe and what He's made out there and I am in awe of that! It's so beautiful! Everything is so beautiful. You look at galaxies that are made up of billions of stars and solar systems, and you think... God put it all there, He designed it, and they're all different, they're unique; it's like snowflakes, they say there's no two alike, everything is distinct and unique of itself if you look at it so close up. Nothing is the same. And yet the beauty of it all. And then God lets us see what He's doing with mankind and the creation of His Family is the greatest of all creation! It's the greatest of all creation and the purpose of it all in the first place. And when you see that plan like that and you start thinking about it and realizing what we are and a part of this, it is overwhelming on a spiritual plane, it truly is. To do anything other than to thank God, to praise God, to be a part of something that is so awesome... our minds are so small.

Verse 3 – O give thanks to the Lord of lords, because His mercy is forever; Do you think God wants you to see something about mercy? You know what? If you can begin to understand the mercy you receive from God and you begin to be thankful for that, you know what you will start doing in your life? You will learn through that process to become more merciful to others, and there is tremendous power in learning to be merciful to others. It's a difficult thing for the human mind to be like that.

To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy is forever. ‘He who alone does great wonders!’ And He blesses us to be a part of those great wonders. Great wonders don’t come out of human beings, they come from God. That’s why I think about technology. Oh, we lift ourselves up big on that one! Different ones through time have done such great things and I think of people when they get so lifted up with what they think they have done and how great they are and I think, “You don’t have anything but what God gave to you, what God lets you have!” As much as when He calls us into the Church, the ability of the human mind to know, to see certain things – God has given that and yet we as human beings take it upon ourselves.

To Him by wisdom, that’s why I marvel sometimes! You think of 6,000 years - Why didn’t this happen? Why didn’t we have technology? Why didn’t we have the ability of the internet 5,000 years ago? Well, God would have had to destroy the world many times over if man had this level of technology throughout the 6,000 years, because we misuse everything and that only enhances sin, it magnifies the ability to sin. I hope we understand that. The technology today. Because mankind misuses everything he has.

To Him by wisdom, who made the heavens: I just talked about that, ‘Who made the heavens’, who made the universe, **for His mercy endures forever.** What does His mercy have to do with that? Because we’re a part of it! It’s out there for us! He’s made everything for the God Family to enjoy, to drink in.

To Him who stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy is forever. Again, all these things about what God moulded and fashioned – all about us! All about the focal point of all of His creation – it’s about mankind becoming a part of the God Family. Everything He’s done is about us becoming a part of Elohim.

To Him who made great lights: for His mercy is forever: The sun to rule by day: for His mercy is forever: Everything we have. We just begin to take everything for granted in life. We don’t think about that we have all this because God gave it to us. It’s just like our calling. I’ve seen in the Church – ever since I’ve been in the Church I’ve seen this, I’ve seen what happens. You know what we do? After a while we begin to take what we have for granted. We don’t *grasp* the magnitude of what we have, which has to do with thankfulness and an ability to grasp what we have that we never had before and we begin... That’s why I know what’s going to happen in the future when it comes to the God Family being here on earth, 144,000 and Jesus Christ, and people who are born on the earth at that time and that’s their norm; it’s easy to take for granted. See, we think about that right now and think, “How could anyone take something so awesome – Jesus Christ walking on the earth...” because He’s not here now, that’s why. 144,000? Because they’re not here. We don’t take it for granted because they’re not here, we haven’t experienced it yet. We look forward to it with incredible anticipation, but when it’s a part of your everyday life and it’s just there day after day and it’s just what you grew up with, that’s what you see, you see beings, you’ve experienced that at the Feast of Tabernacles or whatever, and you’ve seen Christ perhaps – it’s not as big a deal. And after a while you begin to take it for granted – Laodicea.

Gratitude, thankfulness, being able to see these things, crying out to God for help to be thankful, to see these things of what He is doing, how He’s working with us. That’s why it talks about this over and over again, ‘for His mercy is forever’. God is so merciful in everything He’s planned for us and given to us and He has patience with it all.

The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy is forever.

Verse 10 - To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn: for His mercy is forever: What's that about? It's because He had a plan. *We live* by this today! *We grasp* this today in a way, we see something physical that God has shown us the spiritual intent of it all, of *why* He did this, of *why* He worked with the children of Israel, of *why* He had the blood of the lamb that they had to take on the 10th day and wait until the 14th day to slice his throat and to drain his blood and to roast the lamb and to stay in their homes that night and to put the blood on the doorposts. And we learn from this! We learn how *awesome* it is that God gave of His Son, if you will, called Him to be the Passover for all of us. That these things He did because His mercy is forever, because He has a plan to deliver us.

Your life is guaranteed in Elohim if you receive it and just follow Him faithfully as He says to do it, as you cry out to Him to be able to continue to share. Just to thank God, "Thank you that I'm able to share in this." The more you see of what He's doing and that you're able to be a part of it, to share in it – then you won't take it to yourself, which human beings so often do.

And brought out Israel from among them: because, again, of what it teaches for the future; **His mercy is forever. With a strong hand, and with stretched out arm: for His mercy is forever.** That's how He works with us, and in a greater way now because what we're going through now is far more important than what they went through. They weren't being called into the Church at that time. They weren't being called into the God Family yet, they have to wait until the Great White Throne. There are just a few that God was working with at that time. With us, all of us being called to be a part of that period of time. **And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:** talking about the Red Sea, I guess, in the verse before. Again, over and over again, **for His mercy is forever:** all for a purpose, things that we see, that we learn from to inspire us, that help us to see something greater.

But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: the power to bring out a Pharaoh, a great ruler of that time, to lure him, to draw him with his army, because of his attitude and spirit, his hatred, his bitterness toward everything that God had done that was a threat to him, and pursued, to want to destroy a nation of people. Same thing that God's doing to Satan – the exact same thing. God has a plan for everything He does and how He works with us, and works to conquer and overcome him in a way that magnifies God and the God Family. And we're blessed to be a part of it. Not what we're doing – it's what God is doing because it glorifies God; it glorifies the plan of God in a very powerful way; on and on and on this goes.

The Psalms are just filled with these things about thanking God, focusing on what we have, what we're a part of, and it changes the spirit and the mind and the attitude so often when we're oppressed, when we feel oppressed. That oppression doesn't come from God. God called us to free us from that. When we think about and are a part of and are grateful to God for what God has given it gives us strength and boldness to go on to do what we need to do as well with a greater boldness and strength.

I'll end here in Psalm 107 – you just go through the Psalms and over and over again these things are there and they're written there for us to think about them. *Why* did He say this? *Why* did He write this for us? *What* can I learn from this? **Psalm 107:1 - O give thanks unto the Eternal, for He is good: for His mercy is forever.** It's throughout the scriptures over and over again. This isn't just written here just for fun, it isn't just a nice way of starting a Psalm, it's for us to learn from, to be edified by, to be strengthened by. There's a lot of strength there.

Let the redeemed of the Eternal say so; Do we grasp what has been given for us? What God has sacrificed through time? That's why I marvel when I was blessed to give that series here, I think it was

maybe even last year around the Days of Unleavened Bread, talking about some of that, seeing some of that in a greater way (again, I lose track of time, some of these things, of when God gives them), but I think about when God revealed what *He has sacrificed* from the very beginning – when He sacrificed peace to create the angelic realm knowing full well what one would do and what others would do to follow him. He knew that! He knew that by giving free will to the angelic realm that this would... It was all part of a plan! ...that it had to be.

What God gave me to give at the Feast, about creating evil. It had to be created, that we could experience it with free minds that could be moulded and fashioned, that could change, unlike a spirit realm with just only a spirit essence. Because we can repent and change and God can work with that to create in us a mind that, when it's gone through the process, will always-always-always-*always* be at one with God. That's an awesome thing to understand.

Again, the **redeemed from the hand of the enemy. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.** I think of what God's doing. That's what He's doing. That's what He's doing in the Church! Everything that we have right now in the Church – we travel around different small areas, we're not very large, but God has been redeeming samplings, people's, backgrounds, from all over the world! That to me is one of the most inspiring awesome things above all, it really is; representatives of all backgrounds of life, and you don't *grasp* why yet. You don't grasp the magnitude of that yet. It's by design of what God is doing, opportunities that are in front of you.

They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; Hebrew means, 'waste, desolate place of ruin'. That's the way everyone that has ever been called through time, what God has done through time. That's what has happened, especially in the last 2,000 years, because it's not just about a physical people and tribes of people but about the whole world, all the world, it just gets bigger and bigger. **...and they had no city, to dwell in;** so again here, talking about people who've gone before. I think about what God is doing to us, but then He's talking about this process here as well, of different ones He's called, especially that that's the way it's been for 6,000 years; it's not here yet. And so especially you go back through time and look at some of these things.

They wandered.... in a solitary way, a word that means, 'waste', 'desolate', 'a place of ruin'; **and they found no city.** And this word means, 'a place of encampment that's guarded or has a watch'. Unique words that God uses, inspires to be used. This word 'city' is not just a city like we think of a city, it is connected with, added with this thinking of an encampment that's guarded, that has a watch. How meaningful is that! We talk about the 'Night To Be Much Observed', that we just talked about recently, to be alert, to be on guard, to be in a watch, to understand where strength and power comes from, **to dwell in, to live in.**

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted, means 'to turn aside', 'became overwhelmed', 'weak' **in them.** **Then they cried unto the Eternal in their trouble,** think about what mankind or Israel has gone through, think about how we've been blessed, that we go through some of this process as God brings us out of it; **and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way,** everyone that God has called, doesn't matter who it is through time, they've gone through a process like this. God has worked with them and led them in a right way, His way, **that they might go to a City, of habitation,** which means 'dwelling'. You know, that's what it talks about in Hebrews when it talks about the faith chapter. 'They looked for a City whose builder and maker was God.' This is what it's quoting here!

Oh that men would praise the Eternal for His goodness, and for His wondrous works to the children of men! Because of what God is doing with mankind and what He's delivering us from and giving to us. **For He satisfies the longing soul and He fills the hungry soul with goodness.** ...in time, not instantly.

Jumping on down to **verse 21** – Good place to end: **Oh that men would praise the Eternal for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!** ...of mankind; **And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.** There's more to be said in this because there were actually sacrifices that were referred to as 'the sacrifices of thanksgiving' or 'the thanksgiving sacrifices' to God. And there was an attitude of approach; and yet there's an attitude of mind that God is looking for here.

So, we'll probably include some of this in another sermon... I'm sure that's why it happened this way today. When we talk about 'the sacrifice of thanksgiving' there's much to be learned from yet, of what God is looking for in us, of what it means for human beings to offer up something like *thanksgiving* to Him. It has to do with *sacrifice*. Think about those things.

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