

In the first sermon I gave we focused on the journey we've been taking through the wilderness on our way to the promised land to the establishment of those very things that this Feast of Tabernacles pictures. We reviewed our history from when God began working with us after the apostasy.

Now, one cannot grow in spirit and in truth if they fail to *remember* the truth about their calling, and how God has led them. And that is part of the reason God has so blessed us in this end-time since the apostasy, because He has blessed us in being able to see and to be truthful about our past, to remember and never forget *how* He has led us all along the way.

One of the most powerful methods of Jesus Christ leading us and continually revealing more and more to us, has consisted of this process of God blessing us to see where we have been so that we can grasp more fully, more clearly, where we are, and as a result of that then a clearer vision of where we are going.

The apostasy occurred in December of 1994; that's going to be nearly eighteen years now. In some ways that can seem like a long time, but biblically it's a very short period of time, especially when you see that so much of the Bible was written about these end-times. There is so much of God's plan that's being fulfilled during this specific period of time, *from* the apostasy *to* the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings. Consequently, much has been happening of major significance throughout this period, and as we draw closer and closer to the end this process has only accelerated and become far more active even in those things that God has continued to reveal to us. And through this period of time we have come to coin a term that has come to mean much more to us, 'the present truth'. And there is much more to this saying than what we have fully grasped.

Let's turn over to 2 Peter 1 where this is mentioned, as a part of the introduction here, and read this particular verse of where this expression comes from.

2 Peter 1:12 – Wherefore I will not be negligent to always put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be/become established; and the Greek, the meaning of this is 'to become established, grounded, strengthened', **to be/become established in the present truth.** Well, that's what this sermon is entitled today, *The Present Truth*, this being *Part 1*.

Now, I am excited about being able to give this because it makes things so much clearer. I'm always amazed by seeing how God leads us and what He's leading us to see right now and what He's giving us at the Feast is a deeper understanding of what this means and how we're to understand it and how we're to see it, because it has so much to do with how He works with us. And again, I marvel at the process that God leads us and teaches us these things and helps us to better understand, especially going all the way back to – well, going back through time and being able to see and understand more fully things that are given, and some of those things so that we can better understand them here at the end-time. There has been a lot that God's given us over the past four years, 3½ years plus, that has helped us to come to better see, to better understand things that He'd given a long time ago, so that we could grasp what's taking place now. So it's a powerful process in how God leads us by the power of His spirit.

So very many of the sermons God has inspired for us to hear are about seeing and remembering matters of our past so that we can become more fully established, grounded, and strengthened in our present. And this is the very thing that gives us momentum, focus, encouragement, and determination to press forward in a greater boldness toward where we're going. So, let's focus on this process and see how God has led us, established, and strengthened us in the present truth as we've journeyed forward.

Although this was the process that followed the apostasy let's move forward in time to the beginning of 2008. We're going to look at some things here of recent history and then pause and go back in time so that we can better understand, again, these things that God is revealing about here and now and/or things that we have recently gone through. We're going to move forward to the beginning of 2008, speaking of from the apostasy. Do you remember where we were at that time? Do you remember some of the things that were taking place at the beginning of 2008, because it's good to go back and remember so we can understand where we were and what we had to that point in time as far as understanding, as far as truth is concerned.

So what was our present truth at that point, at the beginning of the year? Looking back, I think to the spring especially: On April 17th, Laura and I along with the Harrell's were in Israel. The 19th was the weekly Sabbath and it was the Passover in that year. And in the sermon on the 19th it was announced who the second witness would be and that sermon was entitled, 'It Has Begun – 1260 Days'. And so again, that was given on that particular point in time. Now, it was announced specifically at that time who the second witness was, but again, it was given long before that, quite a long time before that by sermons or in sermons that those who have ears to hear would be able to know and be able to hear and understand. But the announcement of the second witness, again, in this particular sermon was true, but the message that the 1260 days had begun was not true...but it *was* the *present* truth. In God's Church we are judged by the present truth at *any moment in time*.

Going back even farther to the previous year, 2007, on Trumpets. That sermon on that day was entitled, 'Trumpets and its Fulfillment in Four Years'. Now, that date may yet prove to be important but it isn't what some of that message contained concerning the timing of Christ's return. This too was our present truth but it was not true that Christ would return on Trumpets of 2011. Now, I know this can potentially be difficult to individually address and to understand, so where were we at this moment in time? As we look at that period of time, Trumpets 2007, a second book had been written by me entitled, '2008 – God's Final Witness', that was published and ready for the public by the very end of 2006, just before we went into 2007, obviously, with even a greater push for that particular book. But this book that had just been published had everything to do with *how* God was leading us and *where He* was leading us, but there were certain things that He did not give to us as we were to learn from what we were going to experience as a result of such a powerful message contained in the writing of that book.

And so again here, to clarify some of this... the book had been given, the book was written, but some of the things we were still going through and some of the things of what we understood, even about the book and where we were in time – again, God had not given us understanding but He gave understanding of that book entitled, '2008 – God's Final Witness', inspired things to be written and published. Now, after such a powerful book had been written and published concerning the final end-time events that would lead up to the very return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, *how* could such a thing have been stated at the Feast of Trumpets in 2007? ...that Jesus Christ would be here in four years on Trumpets of 2011? The answer to that is in understanding the *primary* thing that God had given us in this book and in the present truth we had at that moment in time.

So, at this time, once it became clearer that this was false, that Christ wasn't going to return in four years after the Feast of Trumpets in 2007 some said that this was proof enough that this is *not* God's Church. Further, it was concluded by some that I then could not possibly be a prophet of God. But the truth is that this *was* the Church of God then and it is now, and that I was a prophet then and I still am now. People simply do not understand *how* God works with His Church, His people, and His ministry, especially when it comes to *how* God reveals truth.

At this Feast God is blessing us to understand this entire process in a clear and beautiful way. I've really enjoyed going through this, preparing part one here and part two and seeing what God is clarifying so powerfully for us. It really is an exciting and an inspiring opportunity to be able to share this and to go through this subject matter. To understand how God works with us and how He leads us, how He reveals truth to us, and even how He judges us, is to first understand how God governs His people.

Let's focus on this matter of how God governs His Church in an area of scripture that is so very basic and yet poorly understood by so many through the era of Philadelphia and Laodicea, yet it shouldn't have been, especially during Philadelphia. This is powerfully covered, by stages, in Ephesians 4. Let's notice those things, because they are stages, they all combine in one but they are stages that work with each other, because you can't have one without the other. It all works together to perform, to accomplish what God is doing, how He's working with us and how He governs His people.

Stage one is an admonition to live up to our calling in order to receive God's government. That's what's being given here right at the very beginning. This is how we must live after we have been called if we're going to be able to receive God's government. There are certain things that we must focus upon that must be in us. I think of that truth, the third truth over all, the first attributed to Mr. Armstrong that God had revealed through him in a very powerful way, was the subject of government, and yet as I have looked back through many of times, of things that have happened throughout time in the Church, since I've been in the Church, I have seen this so poorly understood as God has continued to reveal more and more and helped to solidify that in our minds, in my mind. And I have been dumbfounded by how little it was understood within the ministry. And yet people *thought* they understood it! But there is so much on the subject and so much more, because it's a matter of understanding the spirit of it and the entire process of it as well. And candidly, these stages that we're going to look at and how it all fits together and that it has to work this way and can work in absolutely *no other way*.

So again, this is foundational before a person can even go on, to understand how God leads us, how He reveals truth to us, and how He judges us, that everything is established, in essence, upon this process here of how God governs His people.

Ephesians 4:1 – Paul says – **I therefore, the prisoner**, and it's a term for 'bondservant', willingly so, a desire to serve God, that even from baptism we give our life to God. It is God's to use to His glory and His honor and we are so blessed to share in something so great, because He begins to mold and fashion that within us that will make us the most fulfilled, the most complete, the most excited in life, by yielding to His plan and process and how we fit into it, how we *can* fit into it, how we can be blessed in it.

And so he says, **I therefore, the bondservant of the Lord, beseech you**, a word that means 'appeal to you', and even 'to exhort you'. And so it's a strong word here in that respect, to make an appeal and to exhort, **that you walk**, not 'worthy', because no one is worthy of it. It's a word that means in essence, in a worthy manner. **...that you walk in a worthy manner**, in other words, our response once we

understand it, once we grasp it, that we respond, **to walk in a worth manner of the vocation**, it's the word for 'calling', 'the calling'. We know that God calls us. That's something that is so difficult in some respects to understand, but we believe it, we know it, we understand those things that God has said, that God calls each and every individual personally as He draws us to the Church, He draws us to the Body of Christ; He gives us to His Son that we might be able to be begotten into the Church of God, the Body of Christ through the indwelling, through the impregnation, if you will, of His holy spirit.

And so Paul making this appeal here, this exhortation as well to people that they walk worthy of the manner – in response to, in other words – **the vocation, the calling which you have been called**. To understand that God does the calling, to understand there is a process there at work, and to understand what we've been given. We've been *called by God* so we should *desire* and *want* to walk in a worthy manner, in a proper way, as a *response* to that understanding. And that's the appeal that Paul is making here, and then he shows how we do that, the *only* way we can do that, the *only* way that God can work with us, the *only* way that the government of God can work *in* us. He said, **with all lowliness**, a word obviously meaning 'humility'. How often is that stressed and how often are we exhorted and *encouraged* to walk in humility.

I think of the Feast of Tabernacles, year by year there is hardly a time goes by, in essence, at the Feast of Tabernacles – I don't believe there is since I've been in the Church, at least since I've preached in the Church – that this hasn't been touched upon, the matter of humility, the opposite of pride, showing what happened from the beginning, showing what God is doing and where He is leading us and how He's leading us and why, and the attitude of spirit that we have to embrace with all of our being because the attitude of man is one of pride, is one of *not* listening to God, not only not listening but *actually resisting* God. And so there is something that must prevail in our walk with God, in our desire to walk in a worthy manner to a calling, an incredible calling from the Great God of the universe, which is something we only believe...but we don't grasp that fully!

To be called out of billions of people around the earth, to be given an opportunity for something that is beyond our comprehension, but to believe it and prayerfully to ask God to help us to appreciate it and grasp a hold of it more and embrace that more so that we don't begin to drift and begin to do what's going to be a battle for people during the Millennium, to begin to take things for granted, to actually begin to take Jesus Christ and the 144,000... to actually begin to take the government of God on earth for granted because it's just going to be normal, the way it is.

Young people, people throughout most of that period of 1,000 years are going to be born into that, they're going to grow up in that, with that environment. They're not going to know anything else. They're going to read stories about what happened in the previous 6,000 years and not - just like we read stories - but to fully grasp that period of time, it's going to be difficult for them because they live in a different age, they live in a different time, they live in a time when Satan is not around, when demons aren't around. They live in a time when Jesus Christ *is* around, where the 144,000, they *are* around! Beings of the God Family walking on the earth, able to appear and disappear – I don't know how all that's going to work – but it's incredible!

To understand then for us, the need for humility, the need to not take for granted the incredible calling that God has given to us, to not get to a point – and sometimes those of you who've grown up in the Church, this can become a very great battle as well – that there are certain things that that's all you've known, and after a while you just...you can drift if you're not careful. And it doesn't take that long after being called out of the world that a person can begin to drift and begin to take things for granted,

because this is the way it is within the Church, and begin to coast. And we can't do that, we have to fight and continue to fight, and those during the Millennium are going to have to fight against their nature and seek to change and overcome and seek to understand and recognize the pride that exists in them.

So **to walk in a worthy manner**, means first and foremost it must be done in humility, lowliness of self, understanding what we are, understanding the human mind and the battles that are there and that that is not God's way, it's not God's mind, and so we have to repent and change the ways we think by carnal natural normal *selfish* human nature.

...and meekness, and so this is needed. To walk in a manner, to follow the calling that we've been given, to respond properly to that calling it must be done with meekness which is what? It's a 'teachableness', a teachable spirit, ready and willing to be taught. Now, oftentimes when someone is first called that isn't a problem because the excitement, the fact of being drawn, of being called, of all of a sudden seeing things in your mind that you've never been able to see before, a contrast between what is taught in the world to be true that turns out to be totally false, that Jesus Christ *didn't* die on a cross, that He *didn't* have long hair, He wasn't effeminate, He was masculine and strong, in that respect, strong in a masculine manner, healthy, strong, not having long hair going against what scripture reveals about those kinds of things that actually comes from God's spirit, of how we are to present ourselves, how we are to live and what we represent, and a desire to live that fully.

And so, to understand that He died on a stake, that even the most basic of things, a pole that was put in the ground and one nail that went through the hand area, and the foot area, not the way it's depicted as one through each hand. And that's just the beginning! A star over Bethlehem, to understand how much of a fable that is. It's a childish fable, and to understand it was an angel that led the wise men. And that's just the beginning! To understand God never intended for Sunday to be observed as a time set aside to honor Him, to learn from Him, to worship Him – but the Sabbath has *always* been there, *always* commanded, never changing. And to understand then that great contrast with the world, to understand that Christmas is fully of the world, as much as Sunday is of the world, that Easter is of the world, in the sense of even that which is from Satan, *inspired* by Satan. This can be very difficult then for people to have to address, to realize they've been lied to. It doesn't matter what religious group they've been in, they've been lied to mightily by a false spirit, deceiving, deceitful, lying spirit world that has influenced mankind.

And so we learn and there's that excitement. It's the Passover instead of Easter. The Feast of Tabernacles, not Christmas later on, and all the things in between that we learn and the things about God's plan, that people don't go up to heaven when they die and they don't go down to some place to be tormented in hell. And so there is that excitement, that when we're called and we see these things we are moved, we want to learn more, we are... but as time goes along and we have learned those basic things and then the moments of newer truth, or new things being added becomes less frequent and we learn to be moved by inspiration, by encouragement, by instruction, by those things that we must look at in a deeper way in our own being that must be changed. Understanding the weightier matters of life, the weightier matters of God's law, of judgment and mercy and faith, and what those things mean in our life, and no longer this contrast with the world, because we've repented of that and we're wanting to be taught by God, we want to be led by God, and yet that can begin to wane in time and we can begin to level out spiritually. But we can't afford to do that! That's why we hear so many sermons about being stirred up and a desire to be on fire, to be *zealous* for God's way of life, to *fight* for

God's way of life and not to level out as so often happens and has happened in the past – and especially now, to be far more zealous in learning these things that God is giving to us!

So again here, to walk worthy of a calling that God has given means that *this* is the *beginning*, and for God's government to work in our life we have to have a spirit of humility because we're going to be corrected. Pride doesn't like to be corrected. Pride wants to hold onto its own way. Pride is the thing that resists God. And so that spirit of humility, of a willingness and a desire to receive correction, to want to change, to want to see things in our self...that's a different spirit!

But to walk worthy, in a worthy manner, if you will, of that calling means that this is a part of it, that we recognize the need to change and the need to have a spirit of humility and a teachable spirit, a willingness to be taught, a *desire* to be taught. ...**with longsuffering**, patience; meaning that as we go through this process in our life and as all who have gone before us to this point in time, there is not going to be as much a need for this term 'longsuffering' in the Millennium as there is now, and yet there will be. But in this world, in Satan's world, in a world when you begin to live this way of life, you have to have patience and be willing to suffer a *long time* in this world. Because we're bombarded with things, and coming out of this world is *harder* in this age than what it will be in the age to come after Christ's return.

And so again here, this matter of responding to our calling and to realize that it's going to take longsuffering, a lot of patience and suffering, to realize this is what we have to go through from family; and sometimes loved ones who are the closest to us can be the ones who attack us the most, and we're going to suffer through our life with that, of dealing with some of those things...and *never giving up*, never quitting, never letting down, never trying to get to the point where... You know, it's one thing to make peace, it's another to do what happens in the political world, to make compromise. Sometimes people have made great mistakes in making various kinds of compromise that aren't spiritually healthy. You have to stand firm and stand strong in what God has given, not obnoxiously so, not self-righteously so, but seeking balance and help from God.

Then the next word here, **forbearing**; a word having to do with 'tolerance'. Not in a negative way as this word is so often looked at but as in 'allowing for the differences in others'. When we're brought into a fellowship, we're brought into a calling, there are many people whom God calls and brings us into the same fellowship, but the diversity is great! It's mighty! So many different personalities, and even so many different things that God has given to different ones, and because... you know, He hasn't called individuals who are a lot alike, on the contrary, a lot of differences, because it's within this arena we're tried, it's within this arena that we learn, and sometimes – well not sometimes – but oftentimes things about our own nature come to the surface as we see our response and reaction to different people and things they say and the more we get to know them. But for us, we realize because we have been given a calling God expects more...more and more and more, of how to address things, of how to have a *right* family relationship, not as the world but as *God* desires it in the Body.

And so again here, before we can ever proceed forward and receive God's government we have to receive these things into our life, to recognize these things work *with* God's government in our life, working in our life, regulating our life and in relationships, and our response then to those whom God places over us, candidly, which is a matter of government.

So, **forbearing one another** in what? **Agape**. It doesn't take very long, at least not in this age anyway, at this time, and the last several years here, to understand where this comes from. This comes from God;

it's not something you can work up and decide you're going to do one day. It's something that grows in you a little bit at a time as you *focus* on these things, this matter of longsuffering, in the world and sometimes with others, of being *patient* with others, of not being impatient, but of realizing you didn't change overnight, you didn't change overnight and neither are others. So, sometimes we can have high expectations of others and less of ourselves.

Going on here, **verse 3 – Endeavoring**, this word means 'diligently working'; **endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit**. You have to *work* at that! **...to keep the unity of the spirit**, to *live* God's way of life, in order to walk in a worthy manner of a calling, of *the* calling of the Great God of this universe. All the more so we should be inspired to have a desire for unity of the spirit, to speak the same thing, to *live* the same thing, to *reflect* the same thing, and that very much is what government is about indeed.

So again, **a unity of the spirit in the bond**, in other words, that which just binds everything together, like cement and glue, that **unity of the spirit**. That's what binds everything else together – all of these things we just talked about, the matters of humility, a teachable spirit, longsuffering, forbearing, God's love, having God's love in us and being motivated by those things and endeavouring and working hard to keep this unity. All of this working together to bind everything together for peace, of peace, Jerusalem. It's about peace. That's what God wants in His Family – peace.

So to walk in a worthy manner of the calling we have we must put these things into practice in our life. It *is* about God's spirit and how it governs in our life in order to bring about a right relationship as far as Family is concerned.

So again, stage one, so very important, an admonition to live up to our calling in order to receive God's government. Because all this is an introduction into the stages that follow. It's an introduction to what God is now going to give, and very much about a relationship with God, very much about relationships with others in the Body, and God wants us to see that in a proper way as a matter of a calling, and of changes that must take place in our life.

You know, it's my memory of nearly every Feast sermon I ever heard Mr. Armstrong give, that he *always* mentioned a particular scripture, and did it at the Feast of Tabernacles time. And I'm just going to read it to you, you don't need to turn there, but it was very inspiring and very beautiful to him.

Psalm 133:1 - And I think in part, if my memory serves me correctly, it was, I believe, his mother's favorite verse, favorite scripture, one of the favorite, but it meant a lot to him too personally because of his desire to the Church and to what he saw and what he desired to see, you know...what God desires to see, what He's leading us all to – just read about it here in the previous verse, peace, or the verse we just finished, all a matter of peace to lead us to Jerusalem, that's where God is leading us, and a place of peace, and of rest as we talked about in the past Feast and Feast before. Those are the very things that God gave up. He gave up peace in order to bring us into His Family, but His desire is for Zion, for Jerusalem, and for bringing us back to that, or bringing us to that, or taking us to that.

And so it was **Psalm 133:1** where it says, **Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!** It's a beautiful thing! But God's way! And that's the key; it has to be done God's way, which is a matter of government. There are things that God tells us how to do it and a spirit in which it must be done. And that spirit and how things are to be done is what we just read in Ephesians 4 that lead into then our ability to deal with, to work with, to function within in a proper way before God according to the calling He has given to us, to walk in a worthy manner, to live by those things that we

were just given – and so we can receive the fullness of God and the government of God, and the nurturing of God, because that’s what it’s about.

Stage two, God’s government is *one* government. That’s an awesome thing because there are so many things that pull at that, there are so many things that pull at that in the world, and people want to compromise, they want to think in the protestant world that (even though they don’t fully believe that or they would go to another group and so they choose to attend a specific group because they believe it’s more correct or more to whatever feelings and emotions and judgments that people come up to in the world) – it’s like when it really comes down to it, if it’s all said and done, it’s just that God’s out here working with a lot of different ones; Catholic church, the Church of Christ, the Nazarene, the Amish, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Latter Day Saints, the Baptists. And when it’s all said and done we’re all kind of moving in the same direction but just taking a different road, kind of thing, and yet it’s like God’s just working with us in those different ways to get us to heaven or whatever it is.

And then those things have entered into the Church in the end-time as well with all the different scattered groups that are out here; and some of the feeling is when it comes to dealing with some of this, because especially sometimes with family members and loved ones in different groups, it’s like, “Well, God’s just working with all of us in different ways, some differences along the way here in different things and even yes, in how things are administered,” - which happened to be government - “and different governments here and yet God’s kind of working with all of us to bring us to one.” Well, that’s not true and that’s an incredible lie that worked its way in to a scattered Body. The reality is, just as it says here, **Ephesians 4:4 - There is one Body.** One Body! The only way for unity to exist is in *one Body*, that’s why there is no unity of all the other groups, that’s why they can’t come together and be unified. And then there are some who are ostracized mightily so. I believe with all my being we are the most ostracized, the most looked down upon of *any* group out there, not being real large, but large enough that [we’re] kind of an eyesore and a thorn and all those other things that go along with it.

But it says here, **There is one Body**, which as we grow we come to understand that’s the only way for government to truly function properly. Look at stalemates today, and even in the government of a nation like the United States – primarily two parties, two opposing sides, because in large part people kind of fit into two different categories, from an extreme left to an extreme right and then everything in between and kind of in the middle where there’s a little bit of moderate thinking, giving a little bit of so called balance to maybe both sides, but it lead to compromise and all the things that take place. And the reality is there is no oneness, there is no one direction, it just shifts back and forth continually, generally every four to eight years, just back and forth, back and forth and arguing and fighting and bickering and slandering and deal making and compromising and all the things that go along with that ugly word ‘politics’ that is so *against* God’s way of life, truly. It doesn’t work! It’s *perversion* to government, and when people truly understand that which comes from God.

So there is one Body, the only way for unity to exist, **and one spirit**, again, the only way for unity to exist is that which God gives in one spirit – one spirit! If you follow one spirit, you’re going to be led in one way, in one direction. With one spirit, you’re going to be in, indeed, in one Body, you’re going to be told one thing as you are being led. Now, we grow in that, but the point being is there aren’t a lot of different ways out here to follow then, there aren’t a lot of different choices – people can’t just pick and choose as has happened, especially in the scattering. You don’t like one, you get upset, you get mad at someone, you get offended at someone, whatever it is that happens, and then people have to justify in their own mind why they’ve got to leave one and go to another...and all these traumatic things that happen in the mind because it isn’t clear to them where the *one Body* is!

God is not divided! There is *one* Body and God is one. So that's what this is showing here, that this is what is reflected from God, this reflects what God's government is like and what it is, that you can understand and be convicted of with all your being. There is *one Body*! Again, the only way for unity to exist! **...and one spirit**, the only way for unity to exist, **even as you are called in the hope of your calling**. Again, taking us back to understanding the thing about our calling. *One* calling to *one* God in and through Jesus Christ – *one* Christ! **One Lord**, indeed...one Lord. **...one faith**, and as we've grown in understanding what that means and if people will just acknowledge that that means there's only one belief, one truth to believe, not a lot of different directions that people can go, not a lot of differences out here that people can just pick and choose from. That isn't the way that God works! It's one, one way to follow, one way that's true, one truth that exists at any moment in time in the world.

...one baptism, not a lot of baptisms. Why, because you're baptized into one Body, the Body of Christ, *the* Body of Christ, *the* Church of God. **One God and Father of all, who is above all**, the top of it all, the Great God, the Great Almighty Eternal Self-Existing Ever Living God who has brought everything into being, and then His Son who He's given everything to to administer. All of His government has been given to His Son to administer.

So there is **One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all**. The One God, one spirit – and so that will lead you in one direction, in one way – not a lot of different ways, a lot of different ideas out here; people can't just pick and choose! You know, they follow something for a few years, maybe many years, several years, and all of a sudden they're going to go and have a whiplash and go in a totally different direction from what they were led to even? ...what they were given? Astounding! God's government, truly powerful!

Then there is stage 3. So again, this is in Ephesians; these all combine together but they're divided up into specific areas here or specific stages to help us to better understand how it all works and what is required and what is needed.

So stage three; it continues on then by adding how this process is able to work *in* us being *through* Jesus Christ. God makes it very clear *one* Body, *one* truth, *one* baptism, *one* calling, *one* faith, *one* God and Father, *one* Lord.

So in **verse 7** it goes on to say then, **But unto every one of us is given grace**, so by God as this calling, because it is about our calling. From the very beginning it says to walk in a worthy manner according to the *calling* wherewith we have been called by God the Father. **But every one of us is given grace**, which is a word that incorporates or includes, I should say, would be a better way of stating it, includes forgiveness...that's what God draws us to in order to love us, in order to give to us favor which is a part of grace. Patience, God is patient with us. Merciful to us; He gives us great mercy in this process. Help – etcetera, etcetera. Those things that fit into a matter of the grace that God gives to us once He begins to draw us, once He begins to call us into His Family.

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ; so God is making it very clear here that this gift, that this calling that we're able to receive, that we're able to have of the Father, is able to be given to us, these things that we're able to receive, the grace that comes from God the Father, is given to us of Christ. **Therefore He said, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive**; beautiful expression here, especially when we think about some of the things we have focused upon in the last 3½ years and think about what God is doing as we get closer and closer to the return of Jesus Christ, to the coming of the Kingdom of God to be established on earth, which this Holy Day

season pictures, and that the world is in captivity and God is leading the world out of Egypt, freeing it from Babylon and the confusion of Egypt and Babylon. And so what a beautiful thing here, He's going to **lead captivity captive**, take captivity away – a good example here, what's going to happen to Satan. He's the one who's held the world captive and he's going to be taken into captivity and bound!

So, **He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.** So when we're called – that's the context, as we're drawn out, as we begin to be given grace and so forth.

Verse 9 – (Now since He ascended, then it is evident that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth...) so making it very clear here how these two words are working together here. If one has ascended, referring to a context of something here that took place because it's a matter of from death from immortality. So it says (**...that it is clear that He descended from the lower parts of the earth...)** in other words, from the grave. (**He who descended is the same also who ascended up far above all heavens that He might fulfill all things.**) And so again, God making it clear that everything that man is able to receive comes from Him through His Son Jesus Christ, who was buried and then resurrected as the head of the Church, as so many other scriptures talk about, as the head of the Church. Again, government, because it's all administered through Him, the first of the firstfruits is the one whom God governs the world, the earth, all of mankind and is going to bring everything and reconcile everything to Himself through His Son – the plan that begins with Passover and continues all the way through to the end of it all, until we're all... until all have been brought into God's Family.

...Who was buried and then resurrected as the head of the Church, and all the grace and gifts, freely given, in other words that mankind can then receive from God come through His Son. God makes that so very clear. So again, God making it very clear here the process of being called, of the spirit and attitude of that which we must understand and grasp, of that which we can't go and we are not able to receive the rest until we grasp the calling and what is expected of us, to walk in a specific manner, to be able to receive this that God has for us and then taken to understand that structure or the oneness of God, that there is only one and one spirit, one God, all these things, and then finally that the structure of this is through His Son and everything comes to us through His Son.

So again, it's all about a structure and the way God is organized – everything.

Then stage four... *stage four*: He then takes us to *human* government, which you have to apply stage one and stage two and stage three to understand this, to receive this, to have this work in your life powerfully and affectively.

Ephesians 4:11 – Human government that God established. He didn't choose... see the Kingdom of God is not here yet to where it's going to be God's government on earth where man can see it and talk to and have a relationship even with that government that exists on this earth, to see, to be taught directly by, so that something like what happened that led up to the apostasy can never happen again in the world. God led us all the way up to the very end to be able to experience something, to better understand why God's government *must be* placed on the earth, so that an apostasy could never, ever happen, so that the division that existed in the time of even Mr. Armstrong will not exist, will not be allowed to exist in His Kingdom governing on the earth.

And so again here, there is still human government and that is a part of getting us up to the point of the Kingdom of God on earth and then there will still be that which God works through in human beings

because there is structure, there is order of how things must work through life to bring us into God's Family.

Ephesians 4:11 – And He gave some, apostles, that's where it starts – from Jesus Christ to apostles, **and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and some teachers.** So an apostle can have all the rest of the jobs and responsibilities as well. An evangelist can have the others, as far as pastoring areas and so forth and teaching and the things that go along with that. And so there are different things for different periods of time, but a human government on earth under His Son, under Jesus Christ. That's what is being shown to us right here.

And it's good to understand, again, to emphasize that this is a *human* government of *imperfect human beings*. There is no one perfect! I am not perfect! The evangelists are not perfect! No one is perfect! Sometimes we seem to think that they must be – that's kind of the implication in the world, in the Catholic church, those thoughts and feelings about the pope and some of these false ideas that sometimes exist in the world. And we can't bring those into God's Church, we must have soundness of mind and balance and understanding.

So again, *human* government: people have human weaknesses. Christ is the only one who lived a perfect life. He is the only one that lived by God's law in spirit and in truth from beginning to end perfectly! None of the rest of us is able to do that! Human government is made up of imperfect human beings – nevertheless....*nevertheless* it is God's government, regardless of the mistakes and the weaknesses of people.

Now, there are rules, there are laws that regulate this, that can go too far, that things can happen where God will no longer work through individuals, and when it comes to mistakes and weaknesses, if they go too far, if people don't change, if they don't repent, if certain things go and people do not uphold a proper standard. There have been ministers throughout time who have had to be put out of God's Church! Paul had to deal with them, different teachers and so forth. And so all the way through time these things have existed, but in the midst of that, take away those circumstances and those extremes, because those are extremes, of those things that have it as a whole, except for the time leading up to the apostasy and afterward there, but as a whole, through time and through Philadelphia, as an example, these things as a whole, overall, did not exist. And what continued on to faithfully serve, that which *has* faithfully served in the Church and has not had these extremes that sometimes we can...our mind can drift to when I talk about making mistakes and weaknesses of people... The reality is I make mistakes, you make mistakes in life. We have weaknesses. We have things we must repent of. We are *not perfect*, not a one of us! But as we grow and as we learn and as more responsibility is given to us, indeed the spirit and the attitude should be a desire to have a stronger standard in life, to live up to a higher standard of life, especially for the sake of others!

So, one thing about being a prophet that many might *think* that they understand, but do not, is the expectation of others for bearing or carrying that office (in other words bearing it, carrying it), and what that might mean in some people's minds. Because sometimes the expectation of others is not realistic. But I can tell you about that experience so that you can grow in understanding, because I have experienced it over and over again from others. Some who seek to find fault quote Old Testament scriptures about things stated by a prophet and then not coming to pass. They're always so quick to judge and do not want to *wait on God*, and especially will not listen to *how* and *why* some things change as we've moved forward through the wilderness.

Who is it that would find fault, or wants to find fault, that being their motivation, would want to listen to sermons in order to learn? Not a one of them! Not a one! But those following God do and they learn through the process of wherever God gives as He leads.

So what has been stated in that which has been written *will* come to pass, like '2008 – God's Final Witness'. And *only* the *timing* is an issue...and we're going to hear more about that, especially in the second part of this sermon. But even *timing* becomes clearer for those who are lead by God and faithfully live by the present truth that God's people have at any specific moment in time.

Continuing on with stage four here about a *human* government, of people who have weaknesses and faults and shortcomings in life, who make *mistakes*. Now, some will jump to, and some will say, well then is that being used by you to say that mistakes have been made and therefore that's... Well, let's just listen to the entire sermon in its context and those things become very, very clear. That's why I made a clear statement about '2008 – God's Final Witness', that what is stated there will come to pass ...in God's time, not always in ours, as we live by the present truth at any moment in time.

Ephesians 4:11 – He gave some apostles, and some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers; again, a human government on earth under His Son. **...for the perfecting**, and the Greek word here is a matter of 'equipping' or 'preparing'...'Preparing for the Kingdom of God (?)' - for the purpose of preparing. God has structured us in a powerful way to fulfill that as a part of our name at this end-time, the Church of God – *Preparing* for the Kingdom of God, **for the perfecting of the saints**, the equipping, to be equipped with what we need, to be prepared.

We have gone through an incredible stage here, especially going back to May 26th leading up to the first couple of months there and twelve sermons that followed, from that first sermon that was given twelve Sabbaths counting Pentecost, and a process that led up to greater understanding of how God was and is working with us that's inspiring, that's exciting as we move forward with greater inspiration and greater determination than ever before now at the Feast of Tabernacles, that we've been prepared to move forward in a way that we weren't fully. We were being prepared through the 3½ years, the 1260 days, but not even as refined and as strongly, as powerfully as we have now been *since* that period of time. We've been far more prepared now to go through those things that must come to pass before what's pictured at this Feast is here on earth.

So again, **for the perfecting**; so the ministry is given **for the perfecting/the equipping/the preparing of the saints, for the work of the ministry**, there is work to be done, there are things...that's what God's tithes are used for, for His work. They're not *our* tithes, they are God's tithes. The only thing that might be ours, in that respect, is second tithe, ours to use and make decisions on and then how they're to be used at the Feast, and we can grow thereby by doing that as well, by using faithfully what God has given to us, to do what He said to do. But as far as what we send, it is not ours. That's a common thing that people have fallen into; "My tithes..." "Our tithes..." "I'm going to hold back '*my*' tithes..." "I'm going to do (this or that)." No, they're not. They're God's! You either obey God or you don't! And if God isn't in one place you better find out where He is so that you can faithfully give to God what is God's. Amazing how people think sometimes.

...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the 'edifying'; a word in the Greek literally means, 'the building' – **the edifying/the building of the Body of Christ**: That's what God has been doing! And so how does He do it? Through a human government on earth! It's the way in which He works; it's a part of our calling, it's a part of the *structure* of our calling, it is the foundational part to

grasp and understand so that we can move through time successfully, yielded to God, yielded to God's spirit, doing it God's way.

I have seen so many go by the wayside since 1969 when I was baptized in September of that year.

Then we come to the final stage; stage five. All of these stages that fit together, but we must understand them separately for how we're focusing upon them right now in this sermon.

Stage five: The purpose for the structure of government that He's given. **Verse 13 – Until we all come into the unity of the faith** – isn't that what we read from the very beginning? To grasp our calling? A *desire* that we should have in our lives, of something that should very much exist in our being before we go forward, as we go forward, to grasp, to comprehend what God is doing? This matter of a unity of the spirit? And so until we all come into the unity of the faith, a unity of what we believe... That's why God has so *stressed* to this end-time age and given us the technology that we have through a single website, to where everyone in the world can, as a whole, plug into it and receive the same sermons – whatever sermon is given on the Sabbath, whether by me, which is done in the vast majority of the time, or by evangelists, to be able to receive that, to be of one mind and agreement and understanding what God is giving to us in a very organized, in a very powerful way just before His Kingdom comes.

What an incredible thing He has done as a stepping stone to the time when Jesus Christ and the God Family, the 144,000, will be teaching first and foremost on this earth, and to recognize what He's given us as a stepping stone in order to help bring about a greater unified Body, a stronger unity of *belief*, and especially with all the truths that He's been giving us over such a short period of time! It is indeed *awesome!*

And so again here, **verse 13 – Until we all come into the unity of the faith**, in other words, of the truth that God has given us to believe! It's God that gives us this to believe! It doesn't change as God leads us! There was *one time* for an apostasy to exist in God's Church *ever*, and God did not allow before that and will not allow after that any such thing to ever exist, because He has molded and fashioned and brings everything to pass because He is doing the molding and fashioning so very powerfully, especially now as this final phase of His work before His Kingdom comes is done on this earth.

Until we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, in other words, so we can come to understand Jesus Christ more fully. We grow in that! We have grown mightily in that, especially since 2005. We have come to understand a relationship with Jesus Christ in a way that has grown *so much* more than what we had before, just by that understanding of it. And we have a deeper appreciation of what *He* did. He was fully human! Not like we kind of thought before, that He decided as a God, one of the two god heads, whatever, and that He was going to give up that power to live physically as a human being but had that knowledge of what He did before and... NO! It was a matter of His mind coming from God, His Father, the Word, the Logos, and then Him choosing to live by it – but being born with that which was unique from birth *in Him only* through time.

And so again, things we've come to appreciate and learn and understand, a *faithful* High Priest that we have and what He did so powerfully so for all of us, the *sacrificing* He did that we're to follow and emulate and recognize that to love someone, so often especially in this physical life, requires *sacrifice* in order to love, in order to give God's love...even though people don't appreciate it, to still give it no matter what.

Until we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect/matured/completed, that's what it means, ever growing until we're there, until God says, "Now I know you!" Matured, fully matured, fully completed as a part of that work that God is building.

...unto a perfect person/individual, unto the measure and the stature of the fullness of Christ: What a powerful measuring stature, but that is what God is bringing us to so we can be in His Family, so we can have that immortal life, that eternal life (I should say)...well, life everlasting from that point forward anyway, dwelling and living within us, God dwelling within us through all that time and we in Him, and this uniqueness of a Family – all unique and different and our own mind in that respect, but fully at one in spirit as we grow in in the Church, to become that way.

Verse 14 - So that we are no more children who are tossed like waves, that's what it's giving an example here, like being on the ocean or sea when it gets violent. **...no more like children who are tossed like waves, tossed around, and carried about with every 'wind' of doctrine**, which actually carries the meaning of 'breath' to it here, 'breath', every wind/breath, dual with intent, in other words, **...and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the 'sleight'**, and the Greek word here means like playing dice, 'as with trickery', 'craftiness', 'cunning', 'deceit', 'to trick', 'to mislead someone', and that's how it happens, that's the way of Satan, that's the way things happen, the deceit, the lies, when someone wants a following or themselves leave or they want someone to follow them, the lies that are involved there, the deceit, the sleight, the trickery, the just a twisting a little bit here and there, taking a little bit of truth and so twisting and distorting it that people come to the wrong conclusions and wrong judgments and are led away from that which is strong and powerful and true. It's astounding what can happen to the human mind. That's why we always have to be on guard and spiritually alert, fighting the fight, not drifting along!

...by the sleight of others, and cunning/clever craftiness, the trickery that's involved, the clever way in which some of those things are done, not easily seen. People talk about these magic shows and things they can't see, the sleight of hand, and it's so that others can't see it, but this is done in order to deceive and lead people away from the truth. **...whereby they lie in wait**, as to scheme to deceive. It amazes me sometimes, I find out later on when people have left in times past through time that they have done certain things for weeks, not weeks but sometimes months and years...and finally it all comes out because it's planning and plotting and stuff that has taken place just to deceive, and primarily to lead others away from the truth, that's how Satan works.

So all of this a matter of government and how God's government works in our lives, something we're to yield ourselves to, that we're to walk in as far as understanding the calling that God has given. And He wants us to understand how everything works from Him all the way through the Body.

Verse 15 – But speaking the truth in love, you know, when it's spoken, not a matter of self-righteousness and that we have something better than someone else or that we're more perfect or more right or what we have is right and you are wrong. None of those attitudes! But when truth is there, if it needs to be spoken or said, not to push something upon someone, because they can't receive it unless God's there, unless God's working with them. You can't force, you can't cram this way down anyone, you just have it to yourself. If a door opens up and a question is asked then you give that, you answer that, you speak the truth in love because you don't want them to be hurt, you don't want to give them more than what they asked for, you don't just unload the whole load because that can hurt them. We learn that in time, we learn how to better handle the word of God as time goes along, and when to

bring up various things and when not to. We learn a balance as time goes along, if indeed we will allow and yield to the power of God's spirit leading us in those things.

But speaking the truth in love, always the motivation, for someone else's good, the truth and what we're able to share of this way of life...**may grow up into him in all things**, to God and to Jesus Christ as its leading here to understand in Christ. **...and may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ**; so again, this matter of government, what it all leads to, why a human government is given, to lead us up to, to be able to receive that which comes from Jesus Christ, and so this is what God gives to us.

From whom the whole Body is fitly joined together... from whom the whole Body is fitly joined together – in other words, it's the Body, it's the Body of Christ, it's the Church of God. And it says, **from whom the whole Body is 'fitly joined' together**, in other words, fitted together as in construction. You fit some things in place, and then compacted or joined together, literally fastened, this word literally means fasten here – when you fasten it, whether by glue, nails or whatever. And so there is this construction taking place where if we yield to it we're going to be fit into place where God puts us, where He chooses to put us and then compacted. We're going to be set there, but that takes time, it's a process we live through. But all this is a matter of government and our yielding to it and how it works in our life and what we're able to receive.

And so it shows here by our response to it, **fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the 'effectual working'**, a word that means 'active power at work'. So every one of us has work to do. Every one of us has to yield ourselves to the process. Every one of us living this way of life, speaking the truth in love, responding to the calling that God has given to us, to walk, to strive to walk in a manner that is worthy of that incredible calling of the Great God of the universe and to do it the way God says to do it, first of all with a spirit of humility and 'teachableness', a teachable spirit – never trying to teach something different or trying to find something different ourselves but understanding how God works!

It doesn't work the other way where we can just come up with our own ideas about doctrine and about truth or whatever, or to stray away from and bring in different things that don't fit. But that's a human tendency and something we have to fight against and yield ourselves to God's governing life in us, of how it regulates life. And if we yield to that process we grow and we're able to supply what we need to in that part of the Body as we yield and respond, and it's going to help others in the Body then because of our doing our part. It's a unified thing that just gives strength and momentum.

I think of after May 26th, I'll just mention this to you, because there were different things in different areas, different things different people experienced, different things that came out of different ones, and it kind of shows where we are at the time in our life sometimes. But I remember walking into Cincinnati... now Cincinnati is made up of people who are weathered ☺, they've weathered the storm, the majority have ... the stability, the number of ministers in the area, just dumbfounding, and those whom God is using and more that are coming along as God.... not just a matter of that but it's a matter of the solidarity of that part of the Body. It's a very solid part of the Body if you look worldwide, because it's made up of such a large number of individuals who were in Worldwide during Philadelphia or shortly afterward on into Laodicea, and that *experience* that's there. They've gone through so many things and that's infectious in a Body and it rubs off on a Body.

When people have such a positive outlook and they've been through certain battles before and they know what it's like and they just keep forging forward. They *know* Christ's voice, they *know* God's voice, and they keep listening to it and they have that confidence, you know, if there is something else God will give it to us, we just keep forging forward, this is it, we know where it is! It's not something that they have to wrestle with.

And so when others came in that day on the 27th it was so inspiring because everybody was lifted up, laughing about various things, things of mistakes that had been made leading up to that day that now that you realize that you've done certain things financially and it's like we're in this pickle and we're going to get out of it. But there was this positive momentum and this positive move forward – and I'll tell you, that gave me a lot of strength. It strengthened me as God's apostle! We help each other when we yield ourselves to a process of how God works in our life, and if we don't then that can drag down, it can hurt others, and it can be a detriment then and it can take people sometimes longer then to get through a battle.

So the more we do and the more we yield and speak the truth in love and live this way of life, walk in a manner that's worthy, that God has given to us, first and foremost of humility and meekness, a teachable spirit, ready to learn. If we come to a point where we realize there is more we need to learn, that we're anxious for that.

So again here, this entire process that we live through – again, forbearing, working through something, allowing for differences, the longsuffering...again here, this endeavouring, working diligently to keep moving forward because we want a unity of the spirit, because we know that's where peace comes from, all these things working together in harmony.

So what God started out with showing us, what Jesus Christ was showing us through Paul there in the first part of Ephesians now has come full circle back to this part to show this in action, it's working in action. **...that which every joint supplies, and is compacted together by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working, the active power of work, and the measure of every part.** Every part that does *its* part!

...that makes increase, that word 'growth', to make 'increase' as we talked about in the first sermon, *fruit*, increase in our life, that which we have to rejoice here at the Feast, that which God wants us to reflect upon and rejoice at here at the Feast. **...increase and growth of the Body**, in the Body, individually as we grow it benefits the Body. The more each one of us grows the more it benefits the Body. The more fruit that each individual is able to have in their life, the greater the increase, the more it increases within the entire Body and helps to serve the entire Body in a stronger way.

...unto, this word here means... **to make increase of the Body 'unto'**, Greek word here literally means 'resulting in' **the edifying, the building**, that same word again, **the building of itself in agape**, God's love, agape (ever how you want to pronounce it...people even argue over that). So **the edifying of itself in God's love**: and so that's the source of it all, God, and the power of the holy spirit and the unity of that spirit and the love that can be in our lives then and live through us to the benefit of others, and then it just benefits each other and that makes the fellowship richer and purer and so much more meaningful.

So again here, this is the structure of it all. It's good to understand that as this section of Ephesians ends and it stresses that all this that covers God's government is a matter of His love in action in the Church. That's what it is. It's our yielding to His love in action in our lives to the benefit of the Body. His love is a

matter of unity, order, and peace. God's government is one of peace, but it's one of order, it's one of unity – all motivated by His love. And the more we yield to that the greater the peace, the greater the oneness with God, the greater the unity amongst ourselves, and good...and indeed how good and how pleasant is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

But we're able to have that in our lives, we're able to be molded and fashioned by that in our lives through God's government on earth, because God doesn't come down here, Jesus Christ doesn't come down here and sit with us and tell us these things...instead He works through human instruments whereby this process is accomplished, to help accomplish it in our lives, and we yield to it but we understand it's physical, it's human; nevertheless it's the way God works and this is how He teaches us, this is how we learn more and more within the Body as we're going to continue to see as we go through this sermon.

So when God established a system of government for His Church, the administration of it was given to His Son who was made the head of the Church, and from there it would be administered through physical human beings who were imperfect but chosen by God – just as each one of us is chosen by God. And so God's government, it's chosen by God and His Son to lead His people.

Sometimes there are battles that sometimes people have because they say, "Oh, he/she was ordained because of this relationship or that relationship, or because they knew so and so and because they were friends with so and so..." Well, God may have brought them into that indeed, as a part of a process, but it's all from God – as sermons come from God – but it's up to each individual how they *use* the ordination, indeed. It's up to each *individual* how they respond to God, just as much as when you're baptized, as to how you respond to your baptism. But those things are sometimes to try and test us, and in other words, to see what we do, to see how we respond to what? To God's government. If we rejoice in God's government, that this is what God is doing and we respond and we rejoice in it. But sometimes those things actually try people.

And so it is for this reason that there is far greater condemnation for any who are ordained by God if they do not faithfully strive to uphold the greater responsibility God gives them! When anyone is baptized, as I just mentioned here, then they enter into judgment and they must seek to obey God – that's the way it is, to grow spiritually, to fight to overcome, and to seek to be faithful to the Word of God. That standard is *raised* the greater the responsibility God gives someone in His ministry, when He calls them to it. So just as being brought to baptism, one is brought to ordination as well, and if anyone fails to live up to such a life then they'll suffer. If they fail to raise that standard in their life for the sake of example's sake alone, plus all the other things that are there as far as a responsibility...if anyone fails to live such a life then they'll suffer. A ministry will suffer much more for failure to use their ordination from God to live truthfully and faithfully before Him. And so those are difficult situations and we must repent and seek to indeed be faithful to God in how we do things and everything – and the more that's given the more is required, the more that is expected. Literally, that's just the way it works.

So again, God's government works through physical human beings. It is a reality. People that can and will make mistakes. People that will stumble. But again, the more that's given the stumbling going to be less, the example of leadership is going to grow and become greater if the response is proper. Now, sometimes those things have had to be addressed throughout... I think of Worldwide and the ones that left or ones that even had to be removed through time.

From the beginning God established His Church with government that was established to reflect and to teach His ways, His truth to His people. This was to be marked by a *strong faithfulness* through those who had grown in service to the Church, those who were becoming examples of leadership in the Church, those who were reflecting the evidence of spiritual maturing and understanding that could benefit other brethren and/or simply those whom God will give opportunity to be groomed for His ministry.

Let's turn over to 1 Peter 2:9. Because this applies to all of us. This is how we should all strive to live. But again, when there are individuals who are brought into God's government, the more that they're given the more this should be alive in people's life, the more this should be active...and as a whole it is.

1 Peter 2:9 – For you are a chosen generation, what did we just focus on in Ephesians? Something that God wants us to be able to see, that we're to walk in a worthy manner of a *calling*, of understanding where it comes from, and understanding what we're to address in our life, to rise to the occasion, if you will, to lift up our standards, to seek to make those become greater and greater in our life as we grow. **For you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood**; we're special before God. We're all set apart. We're sanctified – and we're sanctified by God's truth that lives in us, by Jesus Christ and God the Father who dwell in us. We're set apart for holy use and purpose! And so we're called **a royal priesthood**; you don't have to be *ordained* to be a part of a royal priesthood. Our calling is that to a royal priesthood, you know, to become *Elohim*! How much *greater* can it be? But sometimes we get too bogged down with and wrapped up in physical things.

And so it says, **a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, spiritual Israel, the Church of God, a part of that! ...**a peculiar**, or...and that's not really the right word here, but **a special people**: we *are* a special people! That's why I love the beginning of Ephesians there when it says in essence to consider our vocation, our calling, and wherewith we were called, to think about that. And then it goes on to say, **that you should show forth the 'praises'**, and as I've mentioned in sermons past, I love that particular word there in the Greek because it literally means 'the virtues'. So if you are to show forth something in your life that's to be reflected in you, that's to come out of you or through you to others that others are supposed to see, **to show forth the praises**, which means, 'the virtues', which has to do with a high standard of living, virtues, those characteristics and qualities that make up virtues, *moral excellence...moral, morality* should be far greater and far stronger in us than in the world as we're called out of the world and into the Church, as we live in the world. *Moral excellence*; a part of this word 'praises' in the Greek.

...**the moral excellence**, the virtues, *the character*... not ours! Not our moral excellence – we don't have any except that which is given to us in and through God as He calls us and through Jesus Christ, through His Son. Virtues, they come from God through His Son. They establish, He established what virtues are – they are who He is, and that lives and reigns, that is who Christ is, and then that can begin to be in us in all matter of conduct in life as we grow and this becomes stronger and stronger, and it's the more we grow.

And so, **that you should show forth these praises/the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His 'marvelous'**, or as it is, **amazing**, which is what it means, **light**. It *is* amazing! Awesome! Amazing...but it means amazing, **amazing light**. The light, that it comes from God and how it works in human life and being called out of Egypt, out of darkness and into this light, and then as we're able to respond to it by the spirit that works in us, and then these things begin to be reflected in our life, they begin to show forth these virtues, moral excellence in character that's God's that's able to live in us

and be shown to others – others can see it. What an awesome and a beautiful thing that God describes. But again, all a part of how something works in our life.

So, as individuals yield to such a process then they could be increasingly used to give more and more to God's people, when you talk about that organization of government within the Church, they can give away more and more, especially when someone brings someone into the ministry and have more opportunities to perhaps apply this and live this. But all of us as we grow in the Church – everyone – this is how it should work in our life as we grow, that increasingly we can give more and more to others...not just God's people but even people around us, that they experience these things through us, a different world, a different life, a different way of being treated, that they see that example, that they see that moral excellence.

So, people in those positions of greater responsibility carry greater condemnation if they do not *faithfully* execute those responsibilities in the manner that they are directed to do.

Let's turn over to 2 Corinthians 9. Now, it's important why we're going through this process, to understand the present truth of how God works with us in our lives, how He has *always* worked with the Church and with mankind, but especially with the Church over the past 2,000 years through a physical human government and what He's established in our lives that we are to be led by, to be guided by, to be worked with.

2 Corinthians 9:6 – speaking of all of us, but especially zeroing in on that structure of government that God has given, and speaking of the ministry. **But this I say, He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly;** that's the way it is for all of our lives. What we put into it is what we're going to get out of it. If we put little in we're going to get little out, and God gives us the opportunity to put *a lot* into it in this way of life and receive so much more...and especially if we understand what that means in sharing with the Body and giving in the Body – to be there for others, just to be there, just to give words of encouragement, to fight against our own human nature and to keep certain things back or to help steer things back into a good conversation, a right conversation... all the things in life we're challenged in sometimes.

And then it goes on to say, **And he who sows bountifully;** that's work – whatever you put into it – **shall also reap bountifully.** And so the kind of effort and work we put into it is what we're going to receive out of it in what we learn and what we receive spiritually in the mind.

Verse 7 – Every man/person according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give. God wants to know what it is from the heart, what is it that comes out of the deepest recesses of... what is your motivation? That's what's important to God, of how it's done, of why it's done...not grudgingly because it's a job to do, not grudgingly because we've been called in the Church and we have to be a little different, and grudgingly giving to someone. No, on the contrary! It should be because we are filled with joy, excitement of being able to give, opportunities where we drive ourselves, push ourselves to do more, to be... whatever it is.

...not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. So whatever effort we put into something – our time, our effort, our money, whatever it is above and beyond that is ours in order to serve others and help others, to be with others, whatever it might be.

Verse 8 – and God is able to make all grace abound toward you so that you having always, all sufficiency in all things, may 'abound', a word in the Greek that means literally 'over and above' to every good work, above and beyond, over and above, different expressions that people use sometimes. ...that we may abound to every good work. So in other words, the point being here is that we're brought into the Church, we come into the Church, we grow, God gives us more so that we can literally give away more – that's the purpose why God gives us...and we grow. And then if we are brought into a part of God's government in that, even there the purpose is for that, that God is able to give us more, and if we'll put more into it then we're able to grow more. And it says, **having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.** And so God wants us to be able to accomplish more, to give more...that's His purpose within the Church.

So no matter the maturity and spiritual strength of any servant, they are still very human. That's the reason we've gone through this. More is expected, yes, but even there how people yield themselves to the process is an individual matter as much as it is when you're first baptized. And so every servant, no matter the maturity or spiritual growth, they're still very human and they still have sin and battles, things to repent of in their life, and make mistakes. Mistakes will be made. There is no absolute perfection, and so you have to be careful how you judge within the Body. You see someone, you think, "Well, they're this..." or "...they're that...and look at what they're doing, look what they've done." And sometimes those things, so often when they happen, we fail to see the flaws in our own judgment and who we're judging and why and the standard we're using and some, so often, even how there is sin involved in that just by going through the process and the stumbling that takes place. And so often too then we're blinded to things that we don't see in ourselves – and God will show us; He'll show us.

There is no absolute perfection, and any who expects such perfection lacks greatly in understanding how God works through humans. We are a Family, but God works through humans, through people who have weaknesses, just as you have weaknesses, people who have faults, just as you have faults, and that doesn't change and that won't change until we are changed from mortal to immortal.

So we're all to grow in perfection as we do not have it, yet. God expects us to *act* upon whatever truth we have at any given moment in time – *whatever* the present truth is that He's given us; and it is from this that we will make mistakes, but we'll also learn lessons that can be learned by *no other process*.

So again, we've gone through this whole structure here to talk about these things in Ephesians, the various stages of how we all must work together and how God works in us then as we respond and where all this leads us, with soundness of mind, but to understand in the midst of all that again the importance that there is human government, that there is human order, and to recognize that there is a way that God works with us, and in us, and through us, and it is not one that is reflected by all of us as being always perfect. God doesn't give us that which is always fully completely perfected yet. We're *growing* in it! And the ability to grow in it has to do with receiving the things that God gives us to any specific moment in time. That's the growth process and the revelation process, and He doesn't give us everything all at once; that's in His hands, in His time, and we must *learn* from that and *grow* from that.

God holds a very high accountability upon those whom He places in positions of His government, although God's government on earth consists of physical human beings who are imperfect, He has nevertheless given *powerful* government to those imperfect beings to administer. So we need to understand there is a structure, to understand that structure is based upon and works through that which is human, but to understand, nevertheless, God places it there and He places in it *tremendous*

power and authority and we must be in subjection and yield to that as we are to Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church and to His Father over all.

And so there are things we must understand in *how God works*. And so for the sake of strength, power, and great authority to exist in His government God puts tremendous *power* in that government. So great that few understood fully what Christ taught when He spoke of things that were *bound* on earth, that they would be *bound* in heaven.

Let's turn over there to Matthew 16, because this is *really* incredible, what is being said, what is being shown here in these verses. This unlocks a door to great understanding. This opens up the ability to grasp and comprehend things in a far more powerful way, of how God works in our life through a structure of something that He has established, that's fully explained and expounded upon there in Ephesians...all a part of one Body, one Church, from one God, and through the head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:18 – And I say also unto you, that you are Peter; now, it's interesting because the words here become very important, which we've understood in the Church, these things we've grasped and comprehended, and sometimes not to the full power of it but these things have been spoken of in times of Philadelphia and so forth, so these things about that which is bound on earth is bound in heaven – certainly sermons I remember back in times of Philadelphia and some that I gave even at that time and especially on into portions of Laodicea, but began to go by the wayside as time was going on in a sense of a focus or understanding in the Church.

So it says, **And I say unto you, that you are 'Peter'**; now He used the word 'a stone'. You are a stone, and He used that particular word as He spoke to him, though it be his name, emphasizing here a contrast. **...and upon this Rock/upon this Petra** – and sometimes, again here, the way some things are translated it doesn't come across really good. But He's saying in essence here, **that you are a stone, Peter, your name, you are a stone; but upon the Rock...** What's He referring to? Well, it becomes clearer as it goes along here. He's showing here of something that's going to be built, of something that's going to be given. This is what He's going to be talking about then, He's going to make a contrast here of what is Petra, upon a massive Rock – that's what Petra is, it's a massive rock as compared to a stone. What is it? **...upon this Rock I will build My Church.** So there is a Church that's going to be, if you will, on a rock, on a massive stone, a massive rock, **and the gates of hell** – so this is how it's going to be built; it's going to be 'My' Church, that which He reveals as time goes along, in time it's the Body of Christ, the Church of God. **...and the gates of 'hell'**, it's the word for 'grave', 'hades' in the Greek.

...and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it. In other words it's not going to die out, it's going to continue on. It nearly did in Sardis but God raised up Mr. Armstrong and revived the Church.

Verse 19 – And I will give to you the keys, now, this is powerful; **and I will give to you the keys,** to a physical human being, *to physical human beings* through time in the Church, having to do with the Church, those in the Church – Peter, the apostle, the first, to the Jewish people. **...and I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.** What does that mean? It has everything to do with our becoming a part of the God Family – keys – of that which locks and unlocks the way into the Family of God literally, into the Kingdom of God, that there is a way that things are to be done. And there's tremendous power here then that He's going to give within the Church, and that's what it goes on to say: **I will give you the keys of heaven, of the Kingdom of heaven;** it comes from heaven, **and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.** To lock! If it's locked up on earth it's locked in heaven. Authority!

Power, through human beings, because it had to be this way, because of the structure of how God worked with mankind, of God not coming down here and working individually as He did with Abraham, as He did with various ones through time, when He spoke to Moses face to face – in the presence, in that respect, in words.

And so, through the Church it's through faith, it's through a structure while Jesus Christ is *in* heaven, and it's to remain there until it's time to return, like Leviticus 16 talks about, on the Day of Atonement.

...and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosened in heaven; whatever you *unlock*! So what on earth is this talking about? ...this kind of power? ...this kind of authority? Because this is powerful because it's talking about the power to administer God's government; and as His Church would grow it learned that this would mean it was to be administered in the best possible manner with the spiritual understanding and knowledge that God had given it to that moment in time, according to *that present truth*.

What are some examples of such power to bind and loose, or to lock and unlock, that we can look to in the past, so that we can learn about the present. Because we can see things of how God has worked *in* His Church and *learn* from that process, of what these things are talking about and what they did mean, and how things were administered, how God was working in the Church to lead, guide, and direct it. It's very powerful! It's very exciting! It's very inspiring when you see these things, when you understand these things in this context in what God is doing here. ...and had everything to do with, in so many cases, as to people's growth and whether they would be able to continue on in the Church or not – literally – or whether they would go by the wayside or even have to be separated from the Body and not be allowed to continue on. And God gave that tremendous power and authority for a purpose and for a reason.

What are some of the examples of such power to bind and loose, or to lock and unlock, that we can look to in the past so that we can learn about the present? Well, there are many administrative matters we can look to first, that if a decision was made from the top, in the sense of Mr. Armstrong, or those he placed in charge to administer certain matters for the Church, then when such decisions are made they are bound in heaven. It *had* to be this way! It *had* to be this way or otherwise Jesus Christ would have to be down here administering it Himself and that wasn't God's purpose, because there's a purpose in molding and fashioning physical human beings through the process of faith, to lead and guide and direct us whereby we can grow in a spiritual way, that our *minds* can literally be transformed. It's a powerful thing to understand.

So people have to learn to *make* binding decisions. Sometimes people don't like...there are situations in people's lives where they don't like to make a decision – but we have to grow! And even here there is a *need* in God's Church to *grow spiritually*, to make binding decisions and make judgments based on that which you understand to that moment in time! So there are those things that God gives for people to understand to *that moment in time*. It's how we grow! So people have to learn to make binding decisions, and others must learn to *submit* to government and learn how to make *peace*, to pursue *unity*, to esteem oneness in the Church. *That's how we grow!* This is *fundamental* within the government and the structure that God has given, to our ability to grow on a spiritual plane, to be in unity with God *by faith*, by *belief* of the truth, by belief of what we just read in Ephesians 4, to understand how God works!

So this is powerful, again, and people need to learn to make binding decisions. That's how they grow! People have to make decisions and you have to... it's a matter of learning to judge as well, the way *God* would want it done! To make sure we get rid of human motivation in our choices and our decisions.

And I think of an example of decisions about how to observe the Feast of Tabernacles; you know, there are certain things that God gave a command to be observed, but the structure of it and how it's to be implemented is to be done in unity and harmony and there are things that have changed through time and... just the matter of where God would place His name. God didn't tell them specifically of a specific place. Now, there are times, obviously, He's opened certain doors and blessed, but there is also that as a matter of individuals looking to God and asking God about certain criteria and so forth and we have to make decisions then.

Sometimes people go in prayer to God and they say... it's like this example I used to give about a time where it was far more prosperous in this country, that a person puts out resume's to several companies and he gets a response back from three, and so sometimes (and this has happened), where individuals will come and say, "Well, which one should I take?" And, "I'm praying to God that He show me the one that I'm supposed to take." Well, God doesn't work that way! *God wants you to make a decision and a choice*, and then to ask Him to bless you in that choice. So we have to be able to learn to make decisions and applying God's way then to that decision and asking God's blessing in that – but we have choices to make and a great deal of liberty and freedom that is given within the Church. And so here there was the matter of choosing Feast sites and some of those things being done, but that's where people then chose to go. And again, so just that thing alone, just a choice and a decision about Feast sites.

Now, it's important that in such decision one applies the present truth for why such decisions are made, in some of the things that are stated about it, things having to do with second tithe and how it should be used and sometimes how it shouldn't be used. I remember sermons going back in time explaining some of those things. And so I think of the period in the thirties – you know, Mr. Armstrong did not administer matters concerning the Feast because the observance of the truth of the Holy Days was not being fully taught to the Church until the forties, as a whole. Loma, Mr. Armstrong's wife, and Herbert W. Armstrong, they observed the Feast seven years on their own learning about them and setting them aside and learning when, and growing in that, and learning *how* to do it, and by that process began to learn what they mean, what was in them as far as God's plan. And so even for a long time that wasn't even an issue, *because that was the present truth*, and then as it became established in their minds and in their lives and Mr. Armstrong then began to see a need to teach this to the Church he began to do so, and began to set up Feast sites. But they went through a lot in learning how Feasts should be organized and structured.

There was a time when even for the Days of Unleavened Bread there was an observance of seven days and people would come in from all over. They came into Big Sandy and people lived there, camped there, for seven days like the Feast of Tabernacles, and later came to understand as an administrative thing that that didn't need to be done that way, like the Feast of Tabernacles was being done at that time. And that was an administrative thing – it was bound on earth and God bound that in heaven. That's the way it was! So again here, that's just a beginning of understanding of some of these things.

Then there were administrative matters made concerning divorce and remarriage that changed, and sometimes shifted back and forth throughout the sixties and seventies, and people had difficulty with some of this – administrative matters that had to do with binding and loosening. I think of an example early on, and I knew of some in this situation – the matter of the need for people to separate and

divorce if they had been in any other marriage before and the first married mate was still alive. In other words, let's say there was a situation here where two people were married and they came into the Church, or just one of them came into the Church – let's say both came into the Church. And let's say both of them had previously been married and their mates were still alive. Well, the understanding of divorce and marriage at that time was that they had to divorce right then and there, they had to separate legally and either remain single or if they were able to go back to, which I don't know of any situations where they actually went back (I'm probably just not thinking right now...there probably is an example of that) to their previous mate, and if their previous mates had remarried and their not in the Church then you're to live by yourself then from then on. I've known of people who did that in God's Church...and later on was revealed to them that they could marry. That didn't always happen. But I could tell you some interesting relationships and stuff out there of things that happened.

But people did that because if they didn't they weren't able to continue and come on into the Church. If they weren't willing to separate – at that time with the present truth – they could not observe the Holy Days, they could not take the Passover, they could not come to Sabbath services because they weren't yielding to the government of God on earth, of those things that were bound by administrative decisions that God bound in heaven. And so that was difficult for some people, sometimes families, it was hard on children. Those things happened. But thankfully, after a time, that was addressed and able to be dealt with in another matter as we grew in truth about marriage and divorce and people understood that in the state you are called is the state in which you're received into the Church. And so if you're in another marriage at that time when you come into God's Church that is the state in which you can remain. You ask for your past, your sins, to be forgiven. So it was a matter of growing in understanding with more truth, because God revealed more...but before that He hadn't revealed it.

So you have to go by and live by the present truth, of what you know at that time. And that's how we're judged. The power to bind and to loosen within the Church.

So again, I think of examples like make-up that went back and forth...maybe it's good just to start here tomorrow as a continuation with part 2 of this series, because there is certainly more here. But even the issue of wearing make-up went back and forth, and I'll tell a little bit more about that tomorrow, but that's an incredible thing that even if someone were told, if people were told within the Church you shouldn't wear it, and people wore it, that just reflected rebellion. It's an administrative decision, something that God bound in heaven and really, in that respect... well, in one respect it wasn't all that important, in one way, but it was at that time, because to do otherwise...and certainly, if someone is going to be rebellious in the sense to government, in administrative decisions... Just for the sake of an administrative decision they could be put out of the Church – meaning your growth stops – keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Powerful! It had to be that way. *God's Church!*

So again, we'll come back to that tomorrow and talk a little more about that, start right there about this power to bind and to loose, because it leads more and more into understanding how God works with us at any specific moment in time with what we know to *that* moment in time which we refer to and have coined and receive in that phrase into our life that should mean more, and from this period and from this point forward will mean a whole lot more – *the present truth*.

~~~end