

Last week it was stated that we had come full circle from the period when the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet began to be blown and it was stated how that has equated to a continuation of that Trumpet being blown even as the marching around Jericho for seven days remained consistent until a change took place...and that change is the same for us, for this world, and what is coming once the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet blows, which corresponds, again, to the seventh day of marching when they began a process different from the first six days. ...and then to march six more times around the city until God brought down the walls causing the city to fully collapse before the Israelites.

I was talking earlier here, thinking about the things coming full circle. It's been striking me even more and more, if you will, there are so many things that are taking place that it's just like déjà vu of where we were at in 2008, in the fall there, or toward the end of the year actually.

So where we considered we were in 2008 is again where we find ourselves now, so close to the period of time of marching around the city a second time on the same 'day', the 'Day of the Lord'. Indeed not everything has come about as we had envisioned it might in the sense of how and when God will bring to pass those things He has given prophetically that He will fulfill.

God gives us a direction to travel, He gives us an outline, a map to follow, and everything in the outline or, if you will, on the map is there and that obviously is all going to come to pass just as God has given...so we have to follow it. In that outline is an outline of the time that's involved but as with all maps we don't always 'get it' or 'see it', if you will, until we're there.

I was thinking about this, especially today and in today's technology with a GPS, especially if you're in a new area. And with the many opportunities we had in visiting people in different parts of the world we'd plug in an address never having been to certain locations and you would see different things along the way that you might have heard about or known of, but until you see it you don't know really what it's like, you haven't experienced it until you're actually there and take those things in. And so is our journey in many ways as God leads us, as there are things along the way that He gives us, the map, or the outline of things, and then fills that in as we go along. And sometimes God will have us take a different road than the one that we think is clearest to us - just like a GPS does.

I don't know if you've ever talked to your GPS...I've had a few conversations with mine over the years, especially in situations where you just know that it's taking you on the wrong road, and yet it'll get you there, as a whole, unless there is something wrong with the actual programming of it. But again, those different experiences we have sometimes we can relate to our journey as well. And so again, sometimes we think there is a clearer road... I remember times back when - thought about some of the differences of people, that everybody's different, and how some people would get in conversations, especially if you had a long distance to travel to get to a Feast site and you're driving. I think of some that were 650 miles plus in some cases, in some areas, and of course now a days, some people may travel a whole lot more than that to get to a site. But I remember people getting in conversations, and not in an argument, but in strong conversation about the way they felt was best, especially if they're going to travel together in a caravan or something.

Inevitably people have different ideas about which highways to take and how to get there, and sometimes we feel that way about God, we don't... it's not always the way we think it should be.

So, as I give this sermon today I must face a very likely reality, and you in the Church must as well as we don't know all the turns of the course that God will take on this particular 'day'. We are to keep the course set before us, or as this sermon is entitled, *Keep to the Map*.

So again, thinking about a GPS and sometimes I think about times when you're in a particular lane, if you're in several lanes and you think you're in the right one and all of a sudden it's telling you to move over to the left or to the right, whatever it is, to get into a different lane and you think you're in the right one and if you happen to miss it it recalculates and gives you the little instruction about recalculating and you get tired of hearing that sometimes. But again, so it is in our life. Sometimes we take a particular turn or we took one too early or whatever it is and God gets us back on course again, but it's always a matter of adjusting our thinking, it isn't a matter of the course being wrong in any fashion or form, it's a matter of us following it. But thankfully with God, in the same manner, God has mercy on us, He continues to get us on the right course, or keep us on the right course, if you will, if we will yield to Him, if we will yield to that process, just like you have to yield to your GPS or take it in your own hands and hope you get there. But it doesn't work that way with God's way of life, you have to follow God.

And so we keep to the map, and especially when you're thinking in the terms of a GPS, and so sometimes maybe getting a little off course from time to time because of what we think or we think we're off course and yet God reveals to us, "No, this is the way you're to go."

So anyway, a lot of different analogies you can draw from something like that, but today's sermon is entitled, again, 'Keep to the Map'; many different ways of saying this - matter of holding fast, holding to the trunk of the tree and so forth.

So the reality is that this may be my last sermon in this age, candidly, but it's far from being the last sermon given in this age. People have different attitudes, different things out here and are battling with different things in their life, but we need to be strong. It's like God said, "Be very courageous." No matter what comes before us God's work continues on. It doesn't matter what it is! I think of 2005 and having a heart attack - it could have all ended then. I remember (Terry is sitting here today) some of them panicking, which I understand - here it is, we're going in a certain direction and responsibilities can shift and change and people are going to have more put on them if those things happen. It's not that we necessarily want to jump in there and receive those things, we want to be able to continue on the course we're on, but it doesn't always work that way so we have to do exactly what God gives to us for whatever purpose it is that God gives it.

But again, if for whatever purpose my work of giving sermons is finished in this age, then so be it, and God will lead you as He always has, He'll give the inspiration in those sermons as He always has, of the course that you're to follow. You're to continue to follow the map, if you will, or to keep to the map that God sets before you. Again, everything has already been mapped out, we just don't always see it, we don't always know it until we're there at various points along the way.

We follow God and *continue to move forward*; that's the way God's people are. With all this being in the context of this sermon today I thought it'd be good here to begin in an area of Ecclesiastes; we're going to look at some things that God wants us to focus upon at this particular time.

Through time everything has changed. I think of all the changes I've seen since I came in the Church in 1969 - it's a part of growth, it's a part of something that God does with us in molding and fashioning us. We, obviously, have individual changes that we make in our lives, but there's been a lot of change through time in God's Church, especially as we grow, especially as God reveals more and more to us, and we continue to follow God. It's an *awesome process* of what we live through - it truly is.

So our lives constantly change and things in the Church have changed *a lot* through time. I think of all the things we've gone through since 1994. You think of all the things that have happened to God's people and all the scattering that took place in that first 3½ years and incredible journey that we've been on. To me, it's mind-boggling, it really is. We read back in stories in the Bible and we think about different things that are written there and we don't have all the stories of people's lives, all the things that are written there about Paul or Peter or James and John and different ones and you can go back in the Old Testament and read certain things, and sometimes it's just certain highlights of things that happen at certain moments in time and the rest of it we don't even know about. And yet this has been consistent with God's people through time, the kinds of changes that take place, the things they go through that mold and fashion them as they yield to the process.

So, as we come into God's Church we, each of us individually, seek to change, we want change in our life and that's a good thing, obviously.

Ecclesiastes 3 - very simple, very basic here, inspiring to contemplate, to think upon such things, to understand what God is doing and how He molds and fashions us.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1 - To every thing there is a season/a time, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:** God's purpose and things that God is working out. Has been for 6,000 years, primarily for those whom God is calling and working with, or has called and worked with through that period of time, but also for the rest of the world as well. There is a time for everyone, as a whole. I think of the Great White Throne and the resurrection that's going to take place at that time and I think of the opportunities *we* have. God has blessed us incredibly! Sometimes we don't *grasp* the power and the might and the magnitude of the blessings we have, of how awesome it is that so much of the world before us is going to remain dead until another thousand years passes. That's amazing! I think of all those who are going to be resurrected when Jesus Christ returns, 144,000, and the vast majority of those have family, friends, people they've known through time, that they're going to wait another thousand years before they're resurrected to be able to have that relationship, to be able to teach them or be a part of, or be there with them, about God's way of life. So in God's plan there is a purpose and a season to everything that's going to be accomplished...and there is to our lives as well.

**A time to be born, and a time to die;** it's a part of life! That's an awesome thing! It's not a *fun* thing to experience, death, when people die, when those you love die, but when you have God's plan I think of the promises God gives to us and what we're able to see that the world doesn't. How blessed are we? It really is an awesome thing! We understand the resurrections - the world doesn't have that kind of hope! They're not *sure* what happens when someone they love dies, and those things that torment in the mind oftentimes because of that, and so their ability to adjust to the change is much more difficult. And so it can be difficult to adjust to something like that in life but we do and we move forward; it's a part of life. What an incredible thing to understand! Dying, death, is a part of life and life goes on, it doesn't stop, God's purpose doesn't stop, it goes on! But we have a narrow focus, if you will, of life oftentimes. We begin to have that broadened as we focus upon and think about God's plan and what He's doing, but we haven't experienced that yet, we just believe it...but we haven't experienced it yet.

**...A time to kill, and a time to heal; things that happen in life; a time to tear down and a time to build up; A time to cry, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;** so we experience many things in life and candidly, it wasn't meant to be easy. This is a part of it, these contrasts back and forth in time and our ability then to latch onto various things of God's way, especially when God begins to help us understand certain things about His plan and purpose.

And then it goes on talking about different times here and so forth, obviously, in life. So again, I can't help but think about my ministry in that respect, the ministry that God has given to me to be a part of, awesome blessings to be able to be a part of God's Church and to serve even in this capacity, obviously, but the reality is a major part of that may very well be at an end in the sense of speaking weekly to God's people or in having direct ability to lead.

I thought I'd just mention a few things because, again, this might be my last opportunity to speak directly, yet God's ministry continues. Whether an apostle comes to death or is bound, God's ministry continues on, God's Church continues on, the preaching that God gives to His people continues on, our ability to grow because of what He feeds us Sabbath by Sabbath continues on. So again, with this, in this particular situation, mine, with some forms of communication being possible then indeed God will continue to be led by His apostle through others, but even if that were to stop, then again, God's Church continues on and the government that's there, that is established, continues on exactly as it is.

And we have no guarantees. I don't know... 2005 can roll back round again. Don't want it to, I want to see this to the end - but again, you have no guarantees of your life when you leave here today, any of you wherever you are and you go down a highway. Things can happen quickly in life, that's the way it is, unless there is a ... you know, if there is a purpose in it in God allowing it we learn from it.

So, if I go away for a time or altogether I'm... I think about that - I'm not filled with any sorrow. It is a change that is not that easy, it's not what I necessarily want, but for God's Church, again, that continues on, God's work continues on, our individual growth and development will continue as long as we, each of us individually, continues to seek God. And that's my greatest hope and desire for everyone, as indeed it should be. We're going to read some examples here about the apostle Peter in a minute that are absolutely incredible in what he has to say, because he realizes that his end is coming, literally, because of what Jesus Christ gave to him, and his desire for the Church - which was God's desire for the Church through him, to give to the Church - is what's important, that we continue on, that we keep to the map and not let anything pull you down or give victory to others who resist God's way of life.

Some people's loads are going to be a little bit heavier, like right here in my wife in that respect, and for the evangelists and so forth, some of the things they're going to be doing more of with jobs and the like, that makes it harder, more difficult for them, but God will give them what they need, just like for the Feast of Tabernacles and even more so if it comes to that, which it very much looks like it is. So, no matter what happens it is what is *best* for every person's growth and development - okay? It's what's *best* for God's Church!

I want to jump on down to **verse 10 - I have seen the travail/the affliction/the burden, which God has given to the sons of men to be exercised.** Interesting what it's saying here. Again, talking about the different times, a time for this and a time for that and a contrast back and forth that are so different from each other, one extreme to another, and what that does in human life, because there is, as it talks about here, this affliction, this burden of life that comes upon people from time to time because of various things you go through. And when you come into God's Church these things actually are stepped

up a lot, it doesn't get easier, because you're not going along with the flow of the world anymore, you're going *against* the flow of the world and there is a being in a spirit world out there that attacks you, that broadcasts at you because their desire is for you to fail. And so there are those battles that are very real in life.

My wife and I, and I think even Terry here, earlier today or last night, I can't remember when, talking about this kind of thing and talking about the things that people are going through out here and the battles and I think it came out in part of the conversation or at least I intended to talk about it, was that if people can just recognize where these are coming from sometimes. Things that get stirred up in your life, or around your life, that come through maybe *you* when you're having a battle or something and something all of a sudden hits you and you begin to react to something in a wrong way or to someone else, especially in a relationship, in a wrong way, or someone else reacts to you in a wrong way in God's Church - these things happen! So often we need to understand first and foremost where *a lot of that coming from!* If you can just be alert to that! ...be attuned to that! ...to understand the likelihood of those things happening that want to stir things up in your life or around you in your life to bring you to that point in the first place, so that you lose it! ...so that you're *not* in control! And so often just in the recognition of that it helps you to pull back and pray to God for help to rebuke that kind of thing and to help you to respond properly to it so it doesn't have a power in your life. Because if we react improperly we give power to those broadcasts, if you will.

Life is hard enough without... that's why I'm so thankful that we're so close to the end and a new world being established, because that being, that *wretched* being is going to be put away! He is a *wretched spirit* that has hurt God's people from the beginning of time, that has fought against God, that has hurt those things that God has put into motion through time. I think of all the angelic beings, ever how many there were, that were deceived by him. Now, they had choice, but still deceived by him, that were turned from God because of that, that hurt God's family. And then when God began to work with mankind and brought Adam and Eve along, and here he is right in the midst of them doing his same old thing that he's done from the beginning - blah-blah-blah - causing division, saying certain things in the background to cause people to think differently about God and what God had promised, to put doubt in the mind! Incredible! The same old thing has gone through time!

What a *blessing* when people don't have to live around that kind of influence any longer!

Anyway, don't want to get off track, but so often it's good to understand where things come from, where so much affliction and so much of the burden of mankind comes from. It comes from those beings.

**Verse 10 - I have seen the travail/affliction/burden;** life is difficult enough by itself, because the reality is God didn't make us to be eternal, He made us to be temporary, He made it so that it's possible for us, for a great purpose, to have death. That's why God revealed to us that throughout the Millennium *there will be death!* There was a time in God's Church where we believed that as a person grew, or came to a point of maturity in life - 19-20-21-22-25, whatever it takes in life, to come to a point where you decide finally, "This is what I want, God's way of life. I want to be baptized!" And so that decision that is made - then a person can be baptised...and *then* it was as though that by the time a person gets to the latter years, whatever that is, 50-60-70, in through there, likely later, that a person gets to the point where they come to *another* point of maturity spiritually and they can be *changed*, made a part of the God Family throughout the Millennium. That was what we believed. Is that right? Okay, just want to make sure that I didn't hear a bunch of sermons that someone else hadn't.

And that isn't so! There is a *purpose for death!* ...*there is a reason for it!* ...and it's awesome, that we can be humbled by it, that we can understand our limitations, that we can *understand* that without God this is it; if we don't choose God's way of life then we make a choice this is going to be it, because you're not going to continue on! But if you don't want that then that's your choice, and amazingly some are going to make that choice! We don't know how many - maybe in the millions - we don't know. Incredible! But there are people who *just hate God's way of life, they don't want it! They don't want it, they'd rather be dead* than to live with that! Astounding!

**I have seen the travail/the affliction/the burden which God has given to the sons of men to be 'exercised'.** It's the word in the Hebrew that means 'to be afflicted with the sense of being humbled'. That's literally what the word means! When you go back and study into it that's what it means. It has to do with being afflicted and going through burdens and affliction, yes, but for the *purpose* of humility, of learning humility! There's a purpose in God's time for everyone - and so we come to understand the importance of humility, we come to see the ugliness and the evil of pride, and we cry out to God. That's why in last Sabbath's sermon, we think about that, being 'vexed in spirit', of being so *tired* of the *haughtiness* and *pride* we see in every phase of this world, every government around the earth that is filled with that, every *system* of the world that's filled with that, that pride and that haughtiness.

It's like the Titanic, "It can't be sunk!" The haughtiness and pride that went with that that was so great at that time! Oh yes it can be, and oh yes it did. And the same thing with nations! And yet nations think they're going to continue on! Every kingdom, every nation has fallen through time, they cannot continue! Just like every human being comes to the point where they die in time, they can't continue on. God has a plan and God has a purpose.

And so again, **verse 11 - Yet God has made everything beautiful in its time: and He has set the 'world';** interesting word. It doesn't mean 'the earth', it doesn't mean 'this world' - it's a word for 'forever', 'eternity'. Amazing what He's saying here. **And He has set eternity/forever in their heart:** Amazing! That's why religion has so many different ideas and so forth, and you know what they tend to? A continuation of life, a desire for a continuation of life. It's something that God has *planted* in our spirit, literally, though mankind doesn't understand that. It's a part of the mind of mankind, and though he doesn't understand the truth there is this desire...even if it means to come back as a cricket! Reincarnation! ...and somebody steps on you the next time you come back as a frog or whatever, and maybe sometime you'll come back into human life again, but you just continue on. Amazing! But it's this idea of eternity - things go on. Or when you die you go off to someplace - and maybe it's not a good place...and that's why you better be a little bit nicer to people and maybe you'll get to go to the good place. But that's in every religion as a whole around the earth! And that's what it's talking about here. There is something in mankind that mankind doesn't understand but it's there.

**He has set eternity/forever in their heart; yet no one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to the end.** God has to show you. God has to call us to show us what His purpose is, what His plan is, what He's been doing from the beginning to the end. I think of what God gave to Mr. Armstrong; one of the most powerful, most meaningful, most exciting, most awesome thing that he was ever given, that we're to become a part of Elohim. The world doesn't have that. That world doesn't understand why they're alive. They have all kinds of ideas about eternity and so forth but they have no idea the purpose of human life is to live through this life and in time to have an opportunity to become a part of something in God's life for all time - Elohim. *Awesome* to understand that!

So again, that's why we cannot rely on ourselves to know where, when, and how God leads us. Don't be so sure of yourself. Don't be so sure! I've seen this throughout the Church through time, that people get to a point where they're sure about certain things, that when a change comes and God shows them there is a change or a turn in the road they can't make it because they are so *set* on something else and they can't receive something that God may reveal to them as an addition or a magnification of something in the sense of present truth, something that changes and alters in the truth to help us to see it in a clearer more profound way as God reveals it to us - *not going backward* but going forward and seeing the entire picture in a much clearer way.

And so God blesses us with that, but I've seen *so many* go off course and *stay* off course because they *think* they have, or go in reverse as fast as they can where they came from - even back to the world! Look at what happened in the apostasy and how long it took! It took *3 hours*! It took *3 hours* and at *some moment* in a three hour sermon for a lot of people to change and go right back to *exactly* what God had called them out of. What words do you have for that?! Incredible!

So again, we have to be able to be.... we *have* to be like clay. It's a good thing to keep in mind always. We are clay! *God* does the molding! You *don't* mold yourself! You can't decide for yourself how you're going to be molded and fashioned! We are the clay and if God has a purpose in something as a part of His plan and work then that's good and it's good for *all*. It's good for the individual, or if it involves the Church it's good for the entirety of the Church. What we went through a time of California and Mr. Armstrong being in Arizona, *that was GOOD for God's CHURCH!* It truly was! That was good for us! ...to become stronger and more *convicted* of what God was doing, to see this world in a clearer light and what it's like and what can happen and how the world has *always* been this way when it comes to God's people - even the governments of the world and what they have done to God's people.

We just went through a sermon series in talking about what happened beginning at a time when God had to give special protection for 1260 years in the sense of feeding the Church because of a great church that began at that point in time that wasn't God's. And it was backed by *government!* Incredible! Government actually started it! Constantine! Awesome what we've seen through time! And then we've seen other things transpire through time like what happened in England and what happened when Queen Elizabeth I came along and started moving it toward Protestantism and away from the hold of the Catholic church. But it was just another form of something that wasn't good for the earth and wasn't good for mankind, and still attacked and abused and persecuted God's Church, God's people. That's why so many came over here; that's why God built up something over here so that in time He would raise up the end-time work in *this* area of the world, in Manasseh. That's where He's done it! Incredible what God has done! Always according to God's plan and the map that was there, always there; it was just a matter of those who were called that follow it.

So we can't rely upon ourselves to know where, when, and how God leads us. *God has to show us* always-always-always, and in His time He will...in His time He will.

I think of Daniel. I think of everyone that ever came since that point in time when God said to Daniel, "Shut up the book Daniel, it isn't for you to know." The book of Revelation was the same way. So many things that were given, it wasn't for them to know, what those things were about. And so God's given us more - not all of it - but more to be able to piece things together, to see things in a map, in a clearer picture...but we still wait on God, we look to God to fulfill it, to accomplish it, to lead, guide and direct us, to mold and fashion us along the way *in the present truth*...and in that we continue to move forward.

Sometimes we read or hear things that God gives to us and they don't instantly take root, or do not instantly grow. It takes time and many trials sometimes, and *afflictions* and various kinds of experiences for us to live through in order to more fully learn what He's showing us. So we have many experiences in life, in this life, and I think of since I've been in the Church, since 1969, it's just absolutely incredible. If you were to write a book about it, each one of us were to write a book about it and go through all those things it would fill up volumes that people in the future, or at some time, would be dumbfounded to read, of what we have gone through, what God's people go through to get from point 'A' to point 'B' - especially in the 6,000 years that go before the Millennium.

Let's turn over to Joshua. We've read these so many times but it's good that we go back there again and look at this today. **Joshua 1:5** - it says, as God was speaking to Joshua... again, we've read these many times... **No one will be able to stand before you all the days of your life:** to prevent you from doing whatever God has given you to be accomplished. That's the way it's been through time. That's the way it has been for all of God's people through time in that respect. And if God has set something before you to accomplish it's going to get accomplished to that point and to that degree. No one can stop God's work! No one can stop God's work in you no matter *what* you go through, no matter what trials, no matter what hardships in life. It's a matter of yielding to God because God is molding something in you through those things! It's what makes us different from the world, God's in us, working in us.

So God's work moves forward no matter what others might do to stop it; and if God's finished, as we're going to read in a moment here in Peter, then it's finished, things come to an end, things change, but God's work continues on until it's finished.

**...as I was with Moses, so will I be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you/leave you.** God won't do that! Those promises are throughout scriptures over and over and over again. As long as we yield to the process God is there!

**Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people you shall divide for an inheritance the land,** so that was the job that he had and He made it clear to him this is what you're to do and this is what you will do - because God's doing it! **...which I promised unto their fathers to give to them. Only be strong and very courageous,** but please understand what this 'strong and very courageous' is about here. Indeed, we should be strong and courageous, but how do you become strong or how are you strong and how are you courageous and what is the purpose? What is God telling us when He tells us these things? It's about Him. It's about what He's doing. Because of your confidence and your boldness in what God is doing - that's why we talked about in the very beginning on this 'day' here when it began, *we move forward*. We don't have *time* to zero in on ourselves and the 'woe is me' and the battles we have. They may not be easy and they may be hard but those things are to make us stronger! *Those things*, as we yield to God, *are to make us stronger*, and if we focus on those trials - and many of you have all kinds of trials, you have had. Through this period of the 'night' there have been a lot of trials out here, there's a lot of power stirred up out there.

Before the Feast this year there was so much power stirred up, and it's still out there - kicking and screaming and hollering because their time is about to come to a close. God has really helped me to see this in a stronger way even the last couple of days here, and I hope that you can hold onto this and keep this in your mind - there is an *awesome war* taking place right now; more than we can grasp in God's Church, candidly, in a spiritual plane, a spiritual warfare, because those beings know their time is about up. There have been a lot of spiritual wars that God has allowed through time - we've talked about some of them - in the angelic realm. This one here.... See, we don't think about things like this.

We read things in the Bible and we think, "Whoa, that's incredible!" No, *this, this time* is what's incredible! Later on God will reveal to us the magnitude of some of those things and what took place that will be told to the Church when Jesus Christ returns. Those things are going to be told, talked about, taught in the Millennium, of what transpired in a spirit realm at the very end of the age and the kind of battles and the kind of warring that was taking place, and *it's far greater* than what any of us comprehend, truly, or can know right now. And in many respects that's good...but please keep that in mind, understand that things continue to happen until this is over, in the sense of Jesus Christ returning, until that being and all the beings who are with him are finally put away.

Because you know what? God has to do that and He's doing it through His Son, not the angelic realm. God finally intervenes through the power that's in His Son, to do that, to lay hold of Satan, to put him away. He is the one that does it when He returns, when He takes control of the Government of this earth. It's awesome to understand that! Because the angelic realm can't. It was *God* that had to take him and remove him from heaven. He allowed the angelic beings to fight in it but He is the one who did it; so that they had no ability He removed power and strength that they had before, that they couldn't do that anymore. And Jesus Christ is going to return and take that away to a point, to a degree that he won't be around anymore. Incredible what's before us!

So, things are stirred up and they're going to get a whole lot more stirred up before it's over with.

So it says, **Be strong and very courageous**, and the word 'so'...so often when you read this, the word 'so' before 'that' should be there because that's what it's saying 'so that'; **Only be strong and very courageous so that you might observe to do according to all the law**: In other words, don't let anything get in your way! Don't let *people* get in your way! Don't let others who don't want this way of life - don't let the pulls of this world get before you, come before you. Be strong and courageous in following this, because others don't want it and you've got to *stand*, you've got to *stand firm* in God's way of life *regardless* of the way the rest of the world goes. And that's so much of what this is about, to live God's way of life, to not care about what the rest... now we care, we wish they would do it differently, but in the sense of how they look toward you or at you or whatever. We stand strong - and we're not obnoxiously so - but we're to stand strong in what God gives to us and that's what it's talking about here.

**...so that you might observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant, commanded you...** just getting real explicit about it, even about the 10 Commandments, very much so, and about the law that God gave. It says, **do not turn to the right hand or to the left, follow God - KEEP TO THE MAP!** And so much of that is about how we live life. That is why God has blessed us in this 'day' candidly; the sermons we've been given throughout this period of time are truly powerful spiritually - they truly are, in a very powerful way - and so much of it gets down to the nitty gritty of what this life is all about, and the bottom line, it always comes back to relationships. That's the bottom line. It's how we live our life, that you keep fighting for this. I don't care what your struggles are! I don't care what you're going through in life! We are to live right toward one another and how we think toward each other and how we treat one another and so forth.

So it says...**do not turn to the right hand or to the left so that...so that you may prosper wherever you go**. God wants us to.... He wants to bless us in our growing, in our overcoming, in what He's called us to accomplish and live in the first place, but this is how it comes. He can't bless us unless we do that, unless we keep to the map, unless we stick to, if you will, the truth that God has given to us, hold fast to

the trunk of the tree, all the expressions we can use about holding on to what God has given to us and going forward.

So again, we, as I said, are in a war, and we have much that comes against us that tries to defeat us. That's just the way of life we live. It's always been there, but it's stirred up very much out there right now. But we're to hold fast to God's law - that's what it's about, so much of it. It's about us and our response and our reaction to things and our keeping things in a proper focus, not zeroing in on self and our problems and our trials to the point where we become distracted.

There is a spirit world out there that would like you to just get focused in on yourself, your woes, "Woe is me...my troubles...my battles...my financial problems...my marital problems...my relationship problems...my..." whatever it might be, "...my job problems...and my-my-my-my-my..." And we can pray like that if we're not careful, me-me-me-me-me. But again, that's a tendency of human nature sometimes, but it isn't what God wants of us. We're to be strong in this way of life, and candidly, that's good for others, your example in the Body of being strong in whatever you go through, of not letting yourself get down. You've got to fight against those things! You've got to fight against the pulls to pull you down. You're in a war, and you can't do that in a meek manner, if you will, or in a mild-minded manner. You've got to fight!

Don't misunderstand me, what I'm saying about being meek when it comes to God's way of life and learning about God's way of life and being of a teachable spirit. I'm talking about being in battle and being in war.

So again, many of you are battling, struggling with different trials and frustrations of life, questions in life that you may not have answers to at this time. We have email that comes in at different times and calls come in, and I understand the desire, the desire to have more rapid change in life or the ability to deal with some of the problems and so forth...and the reality is you just must keep fighting and be strong in God's truth and God's way of life and courageous, to keep moving forward, working at the relationships, working at the problems, working at the trials God's way - and in time you will have more answers. And candidly, a lot of your answers come through living it, continuing to live it the way God says to do, and in time the mind begins to be healed or situations begin to be healed. And there are not instant answers to a lot of problems and a lot of trials and a lot of battles in life, it's something we just must live through and experience...and with great desire, obviously, because we're vexed in spirit, we desire to get to the other side of this, at a time when there are no longer the kind of spirit powers that exist in the world that are there today.

So what you do is you continue to keep to the map, you continue to hold the course set before you, and in time you will receive your answer and the help you seek. We desire change and that's good, when things are not right, but you continue to do what's right and in time God begins to reveal to you, or in His time He will give you the answers you need in your life. And so you continue to seek the answers and the help.

**Verse 8 - This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth;** 'Be strong and very courageous...?' Amazing. **This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth;** in other words, what comes out of us, how we speak even - and not just how we speak but it comes out then in our conduct - it has to do with what's in our mind, and that's what it's talking about here, God's way of life. That's what should be in us and that's what should come out of us, as we're going to see even more so when we go to the book of 2 Peter in a little bit.

...**but you shall meditate on it day and night**, meaning that you are to consider it in all your decisions in life - God's law, God's way of life - not relying on self, not reacting by emotions, or whatever it might be, but being in control and conscientiously thinking about or praying about what is God's will in this, what does God say to do in this matter - striving to do it God's way! We know if we're living God's way of life or not in matters. We know when something isn't right, when our reaction and our response isn't right about something, our response to something is negative or bad toward someone in thinking, how we think in the mind to where it can come out in words, things that are said, harsh judgment, whatever it might be.

But notice here again: **This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate upon it day and night**, that doesn't mean that you just sit around and you're like some of these monks or something, "Oooooommmmmmm..." and you're bowing your head back and forth and making these strange noises and you're going through these gyrations. That's not what it's talking about! ... or that we're so super religious and we're just, "Don't bother me right now, I'm studying my Bible. I don't have time to talk to you. I just woke up and I have 23½ more hours to go!!" It's talking about how you live your life - okay - and that this is the response then to trials and problems and difficulties in life and decisions that we make, that God's at the focal point. That's what He's saying, that's what it's about here.

...**so that**; this is why it's to be there...**so that you may observe to do according to all that is written**; in other words, so that your response and your reaction is right because you're considering God in what you're doing! We're not just out here living life freely as we want to and ignoring God...and yet we do it. I do it, you do it, it's human nature at times - just like being in the garden - to ignore God. It blows my mind that human beings can do that, but we do that, *because we're human beings!* ...because we're candidly, a little sick! That's why God says, "And I will heal you." And just because we're in God's Church doesn't mean that you don't still have some sickness in you! You're not healed until it's over with. You're not *fully healed* until you've gone through all this, until you are *changed*. As long as you have the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' that makes up the way we are as human beings, as long as any little *smidgeon* of that is in you it's just way too much, it isn't of God, it has to be gotten rid of. And candidly, we can't get rid of it all until we are changed, made spirit, made a part of God's Family.

And so, people have battles, people have things in relationships and tendencies, and sometimes because of our nature, our background, our way we were brought up, whatever it might be, we can revert back to those things sometimes and respond the same way we...and we find it, "How can this be happening again?! This comes up at different times in my life - it's a part of my nature - I *hate* it!" I like the scriptures a little bit later in (I think it's in Ecclesiastes)... where it goes on and talks about basically coming to see that we're like beasts. Beasts! It's not a complimentary thing, human nature. It isn't a good thing. And yet people can't come to see that until they're in God's Church and have God's spirit, to come to understand how evil... It's like this vexation of spirit thing. The more we're vexed in spirit because of what we see in the world, a lot of it's because we see what's in ourselves too, because if we see what's in ourselves and we see that nature we clearly see what's in this world even more so, how *sick*, how *bad* it is, because at least with us in God's Church we're fighting against those things and we're growing in spirit and we're tearing those things down as a part of the evil part of the nature of man, the selfishness that's there, and we're growing. The world isn't growing. It doesn't understand, it doesn't grasp what it's caught in.

We're changing, thank God, and so we're able to see things that others can't see. But human nature is not a pretty thing - the ugliness of the human spirit apart from God is really ugly, it truly is. That's why I look forward to the time my change comes. I look forward to it! The battle, the battle of fighting against this...you continue to fight but you don't quit until it's over. That's what it's all about. You keep to the map, you keep going forward, you keep pressing forward, you hold to the trunk of the tree.

And so, that's why it's saying, **so that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein**: so that that's what your response will be. So if you're thinking about God and you're praying to God, and you have a relationship with God and things happen in life and you stop and think about what you're saying or how you're thinking about it or thinking about someone or a situation or whatever it might be and... you better put God in the picture!

Just like right now, what's happening in my life - God better be in the picture so I have a right light on it. I don't care what happens to me or where I go, I'm going to have it so much better than the *vast majority* of people on this earth! Do you know that?! Truly! Food, water, shelter, clothing - there are a lot of people in this world who struggle... South America, Africa, Asia!

We haven't seen so many parts of the world and how people live; young children, how they have to grow up, how that you see these stories sometimes reported on the news. I think of this one, one time, of how these young children go way out to some of these huge, gigantic garbage dumps in huge city areas to find syringes because they can get so much money. They try to get anything they can find that they can get money for - and that's part of the problem, they get reused and catch diseases... it was a show talking about it; it was a true story about a device that once you use this particular type of syringe you could only use it once, it retracted or whatever and could never be used again. They went away from glass, which you could sterilize, and went to plastic that you can't sterilize, and that's the reason that AIDS and so many things like that have blown up in some parts of the world, because of the reuse of syringes, needles. And you think about all these little children out there in these garbage pits! I mean, mounds and mounds and they're looking through anything they can to salvage, and a lot of it had to do with that, whatever they found, and that was one of the things they'd look for. What a sick world that people have to live that way, that children have to grow up that way, and that children are prostituted in order for a family to live. They think that's what they have to have and so they sell their own children. It's a sick world out there, and so we long for the change...and we're almost there!

...at least I believe we're almost there! I hope there is not another detour in the road at some point. We think we're on the right road and God shows us something else... I hope that doesn't happen, but if it does we go forward! ...and we'll learn a whole lot more through the process *if we hold to the road*, if we *keep to the map* and do what God says. Because it's about a way of life that you live no matter what...and that's what this is talking about; **so that you may observe to do according to all that's written therein, for then you shall**, in other words, **you're going to be able to then make your way prosperous**, you'll be blessed.

Sometimes people just think about something physical. This is not what it's talking about, 'your way prosperous'; the peace - the peace of mind is an awesome thing to have. Soundness of mind is an awesome blessing in life to be able to have; to be able to see things in God's plan and have a soundness in mind to know, a confidence and a boldness of what you're doing and where you are...and you go forward. And the peace that goes with that, the peace of living God's way of life, the peace of being able to judge matters and know that this isn't from you, that it's from God, it's God's way of doing it. There is an incredible peace in that, there really is. It's an awesome thing that God gives to us.

Sometimes we don't realize the prosperity that God has given to us in living His way of life, and the Family that God gives in life, that if something happens, people go astray, they don't have this relationship anymore, they don't have that Family anymore.

That's one of the things that happened after the scattering that people missed, and yet they couldn't be of one mind so they tried to build bridges - and somebody always had dynamite blowing them up from behind them and putting them on fire - but anyway, because people wanted to be back together again because they *missed* something they had before, and so they tried to recreate that, but falsely so because they weren't going in the same way, it wasn't a matter of doing it God's way.

So anyway...**so that you're going to be able to make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Haven't I commanded you to be strong and of a good courage? Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed;** so again here, you do what God says and God takes away the fear; He gives you strength, He gives you courage. That's what it's about! We're not to fear this world. Our lives are in God's hands. Your life is in God's hands and you *keep moving forward* regardless of what happens.

So, **do not be afraid and do not be 'dismayed'**; in other words that word there means 'don't be broken', 'don't be shattered', because a lot of people have been. People get to a certain point and sometimes they just... they can't do it anymore. ...**for the Eternal your God is with you wherever you go**. How awesome is that? God is with you wherever you are, wherever you go.

**Verse 10 - Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the 'encampment',** in other words, through the 'company of people', **and command the people, saying, Prepare yourselves provision; for within three days you shall pass over this Jordan to go in to possess the land, which the Eternal your God gives you to possess.** Well, right now we believe that's for us a long single 'day' and yet we're almost half way through it, and I'm just going to be candid with you, whatever happens... Someone asked my wife the other day, I believe it was, and they might even be here, but asked basically something to the effect of - you remember that dream before Atonement a year ago - not this year but the year before - and the things that were said about being from Satan...and I thought about some of that. It was like, "Has something changed or is something changing in that?" And I'll be candid with you... I know that God has allowed Satan to give certain things so that certain things can be learned from it and that we grow from it, and to understand again, a battle that's going on, why God might allow something like that, but for me, which I hope is for you, that no matter what happens through time, if God were to show, "No, I allowed that, I gave this to him to give and there is more time," you go forward, you hold onto what God gives. You don't change your life, you don't go back to believing that Petra is a place of safety. You don't go back to believing that there are two beings in the God Family. You don't go backward and you don't go grasp a hold of those things that were in the past, you go forward! Do you have that kind of *confidence* and *boldness* in following God regardless of what happens in life?

Now, *I don't believe for ONE SECOND* that that's going to happen, because I believe the present truth, but I have seen the present truth change because of something that God gives for a greater purpose, of something He's molding and fashioning in His people. And *you are clay* and you *do not argue* with your God, your Creator - you *yield* to it, you let Him mold and fashion you...and God will give the answers in His time as He always has.

It's like in the map. I was thinking about that today. We're going down the road and we came up to... we thought we were headed toward Trumpets, and God says, "Recalculate...recalculate." He gave us

something to understand that Jesus Christ...it wasn't about returning on Trumpets, it's about Pentecost, but He'd already shown us that this is the countdown, this is the year, this is 2008... so what does that mean? So that's how God gave it to us, that we're headed toward Pentecost. We were headed toward Pentecost 2012! We didn't know that when we thought we were going to be there... you know you have someone in the backseat, "Are we there yet? Are we there yet?" ...and then how much worse is it if you thought you were getting to a certain point and something...

Have you ever had the situation where you're... now, we've rented a lot of different vehicles and sometimes you have GPS devices in them because if ours...sometimes we use our own - we got to the point where we took our own all the time all over the world. But sometimes you use somebody else's and you're not used to it, and all of a sudden you see this thing here and you see it's two hours away so you're going two hours away, and you finally get there and it was two hours to the next turn! In other words, they're telling you how far away it is to the next turn to go...and then all of a sudden it says, 45 more minutes. It's like...here I've been planning two hours and we're going to be able to be there, this is going to be over with, now we have to drive 45 more minutes, and then after a while you get to the point where you realize it might not even be 45 minutes, it might be another road after that that I have to turn on and it might be another half hour after that! I mean, those things have happened! I don't know if you've ever had a device like that but I've had some devices like that, that that's how they're calibrated or calculating, somebody has set the program to do that. It drives me nuts when that happens! I want to know, what time am I supposed to get to the *final* destination?

And so it tries us sometimes in life. There have been times I've wanted to take a hammer to those things - seriously - you get so frustrated sometimes.

And some of us have had to watch in our life, that we don't get mad at God, because some people did... or primarily me. Usually that's the way it's seen. But some people even talked about God. It's like... and so they can reject that, "Well, that's not the God I'm going to follow anymore because that can't be right, God wouldn't do that." Anyway...

So please understand, I believe with all my being the present truth. I believe we're deep in the 'night'. I believe we're about to come out of it. I believe with all my being that things are stirred up in this world for a purpose and for a reason and that everything that is taking place, molding and fashioning in the Middle East that can happen - \*snap\* - wake up one morning or during the day sometime... Just as much as those two towers, all of a sudden early in the morning had a phone call, "Turn on your TV." Turned on the TV and there it was! That's how quickly things happen and change in this world. And one day life in this world is going to change as drastically and as powerfully and as mightily as that. They don't understand it.

So again, God molds and fashions us. He leads us through this process and prepares us for what's ahead. And as I considered the possibility of this being my final sermon in this age I thought of some of the things the apostle Peter told the Church before he died. And as I went through this I couldn't help but think how incredible it was that God has been having us focus on these things throughout this period of time where we are, some of the things that have been given to Peter here, throughout this dark portion of the 'night' if you will, in this 'Day of the Lord'.

Let's turn over to 2 Peter and just start reading here. Let's notice first of all some of the context of why Peter is saying some of the things he is or why he's moved and motivated to address some of these things in the manner that he is, that God is moving him by His spirit to address. Let's notice this:

**2 Peter 1:14 - Knowing this shortly I must put off this, my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me.** So he was telling them as he was writing that he was going to die and that he knew his life was almost to an end, and so this is motivating a lot of his thinking about the Church and what he's saying here. God used this to move and motivate him in what he had to say.

**Verse 15 - Moreover I will endeavor so that;** again, **so that you 'may be able'**, or as it means here 'may always have', or 'may continue to hold to'...**so that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.** So that in other words, so that you will always remember these things. It drives the point home even more so as this is the context of so much of what he's talking about. He recognizes something that's going to happen as far as a change in those with whom he's working with, that he's telling them, "I'm not going to be around here anymore. God's work goes on, there are things you need to do. There are things you have grown to at this point in time that you need to *continue to do* in your life." ...you know, and who wouldn't want that and desire that for whom they've worked and worked with.

Going back to **verse 1** here, see what some of it says here now. **Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us...** what an awesome thing! He's saying you have obtained as well, you're with us in this, we're Family, we're together in this and you've been blessed to receive the same thing! You've been blessed to receive the truth that God has given to you to live by this way of life with us **through the righteousness of God and of Jesus Christ:** I love the way it says that too, because it *isn't* anything to do with our righteousness! On the contrary, we learn that's so far from the reality of the calling that it's not even funny.

**Verse 2 - Grace,** indeed grace that God gives when He begins to call and draw. **Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God,** that's how we grow; the more we understand the more we're able to receive the peace, the grace that God gives to us, the more we grasp of God's way of life. **...and of Jesus Christ our Lord, according as His divine power has given unto us all things,** and so again here, always being reminded of the reality you didn't figure this out! You didn't have all these smarts and a great desire for God and God's way of life! You didn't do this! God did it! *He* called you. *He* gave it to you. It's from Him. It's His gift to you. It's not because of you and what you have and how good you are in life; on the contrary! **...according as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue:** Awesome! God has called us to this, to have a great change take place in our life, to receive a glory, because it's Him! We believe it but we don't even... sometimes it's difficult to grasp this, that God dwells in us, that God's spirit can dwell in our lives and constantly be in us.

**...and virtue** - hold your place there, but just back in 1 Peter now, chapter 2 and verse 9, this word 'virtue'. I've always loved how this states this because the power of what it's revealing here

**1 Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen generation,** when God calls us, a 'chosen' generation at that particular moment in time and God's called different ones through different periods of time. But **...you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,** I think of some of the things that God said in the Old Testament that they couldn't receive because it was spiritual and it couldn't be given until God's spirit was received by the individuals, and that was for the Church primarily and a few God called through the time before that. **...a royal priesthood, a holy nation,** that which God is building and molding and fashioning, a holy nation of people...a peculiar/special people - special to God! God has planned this out a long, long time ago and to be called to be a part of it in this age? ... or in any age? ...is awesome!

... **so that**, so that the purpose and what is to take place in our life when all this begins. ...**so that you should show forth the praises**, that same word 'virtue' back there, which means 'virtue, 'moral excellence', 'character' of God...not ours! Because anything that comes through us that's good, anything that others can receive in life that's good, agape that others can receive in life at times through us, whatever it is that's right and good and lasting that people can receive, any truth, anything that people are able to latch on to if God's working or gives that to them or brings back to remembrance in time - any of those things *come from God...they DO NOT come from us*, in the sense of out of our spirit. But only to the degree of that inner man that's in us and the part that is deep, converted, and changed and yields to God's spirit doing the work through us. It's God's spirit! We can't take the credit! It's God! That's why we want God to *always* be in us, because you can't do it on your own. And so the honor, the glory, goes to God, and yet He lets us share in that glory that can live through us to the benefit of others. And so we always have to keep that perspective in mind, of what we are and who we are and be thankful for that, that God is molding and fashioning in us, in the inner man, and that we are able to when we yield to God's spirit that it lives through us to the benefit of others. ...that grace that's not just to be received by us but that's to live through us.

...**but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special people; so that you should show forth the praises/virtue/moral excellence/character of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous/wondrous light:** That which can only come from God and that which is able to live through us to others, to the benefit of others. So, *we keep to the map*. We continue to follow where and when God leads us.

Going back to 2 Peter and continuing on where we were.

**2 Peter 3:4 - Wherefore we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises:** sometimes we don't *grasp* what we've been shown. The longer we're in God's Church the more this can become a battle in life because of ... I think of the spirit of Laodicea, what can happen, we can begin to coast or we can begin to be lukewarm or begin to think that we're rich and increased with goods, the normal human tendencies that are there. But it says here, **Wherefore we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises** - to understand, indeed, what we have been given and to thank God for it constantly. What an awesome thing - precious promises - to think we're almost there and all that... That's why we went through last week and talked about... you think about the book of Hebrews and the faith chapter there and you go through the scriptures that talk about all the things that people went through never receiving the promises, and yet we live in an age where we get to receive the promises, in respect of where we're headed, into the Millennium, and that's what we look forward to, that phase of God's Kingdom coming to govern this world.

So again here, **Whereby we have been given exceedingly great and precious promises; so that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature**, we're able to partake of it, to taste of it, and not only that but for it to live through us then, that divine nature, that moral excellence, that character that comes from God...and yet we groan within ourselves from time to time because we see what we're like too. We're reminded, our human nature, and this battle that goes on and the choices you make, because you have to choose and you have to cry out to God for help to yield to His way and to fight against our way.

...**so that you might be partakers of the divine nation, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.** And so those are moments and times of victory, when we come to a point where whatever it is, 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life', and you yield and you cry out to God to deliver you and you're able to follow the right course. What an awesome thing, that you're

able to escape. You can't escape it all because of your human nature, but when you do escape certain things...because we're in a process of being able to escape this world, to come out of Egypt, be brought out of Egypt, but we're still very much in it.

**Verse 5 - And because of this**, and there is a word that should be here, **'by'** or **'through'** giving all diligence, add to your faith, so it's about faith, because it talks about that earlier, it speaks of this faith that has been given to us that we're able to live by and that God has given to us, that... I can't think of the exact expression that was stated just a moment ago by Peter when he first began here... yes, and when it says in verse 3 - 'to those who have obtained like precious faith with us', the truth that God has given and what we're able to live by then. And so now it gets down to the point where he's telling now, add this to the faith that God has given to you, add to your faith, build upon the faith that God has given to you, **virtue**; so it comes back to this matter of 'virtue' again, and it says add that to faith because just being able to believe what God has given to us because of the truth we have, there is much more that needs to be added to it, and so we continually do this as we grow, or else we're not growing.

And so the rest continues here, what is to be added to faith. Sometimes people try to add it to each one and think, "Well, how does this tie into this and how does this tie into the next one..." and what it's telling you is it's a process all the way through, 'adding it to faith' is about what's being added to faith. And so besides adding virtue we're told to add more, **knowledge**; you don't ever stop adding to it. This word here, 'knowledge' means 'perception and understanding'; perception, that's something spiritual - that the more you live by faith that you can add, you grow and you add to it then this perception and ability to understand. Until you live certain things by faith you don't understand.

There are so many things I think of in the last few months leading up to May 27<sup>th</sup> and beyond, that there are things that of understanding because you live it that you're able to better understand it, you're able to better understand people who have gone before and what they went through, you understand what they experienced in a greater way.

Until you live it, you don't have that. So the more we live by faith, God's way of life, the more opportunities like that we have and we yield ourselves to the process, and it's a growing process, we're constantly adding if we're growing.

And then **'temperance'**, which is a word that means 'self-control'. We seek for that, we desire that and to be in control. **...and patience**; we learn that through time and we're able to build upon that, add that to faith. Because faith doesn't just stand alone without these things being a part of it. These are ingredients, these are a part that make it come alive, these are the things that make it faith, that make faith alive and make it real, otherwise it really isn't faith.

**...and patience, and 'godliness'**; this word here literally means 'dedicated worship'.... dedicated worship! Godliness! Dedicated worship - it's a matter of a desire that we have toward God, of placing God first, of seeking to place God first in our life and not our own desires and so forth, our own will, the way we'd like to see things, and if it doesn't work out 'our way'...

**...and brotherly kindness**; so even there, I love the way this one is stated because this is about Philadelphia, philia. Sometimes we have to start there, to add to faith that God gives to us, the ability to see, to believe Him, and so sometimes we have to start at a very minor area here of practicing something that really isn't genuine yet or real in our life. Sometimes you have to live something that you say.... it may seem like a lie or you're being hypocritical because you know how you are. 😊 ...so you

treat somebody good but you don't think good about them. I've had these kinds of comments in times past in people's lives and in counseling with people, and it's like, "Well, that's kind of a double-standard." Yeah, but that's how you learn, because you learn that that's not the way you are. We don't have the kind of live that we should have. People don't practice even brotherly love to the degree that they should in this world, obviously, and even in God's Church sometimes we have to start learning to do that because that's where it all begins. You start learning how to love people and it doesn't always seem natural because reality is it just isn't there to the degree it needs to be.

So the more we can learn to genuinely exercise that toward each other, to show love toward each other, it's like the situation where.... I think of one Church area, the first one we went into as a pastor, and I think of that particular region up there and I think of some people in the very beginning - it blew me over after a while that different ones were complaining about... "You know, (so and so)... there's these different cliques out here and so forth and I don't get invited over like everybody else!" And it's like putting a guilt trip on others and then it comes out, "Well, when did you invite them over?" "Oh, I never...." "When have you invited anybody over, period?" "Oh, I never have!" Hmmm, interesting. So often individuals like that have never invited anyone over. Where do you begin to express brotherly love, and if you're not able to invite somebody over how about going out to eat with them, how about inviting them out to eat, to spend some time together? Where do you start building a relationship? ...and it may seem awkward and it may seem... But that's how you build a friendship, you show yourself friendly! Those are things that the world learns! There are certain things you have to do and then eventually a relationship... and then with time agape will come. In time you will begin to change. In time, agape can actually begin to work through you and you can actually begin to learn now, "Wait a minute! You know what? Yeah, I need to sacrifice in order to do this! They may *never* invite me out or invite me over, but I have to keep doing this because this is my job and my responsibility toward others!" ...if you understand what I'm saying.

That's what agape is about, it's about doing it to the point of sacrificing, regardless what anybody else does, you do it because it's right. And we learn that through time, but you don't learn it if you don't start practicing the other first, and then eventually it's like a light bulb finally goes on, "Oh, now I see what I've been doing..." Anyway, it's about faith and all this, so much of it, is about relationships, and it's awesome!

**Verse 8** - Again, Peter's admonition here to the Church...**For if these things are in you**, if all these things are in you, **and abound**, not just in you but *abound*, you're growing in them, that's what it means, it means you're *excelling* in them and you're *growing* in them. See? There are things sometimes we just have to do in life in order to grow in these things or *change doesn't happen!* And we have to work at making the change! We have to yield ourselves to what God tells us to do!

**For if these things be in you and abound they will never make you so that you are 'barren'**, meaning 'idol' or 'inactive' in the sense of that which is spiritual, **nor unfruitful in the 'knowledge'**, word means 'recognition' here, it's not the same word as 'knowledge' before that had to do with perception and understanding. This one here has to do with 'recognition' **of our Lord Jesus Christ** - the ability to see God, the ability to see Jesus Christ on a spiritual plane in a greater way in your life, to understand, to see, to recognize even the Body of Christ.

**But he who lacks these things is blind**, so not only must we have them we must abound in them, we must grow in them. **But he who lacks these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.** Sometimes God just takes us right back to the very beginning and

says, "Don't you know what this is all about? Why were you called? What is your purpose? What are you supposed to be doing? Are you just on a kind of roller-coaster and it goes up and down in life? What are you doing? You letting it take you wherever it does in life?" ...or are you sticking, keeping to the map, following the way God leads and doing what God says?

**Verse 10 - Therefore**, says 'rather', but it's a word that means 'all the more'. **Therefore all the more brethren, give diligence**, work hard, **to make your calling and election sure**: there has been a lot spent on us! There has been a lot spent on you! ...by God! First of all, His Son...His death. That's what God shows us, that's what He tells us - His blood. That's what's been spent, first and foremost, and plus so much more, that's just the beginning of the process. **...give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, you shall never fall**: There is tremendous boldness and confidence in that that we should have, you know?

**For so an entrance**, or in other words, **For in this manner...** or in other words, **the ability to enter**, if you will, **shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. This is how we proceed towards and becoming a part of God's Kingdom, a part of Elohim. Incredible!

So again, we are to keep to the map, we are to follow when and where God leads us, we're to hold to the trunk of the tree in what God has given to us *to this time*, and we're *not* to stray off course. And if anyone does in any manner or form hopefully you'll get the 'recalculating' message real quick and God help you to get back on the right course and to stay with it.

So again, we're not to move away from the trunk of the tree, brethren. I think of 'Time is Running Out', I went back and looked at that, the first booklet that went out, and that giant sequoia pictured there in that article entitled, 'What am I to Hold Fast'. There is that which God has given to us that we are to hold fast, and those just aren't words, they're things you have to do, they're things you have to exercise in your life, there are things you have to examine in your life to make sure that you are. That's why it's so good to go back and review truths and go back to the trunk of the tree from time to time, to go back to starting with number 1 and going through some of those things from time to time and making certain that you're holding to the trunk of the tree, holding fast.

Some things come along at times that can trip you up and you don't even recognize them, and a little bit at a time. I think of an example that's popped up in two or three areas here of recent time, just in a certain little area of life - and I'm just using this as an example to show what I'm talking about here - but we have to follow what God tells us to follow! That's why I think of the desire on a constant basis of telling people to focus on what God has given us - and so much of it's on the website, the Church website, the FAQ. There is so much information in there! You have to hold on to those things and sometimes examine yourself to make sure that your thinking is right.

I just want to throw out one topic here; it's entitled, 'Conspiracy Theories'... because this has popped up in different parts of the country, in the world right now in the last few months, and I want to read what's on the website because we need to follow what God tells us to do, and if we don't do that you can cause brethren to stumble, you can cause brethren to begin thinking in distorted ways. And I'll tell you what, a demonic world loves that playground. That's a playground for them! So I'm want to read what's on the site:

### [FAQ:TOPICS:CONSPIRACY THEORIES](#)

There are many conspiracy theories in the world. They allege that the bankers, Jews, CFR, Trilateral Commission, Illuminati, Masons, Bilderbergers, the Order, and/or any of a number of other groups are conspiring to control or take over the world.

Maybe people think in some situations that they're going to be able to accomplish certain things in life, but don't get caught in the trap! Because people in the Church *have*, and they *do*. Matter of fact, I think back many years ago, I think this area here got hit by some of that in worrying about the helicopters flying around and people got messed up because of this. And these things happen from time to time in the Church. That's why this topic is here; we're either in oneness with God, unity with God, doing things the way God says, building upon the faith that God has given to us, or we disobey God and start doing something within the environment and conversation within the Church that *we should not do!* We've got to be careful what we say to others! We've got to be careful what we *send* to one another as well! Going on here....

The Church of God does not believe a person will benefit from studying into such conspiracy writings or theories. These theories (and they are just that, theories) contradict both Biblical prophecy and historical facts. They appear to be the devices of Satan as they offer supposed "hidden" knowledge by which people are led away from God's truth. Studying these theories is a waste of valuable time...

You know what it reminds me of as I was going through some of this and thinking about it? I was thinking of that evangelist who used to invite demonic inspired individuals into his office there in Pasadena, California, because he was such an intellectual individual that he knew he could get certain things out of the demonic being, spirit inspired being - somebody totally, in other words, possessed - he could have a conversation with this demonic being, not the individual, and somehow be able to separate the good from the bad and maybe learn some things in the spirit world. And you think, "You... baboon!" And that's being kind. How dumb that was!! An evangelist in God's Church who led so many ministers astray, gave so many false teachings out here...14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Passover, that Jesus Christ might have been strangled... like God said, "Take the lamb and strangle it on that night..." instead of cutting it's throat. You think, "How *dumb* can you *be*? How can you *think* to teach..." Well, anyway, this is like that. When you go into things that you're not supposed to go into, you're messing with things in a spirit plane that can get you, that can take you away. Plenty of people have left God's Church *over this*, where their minds have been *so messed up!*

I think of an individual I met that somehow got invited about three years ago maybe, maybe it was longer than that now, met him in Cincinnati here...and he'd gotten involved in these things in Worldwide and they were still a part of his life because that was more important to him than what he read in the Bible or truth or the truths he was learning, and it was like he had these different ideas about what was going on out here. You think, "Give me a break! *Please* see that we're not on the same page here! Bye-bye! Auf wiedersehen! Dos vedanya! Don't let the screen door hit you on the butt when you go out!" It's better for people like that to be gone, you don't want that around.

*Do not* bring this into God's Church!!

So why are some of you doing it? I think of some that have even been told by the ministry to go back and read this. So have you stopped this now totally? Are you praying to God to get this stuff out of your mind? These things are floating around in the 'pond'!

The Church of God does not believe a person will benefit from studying into such conspiracy writings or theories. These theories (and they are just that, theories) contradict both Biblical prophecy and historical facts. They appear to be the devices of Satan as they offer supposed "hidden" knowledge by which people are led away from God's truth.

That's what happens! Anybody that's ever gotten involved in these gets away from soundness of mind and away from the truth of God!

Studying these theories is a waste of valuable time that should be spent in studying God's word - the truth. By focusing in on what is true, one will reveal the error of man's ways.

Indeed, "power centers" do exist within business, political, and economic organizations around the world. All segments of our society are subject and responsible for their national woes, sickness and immorality. The one behind it all is the master deceiver, Satan the devil, whose goal is to thwart the plan of God. As Rev 12:9 says, "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

But the bottom line is that there is no government, organization, or secret group that will succeed in controlling events in this world in order to bring about any lasting change that they seek to accomplish through their efforts. The truth is, we are at the very end of man's self-rule on this earth, and even Satan's rule is about to end. The government of God is coming to this earth on **May 19, 2013**. (The present truth.) Nothing and no one can stop this from taking place!

That is only a distraction and gets people thinking into, candidly, weird things, and it takes away... when you start thinking of some of those things and maybe God's going to use this and maybe God's going to do this and maybe it'll happen in this way.... Don't try to figure it out! *Let God show you* what He's doing! That's a part of waiting for God! You don't have to figure it out and think that some weird screwed up idea of something out here that's going to come that way, or something you're reading about... because you're not strong enough for this stuff not to *infect your mind*! You're to stay away from it! That's why it's written in here like this!

So either we're at one with God or we go off and do our own thing, and you know what God does when that happens? We start to cut ourselves off from God's spirit because we're not obeying what God says. So when it says to add to your faith certain things, this definitely fits.

So again, no conspiracy theories! What's the source? Is it from God? And if it isn't from God why would we want to meddle in it and swim in it?

Now that's just one topic. How many more in there that maybe we're not in unity and harmony with? How many more are there in there that maybe someone is doing something they shouldn't be doing and trying to bring it into the Body and sharing with others in the Body? We need to examine those things in our life to make sure we're at one with God and striving to be of the same mind. That's what faith is about, living by faith, what we've been given to believe, and if we don't believe that, we believe something else, then we're not at one with God and why would God intervene...?

Anyway, **2 Peter 3:12 - Therefore I will not be negligent to always put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them**, isn't that amazing how we've used these things, some of these things in these verses before? ...**and be/become established in the present truth**. It's a process, to be, or become as it is here, to be established in the present truth! It's a growing thing in our life! It's something whereby we grow, and as we grow God gives us a clearer vision and understanding and it's a growing process.

**Verse 13** - he went on to say - **Yes, I think it is fitting, that as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance**; in other words, by reminding you so that you keep it in memory. And that's the desire that God has for us - that we don't lose, that we don't *leave* what He has given to us, that we don't stray away from it but that we hold to the trunk to the tree, that we keep to the map, that we keep the course, that we stand fast!

So again, this all goes back to part of what he was saying here, that he was going to shortly put off the tabernacle that he talks about, after his decease, like **verse 15** says, **Moreover I will endeavor so that you may be able after my decease**; in other words he's going to continue to put these things before them as long as he can, **to have these things in remembrance**.

**Verse 19 - We also have a more sure word of prophecy**; I think... he's talking about *then*, present truth *then*, things that they understood *then*. I was thinking about what happened after Christ was put to death and how people just... they didn't... you know, sometimes we read things and we don't grasp what was going on in the society in the world around them. The disciples, they were the closest to Him, they had the strongest of relationship and belief at that point in time. They didn't have God's spirit yet but they had the strongest conviction of what they had seen and followed through, and what were they going to do? May 27<sup>th</sup> came for them, "What am I going to do?" Except for them it was far greater than that, obviously! "He's dead! The One we've been listening to! He's dead! He's gone! He's Messiah and He's dead? What are we going to do?" "Go back to fishing." Go back to something....

And what do you think happened to all the others? ...of people that separated themselves, that didn't want to be a part or associated with it in any way whatsoever - because they went to the four winds, that's what happened, except for the few that God was going to bring through all this and stir up on the Day of Pentecost in a very powerful way, those whom God was going to draw to that day and give to them what they needed.

So sometimes things happen in our life - I think of what they went through and how that after they had seen these things...he grasped by this time especially, by this time late in his life, he knew that his life was about to come to an end because of what Jesus Christ had told him, and for whatever purpose or whatever reason God put this in his mind even more so, that, "This is it for you!" And so this message goes to the Church and he says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy." Now they had time. They had grown as a Church, they had many years behind them now, but what an incredible thing, that there were things that they grasped and understood to the level, to the degree they did, all the things that had been written, the things we take for granted if we're not careful, that are written in the New Testament, to that point in time, to that book being written.

He says, **we have a more sure word of prophecy**; they understood things about Christ, the coming of Christ, and yet they didn't understand those things really well yet because God hadn't brought them to that present truth yet. He didn't let them know that they had 2,000 years, almost 2,000 years in front of them - nineteen hundred and fifty.... What would that do to people?

So having a sense of urgency? Having the things that God gives to us? What value do they have in our life? I hope we understand.

**We also have a more sure word of prophecy whereby you would do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place,** so again here, things that can't be seen unless God gives it; **until the day dawn**, I like the way this is stated here actually in the actual translation, because this means a lot more for us now than it ever did for them. **...until the day dawn**; it did for them spiritually and it's to be taken for us spiritually, but here we have it double-whammy! **...until the day dawn**; yeah, we're looking for the dawning of the 'day' right now in this final 'day', and this has tremendous meaning to us in a very powerful way in what's going to take place in the world as we understand what God's going to begin doing at some point after the 'day' begins.

**...and the day star**, that's not a good translation; it doesn't mean 'day star', it's just talking about a 'light bringing' **arise in your hearts**: in your midst is what it's talking about, in your mind.

So again here, literally talking about that which is spiritual in that respect, of that which we've been given. I think of what God has given to us about prophecy and prophetic things and where we are in time and we're so close to the return of Jesus Christ and the things that God is going to do to intervene in this world. We see it in world news! I was thinking of reading some articles - I guess I would have had time, I'm going faster through this sermon than I thought - so many articles out there just in the last week alone, of things happening in Europe. There is so much of it behind the scenes, you don't see it... well, we didn't see it over here at all because of elections. Half the world could have blown up and we would have hardly known about it...

To hear what's going on in different parts of the world! To hear what Russia is doing, what China is doing, what is still going on in Japan, these things that are just cranked up out there something fierce. It's all still there, things between Syria and Turkey; it's just incredible what's going on in the world, it really is! Set for a time; God's time.

So again **...that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, until the daystar/the light bringing arise in your hearts**: I think of what's going to take place as we get closer and closer...because we look forward to the return of Jesus Christ - it is about Jesus Christ - it is about His coming...but we're there! And the 'daylight' for us even means more because we realize when that begins to happen our lives are going to change dramatically! It's not going to be the matter of faith like we've been living by - truly! When things begin to happen, once the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet blows and things begin to happen in this world you're not going to live by the same kind of faith as you've had to up to this point in time, because right now you have to fight in faith for God's way of life, to hold onto it. But when those kinds of things begin to take place things begin to change, they truly do, and it reinforces something in you in a very powerful way, that by that time you are set!

That's why I've talked about, we've focused on some of the things as we entered into this period of time, of being defined by certain things, and the definition comes when the 'day' arises, when the 'daylight' portion comes, indeed, or at least by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet, if you will, because there is still that first time of marching. We don't know how close the correlation is going to be in timing, we don't know how far into the 'daylight' it goes.

I personally hope that we'll find out in time the Israelites got up before daybreak. ...and had breakfast and had their provisions. *I hope* that they started marching around it before the sun actually tipped the horizon! That's my hope because that means it's that much closer. ...and to understand... you know, I think of us going this full circle thing and I think of how God has brought us to understand some awesome things in the sense of realizing the hideousness of what must take place. We see a little thing happening in New York area, New Jersey, and we see how crippled people can become so quickly and how things can be taken away, taken off their foundation, their whole life, literally, and the turmoil that's there, that exists there. And I think, that is so piddly small, so puny! And it hurts, it's gut-wrenching to think what has to take place before people will humble themselves in this world.

And even there... *even there* we were talking about that area, we were talking about different earthquakes around the world and I was noticing various ones down in through Indonesia and in through south of Australia, and seeing some powerful things taking place that I haven't seen the same patterns of in times past, and a couple down in South America, Colombia, and then all the way up to the Alaska area there just in the last week, last seven days, and you look at some of those patterns and I've been watching these for years. And you see some of those things and you know something big is coming, and at some point on the west coast something big is going to happen in that area alone. And that is not even one of the Trumpets!

And then to think that something like that could happen in the Atlantic! The possibilities out there - we don't know how or what, but you think, even if another wave, another wave of water came up onto that part of the world and washed out much more... how many are going to start repenting? How many are going to cry out to God? It takes wave after wave after wave. That's why there are so many Trumpets that have to be there so close together and so powerful on this earth, because of the way man is. And if it didn't happen massively across this country the next day the stock market is going to go up. That's the way people are, the pride, the haughtiness.

And we do, our spirit is vexed.

I made a comment here the other day that I want to make clarification on. I think there is something I needed to make comment there about helping people... If something is happening at a particular moment in time in an area, as a whole we still keep God's Sabbath. But you know, if there is a need... It's one thing... Let's say you were on Staten Island right now, okay, and it's because of your neighbors - should you be out there today cleaning up? No! It's not a matter of life and death for them right now, it's a matter of cleaning up. And we know that at some point here it's going to get worse, even there - okay? It's going to be a lot worse. So you have to understand that what I was talking about in the sermon and what I made comment about, the way we are, we help people who are in need. I'm talking about life and death. I'm talking about dying of hunger or thirst. I'm talking about being there to help people, that we do that, we're going to do that. And if somebody needs help on the Sabbath because of life and death we do that.

But if it's a matter of cleaning up this world to get things back to normal? Forget it! Keep the Sabbath! Because there is no point in it! I hope we understand the distinction there of something when we give and we help and at times when we don't. But when there is a need because people are suffering and because, people, it's a matter of life and death, they need shelter, they need clothing, they need food, we're going to help them even onto the Sabbath!

**Verse 20 - Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** This goes right back to what it was talking about in Ecclesiastes. It goes on to say - **For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man:** in other words, it didn't come because people just sat down and started writing something and by what they wanted God to do or by how... God gave it! He gave the prophecies. He had them recorded in scripture. He preserved them for us! And they're revealed in exactly the same manner - that's his point through all this - that the way they're given when they're first recorded by God, given by God, and the way they're revealed comes in the same manner - *from God*, not of any private interpretation. And yet all the things that have been written about the book of Revelation, all the things that have been written about the book of Daniel - you click on the internet and there is so much out there that it'll make your head swim, of ideas that people have about everything that God has given through time.

Just like anything to do with the truth of God - God has to give it.

**Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** That's why it says we have 'a more sure word of prophecy'; we're in God's Church, God gives these things to us by His spirit, He has given these things even to this point in time here by the apostles, the things that Jesus Christ gave as well, and the things they gave. **For the prophecy came not in old by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the holy spirit.** The point being as you go on and read all these things - it is given in the same manner. If it isn't, it's false, obviously.

So again here, we are to continue to keep to the map, to hold fast what God has given, and things will continue moving forward. That's the way it is! God's work has always moved forward if people are yielding to it. If not...went back for a time, went backward in a big way. But that was the fault of each individual that was a part of the Body - had to repent of that.

We will build upon what God has given us in the present truth - to keep focused on these things, even what Peter said, to build upon these things. There is nothing *new* given...or nothing new, in essence, that will be given that has not been given in the past. We continue to grow. If it's given then God will make it clear - but what has been given will be magnified and built upon and that's why I've even asked the evangelists, some of the things they're to go through in sermons if they're going to be giving them - is to go through some of the truths that God has given to us. We need to be deeply grounded in those things! Hold to the trunk of the tree with all of our being!

I think about some of those things when I think about the scattered Church out there and people who think they've held to the 18 Truths even, and they don't even know what they are as a whole. I think of number one that Mr. Armstrong gave about Government. People have no idea what Government is about in God's Church and how God works - the scattered Body out there - so much of that has been lost, let alone all the others.

So anyway, that's how we continue to grow. Again, these things are going to be reinforced in us, we're going to build upon them. We just keep moving forward; we don't have much time left, thankfully.

So, we'll be seeking to hold fast to the trunk of the tree - all of us - that's what you need to strive to do. You are to keep to the map. You are to hold to the trunk of the tree. And these aren't just words, because some are going to leave, some can't make it. I'm just going to tell you up front. This is not over - the 'day' hasn't sprung yet, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet hasn't sounded. You *need* to be on guard. You *need* to be spiritually alert. And those who are not fully alert, those who have not been fully committed by the time

the 'day' comes - those who have not been fully committed to this, that's it, that's the timing, that's where we are! It's either in you at that point in time - that's the opportunity that God gives - and that's how we're being judged, that's how we're being measured.

So again, you're to hold to the trunk of the tree, to the present truth that God has given to you and you are to continue as you have to follow when and where God leads you.

~~~end