

Basically, I do want to mention some things about 2T (2nd tithe). We've had different questions and comments about it and some who didn't catch or understand part of what was said in the past about that shortly after the Feast, and that is that at this point here you just continue to save it as you would because nothing has been given yet as to exactly how to address some of it. The only thing that has been given is that if individuals do have difficulty as far as finances are concerned and being able to travel the longer distances to Sabbath Services, that if there is no other means, if you're not able to do it, that you can certainly use that. But that's not to visit other areas, that's strictly your own area. It's not for general travel or anything of that nature because primarily it still is about the Holy Days, the keeping of the Holy Days and the like and we just have to wait until some of that has been given later on here as to exactly how to address some of it.

So, my hope and prayer is that it won't be for the Feast of Tabernacles. Unleavened Bread, yes.

With that we'll launch right into the sermon here today. This will be *Part 3* of the sermon series entitled *Strengthening Family*.

Last Sabbath there were three important areas of scripture that we touched upon that bear repeating here at the outset today. I'm just going to mention them because they really say a lot and we can spend a lot more time in covering some of these things and expounding upon them. But God is just giving us basically a framework to be able to judge and learn how to better judge, to be able to understand some of the things that have been given to us right now, or is being given to us right now concerning changes that need to take place in the world, in society, and in family in particular, and to begin to grasp the impact that technology is having on society and with the focus primarily being about family. [We are/You are] to begin thinking upon those things in your own life, matters of communication, things that interrupt communication, things that interrupt normal means of sharing that families should have in their life, that other things are interfering with that and to address those, to begin addressing those and to realize this is what has to be done after the Millennium is established; a beginning of a process to address many things.

There is a lot that needs to be changed, candidly, from top to bottom in *everything* in society. Everything is messed up. When God talks about something being sick from the top of the head to the bottom of the foot He means *exactly* what He says and that's the kind of world we live in. I can't help but think here recently about some of the thoughts and ideas, things having to do with, as God came up to the point in time of the flood and some of the things taking place in the world at that time and thinking about the world today, and we're in the same kind of condition, a time when things need to be addressed. That was a matter of age, that was a matter of long span of life, but it took a period of time for the world to come to the kind of evil that it had, but now with technology we have leaped ahead in a powerful way to bring society to that and past that now where things work far more quickly, far more rapidly in human life and upon human nature, which is not good.

So again, those three scriptures. One was **John 5:17** - where Christ said, **My Father works until now, and I work**. And that involves a lot of things about how God works, His planning, everything that has gone into preparation for His Family, everything that we see in the universe, everything that we are told about in the spiritual realm, but also in the physical universe and in the earth, mankind, etc... and now

what's been taking place in the Church in the past 2,000 years. It's awesome, it's powerful what God is saying, and yet though it's work those things that God does for us, those things that God works as a goal, as a purpose for human life to become a part of His Family is something that's enjoyable and exciting. There *are* things about work sometimes, because primarily of our human nature, that is more of a matter of labour in the sense of not being enjoyable. But when we talk about work, again, unique to look at the example God has set.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 where it says, **Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, again, showing that authority in the Church, **that you withdraw yourselves from every person who walks disorderly**, in other words, out of order, out of place, in an undisciplined and unruly manner in the way that God says it otherwise should be. That's the context.

Verse 10 - For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. Again, powerful principles here.

Verse 11 - For we hear that there are some who walk disorderly, in other words, out of order, not disciplined among you, **not working at all...**

And then **verse 14**, summing it up, **And if any will not obey**, in other words, listen or attend to **our word by this epistle, note/mark that person, and have no company**, in other words, association, fellowship and so forth, **with them, that they may be ashamed**. So again here, very powerful things that need to be stated that more and more because of technology and just because of the impact that it's had on family, the way family is today in the world and the impact that is having across the board... There are things that need to be addressed in life and because of the Church, as well, those things that are in our human lives, when God calls us out of the world they come into the Church. It's a part of our life, it's a part of things that are happening in the environment of the Church as well because God's calling us out of the world. And so there are things we have to address, there are things we need to look at and recognize the impact that society and technology and everything else is having upon us and to realize there are things that need to be addressed and things that need to be turned around, things that are not spiritually healthy let alone mentally healthy for people in their lives. And the reality is we're coming out of Egypt, God is bringing us out of Egypt, out of captivity, out of things that *hurt* the human mind, the human life and family...and the God Family.

1 Timothy 5:8, another one we looked at, and this was in the context of widows and it gave a lot of guidelines for how finances are used even within the Church in caring for, in that particular time, the needs of people because of the way society was, and if you understand the system of 3rd tithe that was to be used by Israel, that was to be used in the process there at that time. This was still a part of what was happening then very much like what we did in the Church during Worldwide, and partially into the period of Laodicea. But again, those particular things that weren't being done by government that God wanted His people to do in a right way, to take care of people's needs. Today, again, it's very much a government system within the world, messed up as it is, but the point being here is that there are still guidelines that God gave even back then for how to address certain things of work, of people working, and that had to do with responsibilities of family, of taking care of family, had to do with responsibilities as a matter of work and those who are able to work or weren't able to and how to judge some of those matters. So again, guidelines of things as a whole, and as a Church we have followed very, very closely, we just haven't preached about it as much oftentimes and talked about those things as much. But again, guidelines that need to be given.

The point being is it's a matter of work. There are things of work that we learn from in life that is the backbone of family, and when that can be done together, when it's shared in a way that is rewarding and beneficial to a family where people appreciate, they appreciate what each person is adding to the family, what each person gives in the family. I can't help but think of a farming environment, of an agrarian society where everybody has to work together more so, even more so in that particular environment. And yet so much of life should be like that without that kind of society itself, but even in the kind of world we have today, it's just that you have to focus upon it and recognize the importance upon it and make certain changes in your life, and to practice some of those things, of appreciation, of contribution and so forth that each individual is able to make, to teach children how to contribute in those things, in the smallest of things in homes but in things whereby they can learn and have responsibilities, have duties and so forth of providing and being a part of.

On and on it goes, God teaching us principles, things we need to learn in a practice of a right way of life. And again, it comes down to where we're heading in this sermon today talking about the subject of sharing, but as a matter of strengthening families. So as we continue in the series today there are some pertinent points that need to be stated as we need to draw some meaningful conclusions from what we have covered in those scriptures last Sabbath, and so I'm going to cover a few things here just to mention some guidelines, some principles of some things we should have been gleaned from all this, things that have been said in part that need to be said more directly in that respect, of things that we can examine in our life in order to have a greater balance.

At this time there are things that some need to judge regarding *how* they are going about this process God's way, and there are elements in the lives of some that need addressing now. We all need to address things in our lives but especially in the context of this sermon series.

1. Basically, if individuals are able to work, to be employed, to hold a job and are not, they need to seek out work and become productive in the family.

Now, I don't want to get into the nitty-gritty here about age and times of retirement and some of the things that was mentioned about widows and age factors and so forth. Hopefully balance and soundness and time will teach us some of those things or we should know those things, and if not we can ask about it. But again here, there is balance in all of this, there are things you work for in life that can add greater ease to your life later on, but there are things especially in the beginning, there is a greater responsibility throughout a period of time in life where you have to work, and *work hard* to build up family, to... as God even talks about, certain things having to do with building your barn first, getting started in life and certain planning ahead for family, for the sake of family, for love of family and on and on it goes.

So again, if people are able to they need to work and need to seek work and become productive, adding to the family. It is the structure, it is a part of the backbone of family life as opposed to sitting around - this is the contrast that needs to be made and weighed - as opposed to sitting around doing nothing, or in other words, very little, being very... having little productivity in life by doing such things like playing video games, or watching TV hours on end, or involved in other areas of unbalanced use of technology, because that is a crutch today, it's becoming more of a habit in society today.

So again, people who are older, retired and/or have health issues are in a unique category of their own and that's to be judged separately, differently, obviously.

Another area here...

2. If the age of children permit it and if they are...or if there are no children, it's almost demanded that both the husband and wife be working at a job in today's world, in today's society, in making ends meet.

Most assuredly, in an agrarian society, both would be working. There is a different structure with how and what that work would involve but both are working, and I mean working hard to provide for the family. And that doesn't change in life, that ability to share and that ability to provide. It's just that because of technology some of that has shifted, but sadly, it hasn't been done well by the world, obviously.

So again, a husband and a wife to be working at a job providing for family and planning ahead for family or... in other words, we're talking about work ethic here. It's about planning, it's about providing, it's about looking ahead. And just because of where we are in time we still need to be doing those things! To keep doing something as though time were going on though we believe fully that it's going to come to a point of changing some things, but we're still going to be doing as we continue on. Some of that may change as exactly what we're doing but we're still going to be providing and working and those principles that you learn from that, and the things you share in family you can't put a price on that. There are things that *need* to be done as a part of life and if we do less we rob ourselves. Work ethic!

Another point:

3. Some of the conclusion from part of what we have covered had to do with what it means to be idle, in other words, from work and how that such a thing, that kind of inactivity can be very dangerous and can easily lead to lethargy, can lead to becoming in bondage to wrong uses of technology, can often lead to spiritual weakness and blindness to God's true purpose in our lives.

You know, we should be able to clearly *see* the value, the *example* that God has set through time of work in family to bring about certain goals, a certain end, a certain fulfillment in family, to provide. And God has set the perfect example of that, Jesus Christ has set the perfect example of that, that's why I love that scripture, 'My Father works until now, and I work.' It is a way of life, and for them especially it's all about the Family, the God Family. We need to learn lessons about that for family life, family structure that eventually become a part of indeed the God Family.

Just like in marriage, a husband and a wife. You know, there are things in family, in the family structure God has given so that we can learn what things are supposed to be like later on, how there are relationships, how a husband and a wife are to become *one*. *One*; what that means spiritually, and the sharing and the things that take place there and the purpose in life and what you're doing and what you're working toward and not working against each other and the unity and the oneness and all the things that are to be learned from that process. Though it may not always be able to be experienced we can learn from it and come to grasp and understand what God is working toward and what we're blessed to share in and work in as well concerning the Church, and where we can we strive to apply those things in our physical lives.

So again, if there is idleness it leads to these other things, lethargy, becoming in bondage to technology - that's a big thing today that's happening in young people's lives, they are becoming more and more in

bondage to technology and idleness of time that robs family and robs parents and children of family relationships because children would rather be off doing something else in the privacy of their bedroom or whatever, on some kind of a gizmo or gadget and the parents oftentimes would rather *they were!* It's a good babysitter! But what does it do to the mind and what does it do for life?

It doesn't mean those things are all wrong or all bad, it's the *use* of things that we must learn how to do in a proper way.

And so again here, these things definitely can lead to blindness, do lead to blindness to God's true purpose in our lives, to where we really can't see clearly and we don't really grasp what God is doing or see the correlation between that and what we're to be doing in our lives on a physical *and* spiritual plane and learning from it. And oftentimes these things lead to becoming more of a busybody, becoming someone focused or overly involved in other people's lives, of judging and gossiping about others and so forth. And so those were some of the things addressed concerning family and the family structure there that was mentioned earlier.

Proverbs 29:18 - I was thinking how there is a couple of scriptures here we're going to look at today that haven't been focused on in large part for some time, but it says, **Where there is no vision, the people perish:** you're familiar with the scripture. This is physical and it's spiritual in what you can learn in life. 'Vision' has to do with being able to see what God is doing. **Where there is no vision,** no comprehension of what God's purpose is, what our lives are to be like in response to what He gives to us, if we do not grasp the magnitude of God's law, God's way of life, what He's doing in our lives, where we're going, what the purpose of it is all about, to the degree that that's diminished in our lives.

Where there is no vision, the people, and it says '**perish**', but the word literally in the Hebrew means 'made naked', 'uncovered or come to nothing'. And so again here, it's like no vision, no planning, because vision is a matter of purpose, of planning, of goals, of striving to achieve various things. It's not just a matter of what is seen, it's a matter of seeing where things are going, where things are supposed to go, and basically how to go about that, the accomplishment of that. So, **where there is no vision the people are made naked/uncovered,** in other word there are things that don't work out in their lives. There are things that don't work out properly for them and as far as God's way of life they're bare, they're naked in that sense.

....but he who keeps the law/instruction, happy is he. You do things God's way you're going to be blessed. The more we do things God's way the more we're going to be blessed in life.

I thought I'd mention a couple of other things along these lines. When I've been going through this series I think of so many people who have set such incredible examples concerning work ethic over time, things that people do in their lives, and you can think of certain things in your life or things about what you respect in others, that they have done. But overall, with some few exceptions, people need to be working at some kind of employment or being trained. So again, in the context of what we've been discussing here, as a whole, people need to be - and again, I'm not talking about retirement or time that you have worked for to get to where you are to this day, to achieve the goals that you have at this point in time. I'm talking about a normal course from the beginning and throughout, that takes up the vast majority of your lifespan, candidly, in a physical life. Those things - people need to be working in some kind of employment or being trained, vocational or some kind of studies, whether it be even at home, to add to, but whether it be literally at a college or university or a vo-tech or something for future employment.

I've tried to encourage people about that in the sense of looking ahead. It's not a matter of whether you're going to use that specific skill in the future, it's what you learn through the process, it's by what you put into it, it's by what happens in the mind, it's by what happens by broadening your ability in life, of what it does to you even in a mental state, of things having to do with confidence, of a right kind of confidence that God wants us to have in life. There are other things that can rob you of that, of a boldness in life, of various kinds of lessons that you learn along the way, and I could go on and on.

But again here, to do otherwise, to not work toward goals, to not work to achieve various things is to create lethargy - that's what is created - it destroys self-worth not to be involved in such things in life. You can actually destroy self-worth! There is a kind of work that we need to have in life, and the context as we grow, as a part of God's plan... I'm not talking about human pride, I'm talking about how you think about yourself, how you just feel about yourself in life, and when you do things God's way there is that which is rewarding, not in a bad way, and not in a selfish way, but in a productive way as far as the mind is concerned as you see yourself within a bigger Family and what you're accomplishing in life. To not do these things lowers confidence, it affects issues of trust and respect from others - even in family, even between husbands and wives.

So again, it's about sharing and it's about building together.

There is another verse that was often quoted in Ambassador College that I think would be good to consider at this point. It's **Ecclesiastes 9:10** - it's a principle here. Just like back in Proverbs there are different principles that are given, here is a very powerful and important principle of life, and in this one here [it says] **Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might**; do it with your strength. This is not something that is to be applied to video games and TV. "I'm going to throw *everything* into *this!*" What does it take to do that kind of thing? Say, "Well it takes skill to be able to run your fingers as fast and to be able to be observing of these things and..." anyway, that's not what this is talking about. This is talking about life, it's talking about how you live your life, it's talking about matters of work especially and what you put your hand to in life, in the home, in family. And God says, **Whatever your hand finds to do**, your hand, your hand is always symbolic of work. I think of what it says in Revelation about the mind, the hand, you know, the sign and that which we comprehend. The hand has always been symbolic of productivity, of work, and that's what this is really all about.

It's about being productive in life, whether it be in the home, or whether it be at a job, but it all works together. What you do in building a family, the work that's involved there, of how husbands and wives are to interact with each other and how parents and children are to interact with each other and all the things we are to practice and learn in life. It takes forethought, it takes planning...it doesn't just happen! There are things in life that don't just happen somehow just because we go through the motions of it that something is going to come out of it that's good unless we put something specific into it. That's where the good can come from, obviously, by the work, the effort, the forethought, the planning, the example that God has set to us in life.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, do it with your strength, throw yourself into it - mind and body! Your mind! **...for there is no work, nor 'device'**, this Hebrew word having to do with 'reasoning things out', device, that's what this word is about, it's about reasoning things out especially when it comes to planning or setting goals with purpose in life. That's basically how some of this is used. So there is no such thing... **nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go**. We have a certain amount of time, as a whole in life, that God gives to us and He says put yourself into it. And there are *blessings* from that! There are blessings from throwing yourself into things and doing it with more

energy, with more thought, with greater purpose, greater design, everything that goes into something. And again, there is balance in that because there are people who become what we'd call 'workaholics' when it come to just work. Again, there is soundness of mind in balance in things we do.

I was mentioning a little while ago I've seen some awesome examples over the years of people in the Church and out of the Church who have excelled in the kind of admirable work ethic that has to do with this spirit reflected here in Ecclesiastes 9:10, and so many of them sacrificed and drove themselves for the sake of love toward family, okay? So often that's what I really admire when I see that, is their motivation, it's about family, it's about the sharing, it's about providing for, and the more that's done in a balanced way and with one's might, throwing yourself into it, the more rewards and blessings of life when you do it God's way, truly are, more potential - more rewards and blessings. It doesn't mean that everyone always responds to that, but as far as yourself, your being, what can be molded into your mind and how you see yourself in life - rewards and blessings with that.

I think of examples of some things, especially when people have been or are retired. I think especially in areas more of what I'd refer to as widows or individuals in that kind of a category in life and how they... I've seen those examples over and over again. I think about 2nd tithe assistance in the Church, because I think of the thing about widows we read last Sabbath, and I think about people who have done things that are not expected of them at all, at an age where you wouldn't expect them to do it at all but people that just do because they have learned the value of those things, they want to accomplish and achieve and they want to be able to provide *more* for the Church - just like it said back there when it was referring to the widows, of how people should think and how families should take care of what they can take care of, and that's the way it should be everywhere in our thinking, to take care of what we can so that there is more that the Church can use where the needs exist. There is a different thinking oftentimes that comes from a matter of just wanting to provide, to be a part of the altar, of offering things up before God, of the excitement of being a part of something bigger than we are, of not sitting back and not thinking about it, not participating in it. That's fine if we're at that stage in life, but I think of individuals who have truly gone above and beyond because of this concept of work ethic and a love toward the Church that rather than receive something they want to make sure that they strive to do as much as they can - some of them, incredible things! I've seen this throughout the time in the Church. I could spend a whole time of a sermon just going over people's lives and thinking about things that people have done and...incredible stories!

And then there are others who think nothing of.... and there is nothing wrong if you're at a particular stage in life - but there are some who are able and of an age where they're able to do more for themselves and I've seen those examples throughout time where they haven't, where they haven't tried, where they haven't put an effort into it and sometimes they've even gotten into the frame of thought of not only receiving from the Church but of striving to receive more, of expecting more, of wanting more.

Now again, where it's needed, where it's proper and right, it's good to ask, it's good that we come together, because God has made the system for that purpose! But when we *can* do something of our own more and we don't do *anything* then there is something wrong there! That's the point! There is a contrast there of attitude of mind. So it's not a matter of people being made to feel guilty for having received assistance and help in the vast majority of cases, but there are cases where some should feel guilt, should feel remorse for not having done anything, to do something when there are people in their 70's and 80's who work and have worked *hard* because they want to be able to have that excess go to help others and so they don't ask for anything. There are people we have had to go to and say, "We

know you're getting by on a shoestring here and we don't want you to do that, and so here is help," because we know about their situation, but they're perfectly willing to do some more sacrificing even at the Feast so as to give more opportunity to others. That's the kind of spirit and attitude I'm talking about here, of consideration for the Family and of thinking about God's Family that sometimes people don't exercise and that's dangerous.

I think of some of the lessons that can be learned from the time period we've been in leading up to May 27th and there are things that people are able to see in their own lives, especially because of what God has given us through more time here, of principles that I stated well before about finances and about credit and so forth, that there are principles involved there that you don't break... This was not a time, and this was made clear, we are not like the Israelites taking from the Egyptians when we're leaving Egypt. We're not taking advantage of and robbing them blind, (I shouldn't say it that way) they felt like that I'm sure, but God sanctioned it for them. He said, "Take from them everything..." because they wanted to get rid of them so they gave them gold, they gave them any kind of foods, of animals and things to get out of Egypt or they said "we'll all be dead people". So for us, when I've been asked or hear those kinds of comments, I've said, "No, we are not at that point. If God shows us we're to do something like that then we'll tell everyone." But again, we've had to learn some lessons there of how to readjust things and in some cases the limits were pushed...and I know that's made some hardship and I appreciate and understand all that. Every one of us can look at things in our life and realize that we geared things to that point in time, but how we geared toward that point in time is what's important, see? How we geared toward that point in time is truly what is important, and beyond that, especially since time has gone on, what we have done since or maybe even up to that point in time...things about whether we chose to work or not work, to receive education or not receive education, of whether there are certain responsibilities we're striving to meet because we made them. If I charged a certain amount on a credit card I have a responsibility to pay for that.

If I have a...and I'm just speaking of marriages that go across the board of things I've heard of in different situations in people's lives. If it comes to a matter of providing for, because there is a divorce and there is the matter of providing for children, that's a responsibility. You don't just not work and not provide for the family because legally they said there is so much you have to give! We should *want to make sure* we support our children in life that we brought into this world. That's a responsibility! Where is the love? So we *should be* providing for and doing our part wherever we can, anything less is not acceptable in God's way of life, is not providing for his own family, his/her own family. And so it goes back to this principle that we talked about earlier, if we 'don't provide for our own family we are worse than an infidel', and that means a non-believer! You think, how much... why does it say it that way? '...worse than a non-believer'? Because we know better. We *should* know better. We have the ability through the power of God's spirit *to know better!*

And so that's why the apostasy was so atrocious in God's Church! That's why it was *so much worse* than what the Israelites ever did in Egypt, because what we did was spiritual! They didn't have God's spirit, they did things out of normal carnal human nature! Yeah, it didn't take them very long - what the Israelites did out of ignorance, out of human nature, selfish human nature, carnal human nature, sometime we can shake our heads and say, "Oh, I'd never do anything like that!" And you know what the Church did and every person would have done during that time period - because everyone did it - anyone that had lived before, whether they were in Ephesus or Smyrna, Thyatira, if they had been put into the end of Philadelphia, into the period of going into Laodicea, every person, all of you who are new since that time, if you were living back then you would have done *exactly the same thing* because it happened to the entirety of God's Church for a purpose. And God allowed that, that we could learn

great lessons from, and the point being is what we did was worse than, by far, what the Israelites ever did because ours was on a spiritual plane and we had the help and the ability through God's spirit. But God taught us a very powerful lesson through all that.

So again, things that we have responsibility for we need to strive within whatever means to make some *effort*. We may not be able to do a whole lot because when it comes to finances we're so pressed against the wall, but to do *something*, to put *some* effort into it, especially the matter of adding to work if need be. Sometimes there are situations in life where people get to where they just barely want to get by...*barely get by!* Why? Is that putting your whole being into something, and especially if you have the ability? It blows my mind, it really does.

I want to read to you of something here, a story just came up this past week that reflects on this attitude and spirit here of Ecclesiastes 9, and I could repeat stories like this - again, so many kinds of things that I know of in people's lives in the Church - but here is one I thought was good because it reflects this attitude of throwing yourself into something with all of your strength, with all of your might, in that respect.

I was reminded of a story the other day about someone who is an elder in the Church, having reared four children...there was an occasion when her youngest child was old enough for school that she wanted to work in order to help provide more for the family but she had no experience and after going all over in a time when there were no jobs available, the matter of no experience kept coming up, "No experience, so we're not going to hire you," type of thing kept coming up. So she then decided to get experience so that she could add that to a resume, in other words, being able to say, this is what I've done, so she went out to a real estate agency that was close to her home and although they were not hiring she offered to work free for the experience so she could then say this later on, so this could be added. She explained her problem of no work history. She said she had successfully potty trained four children and all were reliable to this day... just a little bit of humor in there and how people respond to that, and then they gave her that opportunity. So they agreed to bring her on board and let her do things there. She answered the phone, took out the trash, did basically anything they asked her that was given to her, any task. She worked there for several weeks and at one point they did want to hire her although they were not even hiring at that time, but she created a job by a certain amount of time.

I think of individuals who do so well, they do something with all their might, that their job becomes indispensable, in one respect. I've known of many situations in God's Church where people don't want to get rid of them because they have done so much and put so much into it, they know that to find someone to replace them, it's not going to be the same. So you know, we can do things like that - and it goes back to this principle here, of doing what you do with all your might, with all of your strength, throwing yourself into it, going above and beyond. So it's not just a matter of the kind of job you maybe wanted to have - that's not the point, that's not maybe what you've trained to do, it's the fact your working, if you're able to do something, to receive wage, to provide in a family and to grow in that, to build upon that and to learn from the process. And you know what? God teaches us in those situations, He molds and fashions the mind in those situations and it does something in our being that you can receive in no other way. You can't receive it out of a book! It's something through experience that God will mold and fashion in a stronger way.

Anyway, she moved on after a period of time there, some weeks, and didn't accept the hiring of the job there, decided she wanted to go back to school in order to improve upon her education, to complete the college here. So she went back to college. She took a full load of 21 hours. Now, I don't know how

many of you know what it's like to take basically a full load, generally recognized when you're talking of a semester system there of 15 hours, 16 hours - every hour past 15 becomes a far greater load if you take... I remember times up to 15 and you wanted to take, basically, sometimes you could find a course that was one hour long, but most of the time they were 3 and 5 when I went to college, so if you added 3 more on there you're talking about 18. That is a kind of load that if you put yourself into it, unless you have done it, you don't know. And I see some heads nodding out there, you know what kind of a load 18 hours in college is and you talk about having to watch things, throw yourself into it. Anyway, so signed up for 21 hours and the Dean tried to talk her out of it, but she wanted to do it, she was motivated to graduate so she could.... She wanted to do that to finish off the graduation, to be able to graduate so she could work full-time at a better paying kind of employment.

So to add to this, to add to this, to show you that spirit and attitude, she had four children she was caring for and a husband and three part-time jobs.

I remember going to college having 15-16 hours, tried 18, and I don't think I ever did master the 18 so it always came back to 15 or 16 because I was working, generally, at least 20 hours, sometimes more, sometimes with two part-time jobs. But to do those things, to hold down that kind of work and that kind of a load, 21 hours, I wouldn't even want to think about it.

So again, four children, a husband, three part-time jobs, which included housecleaning, replenishing greeting cards in a stores and working at a bowling alley on Saturday nights. And then with that, on top of all that, she received straight A's except for one B. Now, you know, to respect such things, to respect such a spirit. Those kinds of stories can be repeated over and over and over again in God's Church. But what is amazing is what it does in people's lives, what it molds and fashions into the person that yields themselves to that kind of spirit, of throwing yourself into what you do. And again, a matter of giving to the family.

One of the primary phases of strengthening family is in work that comes as a result of properly planning ahead in our lives. Family doesn't just happen God's way. God's kind of Family, the kind of Family God wants us to experience and reap the blessings of doesn't just happen and it *definitely* does not happen in human life because of our nature. We have to work against our human nature and strive to live things God's way, to learn things that God has for us, throw ourselves into that, but it takes thought, it takes forethought, it takes change in our life, it takes addressing things in our life when they come along, it takes discussion of those things and sharing of those things in life and growing. It's what you grow in together. It's how people grow together, that's the beautiful thing about family, when it's done God's way. The more it's done God's way the more people draw closer together as one, like a husband and wife.

So again, getting back here to some of this. We are not putting things on hold. I'm going to explain a little bit later why I don't like that phrase, but we're planning ahead. You see, there is a different thinking there. To put something on hold can give a wrong connotation and wrong thinking if you're not careful, but to plan ahead, which may involve some of the same outcome - in a sense, you can put on hold, you're really not going to have exactly the same outcome - because to plan ahead means you've got to work towards something, you've got to think it through and think what it is you're working toward. So what we should be striving to do, and as a whole what we strive to do in God's Church is to plan ahead.

Sometimes that might mean holding back or holding off on some things we might desire or seek to have in our family until we've properly planned ahead to accomplish, good goals in an orderly and systematic way, all as part of an overall *purpose* of rightly strengthening the family.

And so again here, the definition of the terms here and the one I would say a person needs to be cautious about, because to plan ahead is wise, and how you plan ahead is important and it may still involve some of the things that you can say is a matter of putting some things on hold, but be careful how the word is used or the phrase is used.

Planning ahead most certainly weighs heavily upon work, occupations, education and so forth. It involves other aspects of looking and planning ahead that involves debts, finances, budgets, housing, family, on and on it goes, things about family, family size and so forth...which leads me to something that I want to read today to show a kind of balance and also some lessons here for us to learn from in the Church about judging. Recently God has been having us address more things having to do with judging and how we judge within congregations because so much so often when I use that term we're talking in the sense of condemnation or looking down on someone or coming to a conclusion, "Well, I wouldn't have done it that way!" Well, that's fine, keep it to yourself and don't be so sure you're right, because you don't know what all is involved in someone else's life and the choices and decisions that people make and the respect that should go there and the desire that someone succeed in what they do and sometimes it's a matter of maturity and the reality is if you're in your 40's or your 50's, and especially your 60's into your 70's, you can't expect someone in their 20's to act the same way you do. There are certain things you just learn through life, through experience, because you've experienced it.

If I could go back and change - which I don't want to do. I don't want to go back. But I wish I had the abilities that I have now when I was in the 20's. Whew! What I know. But you *can't*, that's how you learn, you learn through your experiences. That's how you grow, it's a process, and it comes in no other way. It's like I told the ministry oftentimes, there are things I can tell you about and you're going to receive it to varying degrees because until you experience some aspects of it you're still not going to understand it. That's just the way of life. There are some things in life we can't fully know until we've actually experienced it.

Anyway, here is something that has come up in some questions of recent time, but one individual asked some certain questions regarding this subject of having children during the end-time and wanted to understand for now certain things and so I addressed it, but I addressed it in a far more detailed manner because it's something I felt would be helpful to the Church, to the ministry, to everyone in God's Church, and candidly not what I felt but what was given. So anyway, I want to read this. It's rather long but I think it's helpful to understand various matters here but it affects everyone in all of our thinking, in how we think about things, and this is just one phase of planning. Having children, planning children in a family is only one phase of life, of things you work toward, of goals and so forth and why you do what you do. But anyway, here is what's being addressed.

This is going to be a rather long response, as it is something that is going to be presented to the Church and needs to be a little more thorough than what would normally be given as a direct reply to what you have asked.

Addressing the times in which we live and the subject of whether or not to have children at this time has not been easy for some families in God's Church. The measure of

difficulty in addressing such an important issue has varied greatly, and that in large part has to do with the measure that some have placed upon what the Church has admonished and taught during this period. For some, this subject has indeed had a big impact on the planning, dreams, hopes, and desires for adding children to the family.

Although this is a very private matter that each couple must address in their own life it has often spilled over into the lives of others in the Church. Some of the spill-over is good, but most of it has been bad due to how people often judge and then discuss such matters about the lives of others. So it's good that the subject be addressed more fully for the church so that every member can take the opportunity to learn from this and become more sound-minded and balanced in God's way of life.

From the outset, I want to state that I believe that you have handled this matter very well in your own life and I believe God will bless you mightily for that. There is much more involved here than that of adding children to a family. The greater focus is a matter of the growth and development of God's Family, which is what you have been yielding yourself to in all this. Our individual families are best visualized when they are seen within the context of being part of God's Family.

You know, that's how we should plan, as a part of God's Family, as a part of God's Church, as a part of what God is doing.

A decision about having children carries great importance and has a powerful impact on family and family planning. There are extremely important lessons that can be learned through all this as to how a person "thinks" when it comes to their relationship with God and His will in our life. Having said that, people have put different weight upon what I as a minister have admonished and encouraged concerning the subject of having children during this final end-time.

There is the principle of "binding and loosening" as was mentioned in a Feast sermon that in part applies to this. In this case, it is not a matter of committing sin if someone chose to have children during the end-time. Indeed, the matter of whether or not to have children during this period was not stated as a matter of sin, but in a context as a matter of exercising wisdom and being expedient in these times. Beyond this and most important, it is a matter of wanting God's guidance and purpose being the center of our life and of the decisions we make.

The greater matter here is spiritual in nature. It is not fully a matter of whether or not someone made the decision to have a child during this time, but of "how" such a decision was made and "why." As with all decisions in life, that is between each individual and God.

Although some have taken various precautions, accidents or surprises still happen. In some instances individuals can council about such matters or make a judgment that has involved thoroughly weighing out all the possible conditions and/or circumstances of their life and have proceeded with having a child. These different circumstances of how

such a decision was made and/or why such a decision was made then impacts and reflects upon the kind of spiritual relationship one has with God...

In all of our decisions we make!

... especially as to the degree God was included in the decision.

Sadly in the midst of such an occasion of a couple having a child during this end-time, there are some people who have secretly or openly judged such matters in a wrong way. Obviously, all such misguided personal judgment toward anyone who has had children should not have happened, and most certainly should never have been voiced to (shared with) others. Any person who has done so does not realize that by wrongly judging others they themselves have sinned in that which they have condemned. Often times what people wrongly judge as sin is not sin, but the act of judging as they have is the actual sin.

So up front...

You know, there is a lot to learn in this, through this process of understanding things that are spiritual in nature and how we think and what we do in *all* facets of life, in finances and family structure, house structure, whatever we do in life.

So up front, in this kind of discussion, it should be noted by those who would judge and dare to speak openly of their judgment, that they should first examine themselves and learn to be more quick to judge themselves than others.

Over the past few years some have chosen to add a child or children to their family and others have not. “How” and “why” they have made such a decision is between themselves and God.

As we consider this subject matter, it is important to have a good perspective of our recent history. It is important to grasp what we have believed and understood as our present truth, by which we have been and are judged. We are judged in our relationship to God in context with the “way” of life He has revealed we are to live and in relation to the truth He reveals to us. Most assuredly we always need to look to God, especially in all planning ahead, including that of planning a family.

Up to the time of December 2008, the Church had always believed that once the final 3 ½ years began that we would be thrust into “great” tribulation, meaning that great physical destruction would last throughout this final period of time. We came to “see” and learn from God that His purpose for this period of the end-time was not one of continuing great physical destruction. At that stage of revelation, we would have been foolish not to have considered the impact such conditions in the world could have on physical family life, especially on those who would be newly born.

Thankfully, even unto now, we nor the world has had to experience such hardship or horror that will yet come upon mankind. The only factor is “how long” will such a condition last? When will final cataclysmic events begin? God has not revealed that and He did not reveal that over the last four years. So we have moved forward in faith of this

being the end-time and we have striven to be wise and expedient in our decisions, and as we have moved forward we have learned and grown to the proportion that we have looked to God through all this.

As we moved forward from December of 2008, and as we approached May 27, 2012, such consideration about having children became more and more important the farther we moved into this period. The matter of “how” we judge such matters simply from a perspective of love toward a newborn child and that of properly providing for family also grew in importance. Such planning and thought has so very much to do with our spiritual relationship to God. We have always understood that once a world war ensues that basic necessities like food and water itself will become major concerns in the lives of people—of families around the world. This does not even touch upon such things as disease, mobility, crime, radiation and other horrific things that will confront people. Whether a child is brought into the world at such a time is an extremely important decision and has much to do with “faith” and belief of what God has given His Church.

This is but a small overview of the time we have gone through in the Church since December of 2008, but it is the framework for the structure of many decisions that individuals and families have had to address throughout this period of time. This is the basis upon which many decisions have been made regarding major planning we have had to address. We have learned throughout this process and much of that has been about ourselves, in the way we think, the way we are, and where we are spiritually in our relationship with God.

Most recently, I have stated my dislike for the expression of “putting my life on hold.” This term seems to be used too often as a crutch or even as an excuse to not plan ahead, meet current responsibilities, or even work at this time, but instead to simply “wait” for change in the world to come to us. Yet over the years encouragement has been given that people should plan ahead, especially when it comes to working toward a future occupation. One of the primary means of doing so is through furthering ones education. Certainly this is the basis for planning and of being employed—of working. It should have been understood as part of ones responsibility: to work, plan ahead, and meet current obligations now.

When it has come to the choice or question of when to have children, this term of “putting my life on hold” has possibly been used to describe postponing having children until after Christ returns. However, “putting your life or family on hold” is not the best kind of term to use in this context, as it implies a negative association with not having children now, when in reality it should be viewed as a matter of “wise planning” in striving to provide in the very best way we can for our family out of a motivation of love. This is the kind of “love” that provides “as best it can” for a family. It is what “gives” the greatest potential for providing, in the best way possible, for a healthy, well nourished, stable, protected, and well provided family.

Establishing a career (job, occupation) to provide for a family is one very important phase of family planning. Yet even in this, many do not plan or have not planned as well as they could have or should have. The more one does plan and the harder one has worked to

accomplish those plans/goals, the more a family has potential for being blessed. This is the process of exercising “love” to one’s family. How and when to plan on adding children to a family is extremely important in life, especially in the times we have been living as we know that a world war is on the horizon. So we have been admonished to “plan ahead,” not to put one’s life on hold, but to move forward with our planning and working in order to provide in the best manner possible for family.

Going full circle, with all that has now been stated about planning and working toward family goals in life, and the consideration of the times in which we live, the matter of when to have children is a very important decision. It is not a matter of sin, but of “planning.” Each family must make such decision themselves. Once they have made those decisions, they must then work to accomplish what they have planned. No one should judge them in their personal choices of how, why, and when they work to accomplish their own personal family planning.

As was already mentioned, sometimes the best of planning has to be revisited as in the case when an “accident” or something of a similar nature occurs. Sometimes the consideration of the desires of a mate who is not part of the Church at this time must be taken into account as part of “family” planning, which two people must work out between themselves. Some situations have unique considerations that can have a great impact on ones planning as well, such as health, age, etc. Again, these are private issues between a husband and wife.

Before May 27, 2012, the greatest admonition given about any decision regarding having children concerned the condition of the world and its potential affect on family once a world war erupts. Who would not want such a thing to be a major part of ones consideration in planning family? But now our focus is upon May 19, 2013. Interestingly, what we will now address as new for consideration in when to have children was not part of our thinking prior to May 27.

At least as far as what God gave through the Church. Now, it was in some families lives! You know what, it was looking ahead, believing that May 27th was the date, so that someone who is pregnant, that child is going to be born in a new age! Awesome! But that didn't work, so you know what you do? You move ahead because you did it before God in faith, you did it in the best way of your planning, a part of your planning process and you ask God to bless it, you ask God for protection. We do that anyway in our lives, we're going to do that anyway. It's a matter of a relationship with God and including God in our lives!

Although we did not know it ahead of time, God was going to take us beyond that date, and that would definitely affect such planning.

For someone to now become pregnant, the child would not be born before May 19th, but would be carried longer and born latter in the year. Anyone who is older may well choose to consider such a possibility in their future planning, but that again is a personal choice between a husband and a wife. We cannot plan beyond that time in the context of “what if” Christ does not return on that date. The reality is that this is what we fully trust and believe God has given to us as a timeline.

And those before May 27th did as well. So it was a matter of including God and God will bless you in decisions and choices you make when God is included to that degree, in that manner.

As in all matters of family planning we look to God to bless us in our decisions.

And you know, that's the bottom line. Do we do everything perfectly? Not a one of us. That's how we learn and grow, we learn from mistakes we make and we go before God and God has mercy on us and God intervenes in our life as we learn and as we grow.

So anyway, I wanted to read that, to give... because factors like that, of where we are, have affected the ways we think in all kinds of planning, not just about children but in finances and in other things in structure in the family and what you do, cars, homes, where you live, apartment, whatever it might be. There are many factors to be included in family that you share and grow together in, things we learn about responsibilities and the like. So this just being another part of thinking ahead, of how to plan and how to think when it comes to family; it takes work, and a part of that work has to do with the planning and thinking ahead and sharing of talking it over, then sharing in the life together and that's how God works with us in life. It's a beautiful process, this thing of sharing in life, and especially in families, husbands and wives and children and so forth.

One of the greatest attributes of focusing on God at the beginning of this series has been about the backbone of what it takes to plan ahead, to bring about the ultimate in Family, which is Elohim, God's Family. That backbone is work and it involves many aspects of life, not just employment, but that's one part, that is a *big* part for our human life, and it's reflected in a way that God has been planning, preparing, and molding His own Family. There is so much to learn from God and how God does things, how God has worked, what God does and why He does it. We're to learn how to plan ahead and then work to accomplish the goals of those plans, to accomplish them, and it begins with hard work.

Let's turn over to 2 Peter 1. It's work that becomes pleasurable and rewarding when geared to sharing in what God is building when God is the focus of it all, and that's the next big thing to grasp about true work ethic that comes from God, that the purpose of the work is all about sharing, sharing in a Family and God speaks of it in many different ways.

When I give something like this I can't help but think about how the world stops short at the reason for Christ's death and they don't grasp the purpose of it all, how it's not just a matter of being forgiven of sin it's for the purpose that God can live in us. That's an awesome thing to understand, that correlation here of something we're talking about on a bigger, in a bigger scale in a sense of seeing what God is doing and how He's doing it, and I think of all that He went through, indeed so that we could be forgiven of sin but the purpose of it, the purpose of things always needs to be seen and understood, and sometimes people skim over that part because it's a matter of that vision, of seeing what God is doing and understanding what God is doing and why He's doing it, things about the Family. And the primary thing is always about sharing, it truly is, the hard work that's involved, but the purpose of that is for sharing and what can be learned from it. It's a building process and it's the definition of Family, of what's made from it, what's created from it, of what comes about as a result of the kind of Family that God is blessing us to become a part of and what we're to glean from that in our own lives.

So again, that is the next big thing to grasp about true work ethic that comes from God, that the purpose of it is all about sharing, sharing in family/Family.

2 Peter 1:1 - Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Peter setting the stage here, telling them by what power this is being given to them, the understanding of certain things that we're able to have and that we're able to have together. ...**like precious faith with us**; it's a matter of sharing what God has given to us, always.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, a desire of something that God wants to share in His Family, grace and peace. He wants us to grow in that so there are rules, there are laws of life, there is planning of life, there is work involved to bring about peace. It doesn't just happen! There is a way that brings it about and there is effort that goes into it, especially with what's required upon human nature. This is the way of God but it isn't the way of human beings. **Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord:** So the desire is that we receive the knowledge we have with God's spirit and that which comes about then, their purpose, His purpose and so forth, what it all means, that we can be blessed by it and grow.

According as His divine power has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, again, this thing of God dwelling in us, of what God wants to share with us, of what He wants to give to accomplish something so much greater, **through the knowledge of Him who has called us to glory and virtue:** to a Family that is going to experience something far greater, of something we want to attain to that is sometime even difficult, obviously, for the human mind to grasp and comprehend because of our nature.

Verse 4 - Whereby is given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises: in other words, of those things that God has planned and worked to accomplish. He lets us know what He's been doing, He lets us know the purpose of it. He lets us know there is something from the very beginning, Elohim, and His purpose for a Family, **that by these you might be 'partakers'**; it's a Greek word that literally means 'a sharer'...a sharer, partaker, that's the message here, **that by these things**, that we have just gone through and mentioned, **that we might share in**, that's what He's telling us, that's what it means to be a partaker in something here. It's a partaker with God! It's not something we can have apart from God; it's literally a matter of having to share in this, because the source is God and God wants to share it with us. That's His way and that's the way of His Family. **That we might be partakers/sharers**, as it should be, **in His divine nature**, because that's the context, His divine nature and not 'the' divine nature. We know what that is, it's about *His* divine nature, that's the context; **having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust**. And so there is a process that God takes us through so that we can share with Him, and there is a lot involved.

How long have you been in God's Church? How long have you been fighting against self? How long have you been working at various things? This concept of working at things is mentioned over and over again in scripture that we're not even going to go through. We know that's a part of life, it's something we... because it's not just going to happen. You have to put effort into it, you have to put effort into your relationship with God, it doesn't just happen!

To draw closer to God, it doesn't just happen, it's got to be something that God shows you literally how to do it, in part, and much of it, just like in any family has to do with communication, fellowship, being on your knees, crying out to God, praying to God, a desire to draw closer to God, a desire to study material that He gives to us, to understand, to grow in understanding of His mind and His desire in our life. And so what we put into it is what we get out of it, literally. How much we throw ourselves into

that is to the degree we receive out of it. I've mentioned this oftentimes just in the context, in the truth about going to the Feast of Tabernacles. We can go to the Feast of Tabernacles and we hear sermons that have been prepared for us but the more you put into it the more you're going to get out of it, the more you pray about it, that the sermons be inspiring, that they be blessed, that they be what we need, the more you prepare yourself in the right spirit for the Feast - and I'm not going to go through all that - but again, things we've given admonition about, things that have been there. The more you put into it the more God can give you, and that's what He wants to do, He wants to feed you mightily at the Feast more than any other time during the year, because of all the material that's there.

We can go and listen, but if our prayers haven't been involved in it, if our desire isn't there in the same way and the hunger isn't there it's not going to be fed in the same way because this is spiritual. And so there is work, there is even things we just have to go through as a matter of effort on our part as to what we receive out of it, and on and on it goes.

Let's turn over to 1 John 1. We're going to look at a word next here in the context of the plan God is working out in His Family. It comes from this word 'partakers', which means 'a sharer'. There is another word that comes from that that's interesting how it's used. God just continues through time to show us more and more about His Family, the purpose of sharing within Family. It's one of the major purposes of the work and the effort and the planning that goes into it. It's the product of something later on that you're going to receive, and the sharing is the benefit, is the reward, is the excitement of it all. It's what brings about the fullness and the richness of it all.

1 John 1:1 - That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life; and so very profound here, in essence, what He's saying here, because it's powerful physically and spiritually and he's talking about something here of something they have experienced, they had been experiencing about the Word of God that has come into their life, that they have been blessed to live, to be a part of their life, but even having to do with the very life which they witnessed concerning Jesus Christ, of the Word that became life, of Jesus Christ, of that which was God that was made manifest to them of a way of life to be lived. They had an example, it was through Him. It wasn't in the Sadducees or the Pharisees or anyone else, it was in Jesus Christ. And that's what's unique about the Church, that people are able to, to a degree, not to that degree, but in a like manner, have a taste of, have a part of something that even if they don't understand it... but we're able to have that uniquely in fellowship with God's spirit, and the more, if you have God's spirit obviously, the more that that's able to be received as far as a uniqueness of sharing in family, but even in the world there are things that people are to receive different from us than they were.... like at work and different employees of a business.

The way *you* treat someone should be obvious as compared to so often even the boss or the one that you're working under because of how other people treat them and how... and so there are differences that should be obvious in our life that people don't necessarily have an answer for. It's like the Feast of Tabernacles, people are always excited in some of these places when large groups of people would come in, and some of the major things that they were impressed by, because they had other church groups come in and some of them cringe when they heard it was a church group because there are just a lot of church groups that just tend to be a little riotous and do things that aren't good, and yet so often God's Church would come in and what they saw, they saw a difference in how children were, how people behaved themselves, how they treated waitresses and waiters. People often commented on those things. They didn't like what we believed but they liked the product.

And so the world doesn't understand that yet but this is a part of what we're talking about, of what John is describing here to the Church, **that which we have seen, which our eyes have seen**, literally seen it. We've seen His life, we've seen the Word of God being lived in Christ, and we have been blessed to handle this way of life then, to live it.

Verse 2 - (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and we bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, not Christ, but Christ in them, God's power in them by how they're being dealt with and worked with and how we learn to treat each other in a Family, **which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;**) Shows the source, it comes from God, and God wants to share it. It's all about sharing!

That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you also may have 'fellowship', comes from this word 'partaker', 'a sharer'. We know that. By knowledge we know the process, we know that it's about sharing, but the very words themselves in the Greek language, this is what it's getting across, partaking of it, that we're able to be blessed to be a part of it and that it's God's desire... it shows God's desire to *share* these things, that we're able to share it in fellowship with each other, that we're able to share it with God. That's what's so beautiful about fellowship, it's with God even amongst ourselves because it's a matter of God's spirit that enables it, that brings it about. Just like the letter we went through and talking about judging and things we do. We learn about care and concern for other people and things they may be going through in life, and there is enough condemnation by the world, we don't need to add to it. We need to be merciful, we need to have the attributes of God. You know, if something needs to be addressed and changed or something in people's lives, it'll happen in the structure that God has given and God will, if it's to that degree... and even then it's going to be for the purpose of people being able to come to repentance and change and continuing on in fellowship, being at one, and having sins 'covered', gotten rid of God's way, not to be exposed to everybody and...

Anyway, a unique way of life, the only way of life, one that is focused upon a way that is giving, sacrificing in order to give.

Verse 3 again, **That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship/sharing in with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ**. So again, showing the source of where this fellowship is coming from, this sharing, this partaking together, where it's coming from, it's coming from the power of God's spirit that we're able to have in our lives. **And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full**. With God's spirit and God's way of life, the more it's a part of us, the more that it lives through us, the more that it lives in us, the more that we share of God that we can bring in of sharing with God the richer life becomes, the more rewarding, the more blessed life is. And that's what he's saying, 'that your joy may be full'.

This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, so it's starting to show something here now that is unique and different in a part of a relationship, in a fellowship, in sharing with God. His desire is to share Himself, which is the light, a way of life, and that's the example that's being given here.

Just like other scriptures talk about, 'what fellowship is light with darkness', it's the same sort of thing. There is no fellowship of the two, there is one or the other in that respect, the two are not the same. And this is an example about God and God's way of life and what we can share with Him.

Verse 5 - This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And if we say that we have fellowship with Him, if we have a relationship and we're sharing with Him and God is our focus and God is in our life and God is in us and that's what we desire in life and we desire to have that kind of relationship, of sharing. **If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and are not doing the truth:** God gives us things to measure by so we don't deceive ourselves into thinking we have some kind of relationship with Him or that we don't try to foist off something that's false, that we're having a relationship with God because we go back and forth from Sabbath services and the Feast of Tabernacles or whatever, but it's being lived by what we think toward each other and the kind of fellowship we have with each other. On and on it goes....

So there is that which we can measure ourselves by. **If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie,** because we have to repent of that because it's sin, to walk in the darkness, the things that are in darkness and the things that are in our life that we want to be free from, to come out of, **and are not doing the truth:** There are principles here that can be applied in physical family and physical structure in life, of whether something is true. I probably should have asked to read a particular letter I sent out this week, maybe I will next week, we'll see, because this fits into some of this too, it has to do with physical life and how people live family life and what we do in our relationships and how we live toward each other and there are some things that are a matter of ...that aren't true in life, and there are some things that are true, and that which is God's way of life, of how to live, of how people are faithful to each other, on and on it goes, there are certain principles and truths that people must learn to live in life and this is... And so this is a relationship with God but how about applying those things in a physical family as well - yes they should be, they're principles that should be applied that make a family strong, the sharing in a certain way of living and sharing in this way of life is awesome, it truly is, people that are able to share, able to share in family, that your desire is for children, that they share in this way of life, that they grow up valuing the principles and things that are there and with God's spirit they will in time, whatever that time is, because God has purpose for different things He's allowed through time.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, there is a uniqueness of sharing that we're able to have, of something that's beautiful. It's like as we grow and as we learn and things that inspire us when we hear them, things that we've read over many times and all of a sudden something hits us. I enjoy some of the letters that come in sometimes about somebody listening to something a second time or third time and they talk about they heard it but it didn't hit them and all of a sudden it hit them and it's like this light. We all experience different things like that at different times when something hits us, and inspiring, it's exciting then because it's seen on a spiritual plane that is unique and we... what an incredible sharing with God, because God lets us feel that, He lets us experience that.

I think of something else that God's letting us experience right now that I'm going to throw in the midst of all this, because it's been very much on my mind - probably supposed to be for the next sermon, but anyway - something that everyone feels unanimously I would say in God's Church; it's the voice of a 5th Seal more powerful than ever, "How long Eternal? How long God? How long?" We have such a desire to see the end of this age come. We are so pressed, if you will, stressed - pressed, though, is a better word in one respect but sometimes it causes the reaction of stress. But we are pressed. There is that which is in the world that we are seeing in ways I have never seen it. I think of the apostasy. I think of different things that have happened, but I think of where we are... I think of the way the world is right now. I am reminded of this every time I look at the book thing now when I see the numbers of books going out. It's dropped off to nearly nothing and it reflects a spirit in the world, it reflects the lethargy,

the sleepiness... like as in this country, it's been lulled to sleep. It's like what happened... That's why the apostasy happened in the Church. We are seeing and experiencing something on a physical *and* spiritual plane, if you will, in the world that existed before the apostasy occurred, and we're seeing the same sort of thing being played out in a greater way in the world now.

But there is something very unique in all this and it's what we sense...and I hope we can come to understand that this is what God senses and we're sharing in it, just like before the flood. Okay? What God saw! And it talks about what God saw on the earth, okay, God sees it again. It's not that He hasn't seen it all for 6,000 years, but it comes to a point of seeing it to where it now must be addressed, and He's showing us things, He's letting us see things to where we loathe what we see in the world, we want to see everything changed, we long for it, for all families, not just our own, we ache for it for the rest of the world. Our prayers are not just about ourselves - shouldn't be - our prayers are not just about the Church, it's about everyone in this world, of the freedom, of a desire that we see of people being freed from what's out there, of the bondage that exists, of things that are so upside down that are so painful and hurtful in people's lives, and about the only way that people are able to cope with it is to be lulled to sleep. There is a spiritual aspect there, like a drug, of having some other kind of focus to take your mind away from the realities of life, and so much of the world is living in that now, but we see it on a spiritual plane. And in some ways I hope that that's encouraging to you because you're of the same mind of God, God is blessing you with His mind, of what He sees, and what He sees He's sharing with the Church so that we can see it, so that we can understand. Do you remember what it said about speaking of men of old and by what they did, and I think it spoke specifically of Noah, that because of what he did he condemned the world. We do too.

Because God blesses us to see it we condemn the way of this world, we condemn... we are in agreement with God that the only way, *the only way* for this world to be changed is for mankind to be humbled. There is no other way! And to go on, it just gets worse and worse and worse, and the blindness of it all, the almost, as you were, drugged effect of it all, of this lethargy and a drugged state mentally in the mind, is such a poison and it affects us because we see through it. I can't stand to watch the news at times; I just can't stand certain things because, you know, something that should cause a nation to panic... "Oh, let's just print more..." Lies! I saw an article that came through and talked about all the lies, and you think... I'm dumbfounded by the kinds of lies that are being thrown out there that people latch onto in life because they'd rather believe that in order to continue on, so they don't have to think too hard about certain things.

You know what I'm talking about. But please see this on a spiritual plane, that if you have that mind is God's spirit in it? Better believe it, because that's the mind of God right now, because we're at that point, as with before the flood, of something that God sees, in that context of what it means to 'see'... He's always seen it for 6,000 years, but *now* at a time that it must be dealt with, *now* at a time when these things must come to pass for the sake of delivering the world, indeed, for the sake of bringing in a new Government, a new way of life, and we are deeply, deeply convicted of that...not by our own ability but by God's spirit. So this is a part of sharing. It's not a pleasant part of the sharing, just like sometimes in life you address difficult things in a family - might be finances, might be death, might be many things, but you address something, whether... and when I speak of family I mean individually or with others involved in that as well. But within family/Family there are things we address oftentimes in life that aren't enjoyable, but the fact that we share it with others, to whatever degree we do, is a part of life and that's a part of what we're talking about here. Not everything that's shared is pleasant, but you know what? I think of the marriage part of a marriage ceremony when we sometimes hear, 'for better or for worse', in other words, 'in good times and in bad times', and you know what, you grow, you can grow

through both. The good are rewarding but the bad are the things that tend to mold you, and how you address them and what you share in addressing them in your life, whatever it might be - death, hardship in finances, whatever the things are - the more you share that together the more you're bound together. And so we are with God.

I think of a scripture that talks about entering into fellowship, entering into 'partakers of the sufferings of Christ'. You think that isn't a biggie that draws us closer together to God? By its very structure is the very thing that helps us to draw closer to God, that helps us to understand and perceive and grasp things, like I just mentioned here about the world, that we want God's way of life, that we are more at one, in unity with God, in one mind with God, in agreement with God. We not only understand the need, we *desire it soon* on this earth! And so again, uniqueness of things we share in that are the things that cement a Family together, that draw a Family closer together. It's a beautiful thing when it's done God's way. So it's through good times and bad times and what we make of it is what it's all about, how we share it is what it's all about. If we don't share we rob ourselves.

So again here, this principle, **verse 7** - I just want to make sure I've covered it all - **But if we are in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin.** So it's a process, a process of coming into unity and oneness with God. And again this thing of sharing, sharing His way of life, getting rid of sin, sharing more in the light, being a part of the light, becoming the light, the word, whatever.

Another area of scripture here, **Ephesians 3:9**, in context - **And to make all men see what is the fellowship/all people see what is the fellowship**, again, from this word 'partaker', 'to share', 'a sharer' **of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God**, so the point being is that no one through time has grasped anything save that God give it to him, because it's hidden in God, it hasn't been given to the world. The world doesn't understand, doesn't comprehend. That's why we talk about a progressive revelation in how God reveals things in His way, His time to those with whom He works. And so it's talking about some of this mystery, in other words, it's a type of thing in the context here that no one else can see it, no one else can understand it...and that's the mystery of it. But we can because it's of God's spirit and it's about God dwelling in us. This mystery is about God dwelling in us and what is given in the mind that otherwise we could not have, what we see and what we share in that we otherwise could not share in. And so God shares His spirit, His life with us to bring us into His Family.

And so again, **to make all see what is the fellowship, to share in of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God who 'created'**, a Greek word that means 'to make', 'to build', **all things by/through Jesus Christ**: So again, that planning and that purpose that was set out before anything was created; that mankind needed a Saviour, needed a Passover, needed a High Priest, and that structure then that God has been working to build through time, working to accomplish.

Verse 10 - To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in... it says 'heavenly places', but it's just talking about that which is in God's care and in God's purpose and God's working, what He is accomplishing, **might be known by the Church the 'manifold' wisdom of God**, it's a unique word here, it means 'the multiple elements of', 'the multiple features of', 'the vastness of', and it even is a word that has to do with color, the different colors, literally, is where the word comes from. It's like this matter of wisdom, it's so extent, it's so varying, it's so rich and so full, and the more we learn the more we see of it the more we grow in it, the more awesome it becomes, the more beautiful it becomes, and so this is a part of how it's describing this, almost poetic as it were by the word but real.

Verse 11 - According to the eternal purpose, you know, purpose! You purpose certain things, you plan for certain things in life, you plan ahead. What is that purpose? What is that plan? What are you working toward? What are you sharing in? It's an awesome thing, God's plan from beginning to...when I say "...the end" I'm talking about mankind, to the end of the hundred years, a thousand and then a hundred, to things accomplished to bring about His Family, the God Family fully - but **according to the eternal 'purpose'**, a word that just means, 'that which is set forth, that which is in motion', that work which is being done, **which He 'purposed'**, another word here that means, 'made', 'did', in other words, 'performed, worked to accomplish' **in/through Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in Him**. You know, even there, these are principles of life that are spiritual being revealed to us here but they're also a part of physical human life, that when things are done God's way, by the matter of purpose and planning, of something that you receive from it by working toward it and accomplishing certain things. There is a boldness and a confidence in life that you can't gain any other way!

I think of 'Spokesman's Club' that we used to have in the Church; certain principles of individuals getting up and learning how to present themselves and speak and having certain formats of speeches that were to be given before a group of others that would evaluate what they did and every aspect of human nature that comes out in all that because you have your peers that are going to tell you, they're supposed to give you one good thing you did in it and then one negative thing, and sometimes there are many negatives things and you are just so overwhelmed and you feel all horrible and you fail it. And sometimes they'd make the decision, "You failed your speech, you need to do it again." And then the minister would get up and decide whether or not that was the case, you need to go at it again. But there was a process by going through this that was unique in the Church, because God was a part of it and the training that was involved, that there were principles you learned by the experience, and even about yourself. There were people who became far better at their jobs, their ability to express themselves.

I think of different comments that came out in time. I remember how I was when I first started and I've mentioned that many times, the first speech where my tongue stuck to my mouth. I had a huge dose of human nature, of carnality, of vanity and pride, because that's why it stuck there. If I wasn't concerned about what others thought it wouldn't have bothered me, but it did. It's human nature, things that come out of you that you're able to learn from and you learn to combat. And that's the way God's way of life is. But I think of how that was done in a very unique way, that there are principles that you live that I marvel at the number of people who commented later in life how their jobs, how even positions they received, they received so much more because of this training they went through, simply because of a boldness and a confidence and an ability that was molded and fashioned within them that they didn't have before.

And so it's like work, and the more you put yourself into it, of whatever it is in life, the more you put yourself into something, like the individual we read about earlier, there is a boldness and a confidence there that couldn't come any other way except through that experience. And it's by throwing yourself into something and applying and putting yourself into something, the more you put yourself into it the more these things can become a product that is rewarding in your life. So it is with God's way of life. But I think of even on very physical terms...anyway, I could say more but I don't want to, want to stop there on that part. There is so much to be learned from these things, truly is, things we go through in life, things we can experience just about ourselves that's healthy for people to have and how you think about yourself...because it's a matter of being measured by God, before God, of how you're doing things in your life. It's not a worry and a concern about how others think about you in life, it's a matter of how

do you stand before God? That's what counts! And you hope that all others learn that through their life, through their time and learn to treat people accordingly.

It doesn't matter where people are, at what level of life by how human nature tends to judge it, we're all the same. We all have to sit on a pot, you know?! There are certain things that are basic in nature. Some people seem to be above that in life...their nose seems to reflect that - but that's not true... and sad, isn't it.

Verse 13 - Wherefore I desire that you not faint/grow weary/lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in heaven and earth is named, and so what he's been talking about in the whole part here, even throughout the entire area here, it's always, as a whole, about Family, it's about God's Family and how we're able to become more a part of it, what we're able to see as our part in it and the boldness and confidence we can have in God's Family. And the more we're at one with God the more we share in God the more that's us, that's the way we are.

Verse 16 - That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man; That's God's great *desire* - what an awesome thing - it's just we have to yield our self to it. We have to be the ones to determine to pray and to study and when to fast or to do things in our life and when we do it because we want to draw closer to God because we desire that this life live more fully in us, we desire to be more at one with Him, to be more in unity with Him, to share with Him. There is nothing greater than to share with God! That's why one of those things that God revealed for the Feast a couple years ago, whenever it was (lose track of time here now), but the awesomeness of what God revealed, that in His Family, that He's going to dwell in us for all eternity, that's what it's about. Now we just experience it from time to time in varying degrees in our life depending on things about sin and repentance and our ability as to where we are spiritually, but once we are spirit to recognize that's going to be the way of life of a mind that is the same, unity and harmony and it's done by a spiritual power? I don't fully comprehend that. We are tasting of it now and the more we taste of it and when we taste of it in the greater way in different portions of our life the more exciting it is.

I think of the Feast when we hear as many sermons as we do at one time - that's sometimes the height of what we're able to experience in a particular year! It's at that time more than any other time, a closeness, a oneness, an excitement, a rewarding experience we have with God that we're able to drink in and with one another in fellowship that is unlike other times of the year! Awesome! But to have that for all eternity within a huge Family? We can't grasp that, we just look forward to it with anticipation and excitement because we believe it, and we know that is has to be far above and beyond what the *best* of anything we've ever tasted in life thus far.

...to be strengthened with might, by His spirit in the inner man, that spirit which is His that dwells in us.

Verse 17 - That Christ may dwell in your hearts, meaning the inner being, the inner man, if you will, person, the mind, **by faith;** powerful tools of something spiritual that God lets us experience that we never experienced until we came in the Church, until God began to draw us. It's an awesome thing to have something spiritual in your life. You think of the world, they have nothing spiritual! They have nothing they're sharing in of God! Nothing! Until they're able to taste of God's spirit in that regard. That's when you really begin to have a relationship with God, when you're able to receive of that spirit - like the first time you just knew, without proving anything, the Sabbath. "Yeah, it should be obvious to

everyone!" You realize, no. You have to learn after a time that the only reason you have it is because God shared with you something of Him, of Himself, and the more that grows the more exciting it becomes. It's an awesome process that we go through.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts/inner being/your mind by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love... that's God's desire, it's what it's all about. It's the way we're able to experience something that is different from anything of human nature, because the best we can have is philia, as human beings, philia, Philadelphia, brotherly love, fraternal love. But to experience something that's totally giving?totally unselfish? ...we still have that part, don't we, but we're able to experience more of that at times in our life when we recognize that there is sacrifice and the giving of love in order to love someone else, forgiving and so forth, the things that take place.

And so God blesses us to be rooted and grounded in that because this is what peace, this is what Jerusalem is all about.

Verse 18 - That we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is, not 'the breadth', but such breadth, because it's talking about agape, God's love, God, length, and depth, and height; in other words of such love, such a mind, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, it's something that you experience. It surpasses just knowing about something, it's something you gain through experience, through life, through living, and you know it, it's in you, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we may ask or think, according to the power that works in us; Awesome! God's power and God's spirit that works in us to bring us into His Family - unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. It's awesome what it says!

I think we'll stop there. That may even be the conclusion of this sermon series, we'll see.

Because basically what we've talked about, these principles, the principles of work in this particular series, of the work that goes into creating, to building, to planning everything else in family/Family, whether it be our own or whether it be in that which we share with God, the principles are all there, the framework is all there and we need to learn from that in our own lives, the sharing.

So much can be said about that, about families. We need to look at our lives and see, in some cases, where technology has robbed us of the times for sharing... because sharing doesn't happen... there are other words in here we may or may not go to next week when it talks about a communion; it's a word, again for fellowship, words for communication, where it talks about communicating, it goes back to these things about sharing and fellowship, but there is so much to do in a family, in family life that has to do with vocalizing, and that takes time and they don't always just happen and there are so many things in technology that tend to rob us of those things today.

And so we need to think about those things that we can share more together in and what it means to share in the things we have, the good and the bad in life and how we grow from that.

With that we'll stop for the day.

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