

Welcome to God's Sabbath, brethren.

The title of today's sermon is *Stay Focused*.

Life in general is difficult and at times full of human stress and suffering. There is a saying that says, "Life was not meant to be easy." Well, that's true, life was not meant to be easy, and the reason is because through trials we can grow. Growth can come if we handle trials in a spiritual way rather than on a physical way. And as this world now plummets further into distress, the world financial system continues in its downturn, even though things on the outside sometimes can look good, the reality is that the world's system *is* heading for a collapse. Unemployment is continuing to grow in certain countries.

I saw an article the other day where in Kenya with highly educated younger people, the unemployment rate can be as high as 70%. 70% unemployment! And people would queue up for *hours* with a *hope* of being selected for employment. Unemployment is a problem in the world. Well, employment becomes more difficult to obtain and we have the continual things of physical life. They do not change. Matters of physical life do not change. We have to earn an income. We have to pay our bills. We have to eat. We have to put a roof over our head. All of these things can cause physical human stress.

For us in God's Church we strive to focus on the spiritual aspect of our life, but we don't always succeed because we are physical and we have to deal with physical matters that impact our life. There is a statement that says, "Money makes the world go round." And that's just a fact of life! Without money we can't survive.

I was speaking to someone the other day that spoke about how there was a period where they had no income at all and the lengths that they went to, to earn an income – going fishing and various things. It can be very stressful. Just to try to earn an income is difficult, but to eat? Without an income what do you do? Well, if there is no income, if there is no money, you still have to eat, still have to pay bills. And these days with government systems and the way they're set up there are rates to pay or land taxes, there are all different taxes where even though you don't have an income you're still expected to pay for life, to pay shires and to pay governments taxes, even though you don't have an income.

We all have to have an income of some type to sustain our physical life. We have matters that we have to manage in life. Those matters are just simply living. There is a story that talks about somebody that owned an island in Hawaii – and I don't know whether it's true or not – but the moral of the story is a reality in today's government structure, today's society. The person owned, I think it was around 100 acres of land, and was very happy living off that land in a beautiful country like Hawaii, and over time, of course, governments move in and begin to tax. And it ended up that he was living off the land and living off the ocean, but because of the government system of taxation and various things there was then, of course, a need to pay taxes on the land, in other words, rates. You've got to pay rates for the land. And somebody came out and valued the land, the hundred acres in Hawaii at almost like a million dollars; therefore, his rates and everything he had to pay went up and up and up. And all he said to them was he wanted just to live where he lived all his life and he just wanted to stay there and live off his land and continue to fish, and he didn't have an income per se to be able to pay all the taxes. So in the end he

owed so much money to the government that in the end, what did he have to do? Well, he had to turn around and sell the land that he wanted because the only way he could fund the taxes was actually to sell the land. And that's the way man has set up his system. The more that a person has in the way of land and equity or things of today's society, you'll find that the governments of the world penetrate into that to try to acquire what they can. So owning possessions in this world? You have to pay a price for owning possessions in this world, no matter what it is.

In Australia, if you own a car you have to register the car, you have to insure it, you put all these different things that you *have* to do, so owning a car can cost you thousands of dollars just to actually *have* it, and that happens every year! No different than if you own a house. You have what's called "rates." So even if you own it, you still have to find money – today's society's money – to be able to pay the government for your acquisition. What you *own* you have to pay for it for the rest of your life, and it's called "rates" and "taxes."

Those things in life *can* cause us what is called "stress" or "distress" because we all have to have an income. And today's society is now all governed or geared towards the fact that things are going to get more difficult. And as that applies to all of us in all different countries things are becoming more and more difficult. It is harder to pay the bills, whether they're the water rates or the water bills or the electrical bills, all the different rates and taxes that we have. Money becomes an issue.

Well, Christ made a statement about this. He said not to worry. Well, what did Christ really mean when He made this statement not to worry? The purpose of this sermon is to encourage those called by God to stay focused on what is important in life, and that is the spiritual. And the reason is because we can get so drawn into the physical things that we often can leave God out of the picture, and that is a tendency of human beings, to become self-reliant and not to focus on the *most* important thing in life, which is the spiritual component of our life.

If you'd like to turn to Luke 12 and we're going to read from verse 13-53. **Luke 12:13 – Then one of the crowd said to Him, to Christ, Teacher (Master), tell my brother to divide,** and that is "to distribute" **the inheritance with me.** So here he's saying that, it's a brother, he wanted now to have the allocation of the inheritance that generally had went to the older brother in the family, and he wanted it to be divided with him.

Verse 14 – But He (Christ) said to him, Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator, or a divider, over you (or "unto you")? And what Christ's saying is, "What makes you think it's of any of My business to be a mediator for you?" In other words, Christ is really saying there, "Well, who made Me the judge of these matters? There are laws to be followed."

Christ now then goes on and reveals the intent of the motive *behind* the request or the *question* about dividing the inheritance, because there is a motive. When somebody makes statements like that, "Well, tell my brother to divide the inheritance," there has got to be a motive of *why* that question comes into the mind, and it generally is based on the fact that they believe that it's unfair that the allocation of the inheritance has gone to the elder person, or they're saying that, "I need more. I want more!" But there is a motive and that's what Christ then goes to, which is the motive of the question of why this person is asking this particular question or request.

Verse 15 – And He said to them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, now, that word there is "greed, the desire to have more," and it can be more directed towards "an unlawful desire," because

there are desires in life that are lawful, that God says that we should have. We *should* have desires for things that are lawful. Well, here Christ is referring, "Beware of covetousness," because it's actually an *unlawful* desire, which means it's a motivation driven by self. That's what's really being said **...for one's life does not consist in the 'abundance,'** (the excess or increase) **of things he possesses.** Now, Christ is virtually saying that, "Things are not about what we own and what we have access to on a physical level." Life is not about that for somebody that has been called by God into the Body of Christ. We are to watch our *attitude* towards wealth.

This is a key area of life. We have to be very careful of what attitude we develop towards wealth. Now, with the world being plummeted into the desire to continue to gain wealth or to live in prosperity, it's going to have attitudes *towards* wealth. In certain countries in particular, when Africa went through a change, one culture saw that another culture had more than what it thought that it should have, so it's attitude towards those that *had* the wealth was one of, "We're going to take it from you!" And they *hated* the people that had the wealth. Well, that is because of human nature, and this is something that we have to be very careful about, that we don't have a wrong attitude towards people that have access to wealth, that God has allowed to have. We need to guard *our* attitude towards them, not to be envious, not to be covetous and desire to have it. Now, there is a Proverb, also, that talks about many aspects about the way we think towards wealth and others that have wealth. We're to be on guard against an attitude of greed.

Now, *this* is a subtle attitude that can develop. It's a covetousness that starts in the mind because of the way we think towards wealth or acquiring things, and it really comes down to being self-sufficient, self-reliant, rather than relying on God who is the provider of all things. Life is not *defined* by what we have. Even when we have physical wealth that should *not* define our life. Our life should be one of focusing on what God desires of us, which is a focus of worshipping God, putting God first in our life.

There is a statement that says, "Contentment is a great blessing because it's a way of thinking or it's an attitude," and that contentment is one of thankfulness. So underneath this, the way to overcome and to beware of covetousness is to acquire an attitude or have an attitude of thankfulness, to be thankful to God. Now, when we become thankful, what we find is we have a different attitude towards anything that comes our way, anything that God allows us to have access to or be *exposed* to. Because if we're thankful for what we have, whether it be least or more, it doesn't make any difference, it's just simply an attitude of thankfulness because it was God that allowed us to have it. So if we have what we consider in this world to have "nothing" on a physical level, we should be very thankful for what we actually have! And yet that's dwelling on the physical.

The reality is, there is a scripture also in Revelation that talks about one of the Church eras, it says, "Though they are poor," they are in poverty... it's talking about on a physical level, and many of us are going through difficult times on a physical level when you consider what we *need* to live. And if people *are* going through difficult times and have *less* than those around them, we can be thankful for what we have. We have *the most precious gift of all*; we have the *most*, and that is spiritual knowledge, spiritual understanding. We have wisdom. We have God's holy spirit. We have the truth. Now, we can't ask for more than that! To have a relationship with God, to be *in* the Body of Christ, to be in the Church. We have so much. We are *rich*! We are truly rich! The world can't see it. They would see us as being in poverty, or being poor, or struggling, or in difficulty. That may be true on a physical level, but on a spiritual level, brethren, we have so much!

I remember I was going through an assets list and I had to write out the various assets that I had when it went through various questions. And at the end of it you draw a line and you look at it and you think, "Hmm, this doesn't look too good on a physical assets list." Yet I came to understand and to deeply appreciate how much God has given to me, personally, and how much God has given to His Church. It is *amazing* if we really just dwell on our calling, if we dwell on what God has placed into the Church. The fact that we are *in* the Body of Christ in itself is so humbling, and to be thankful for that is a key point of making sure that we are taking heed and being aware, or beware of this covetous attitude, this *wrong desire*. And this comes about because we desire the physical and not the spiritual.

How much more it is, brethren, to have, than to ask God for His character, His mind, His spirit living and dwelling in us. How great a blessing it is to have the gift of mercy! To understand mercy and to live mercy to others, this is an *amazing* spiritual gift that cannot be measured in physical terms. But the world won't see it. People will not "see" this great gift.

To have the gift of being thankful, to have this attitude, this mind of being thankful, relying on God to be our provider and being content with whatever situation we are in is a great blessing that *cannot* be measured. But the world can't "see" it. But we can measure it, we can give the glory to God for allowing it because we know it's all about spiritual growth. It's not about physical things. It's about spiritual growth!

Verse 16 – Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man, someone that was wealthy, **yielded plenty**. So here is a young man, he's growing in wealth and his crops and everything are growing and it's yielding plenty. He's got *abundance*.

Verse 17 – And he thought within himself, and this is that inner thinking, which we have also, which is that inner thinking about, "Hmmm," and considering things and then making decisions based on this thinking, **saying, What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?** He's got all this wealth and he's got no room left. He's got abundance. He says, "What am I going to do with all this money?" All this crop that he's got, which can convert into money. And of course, it's a thinking, it's a process about, "Well, I've got all this," so there is no thought in his mind at this point about *sharing* with God or *sharing* with God's people. He's got a thought of selfishness because it's about himself, about what he will do with "his" crop because he has no room in "his" barns.

Verse 18 – So he said, I will do this. Now, this is the inner thinking and it's a decision now that has been made. **I will...** Now, we know about this "I will" because it is an inner thinking. "I have decided to..." is another way, and remember back, when we referred back to Satan and his attitude about going against God's government, it was, "I will do this..." "I will ..." "I now am going to do it..." "I have decided to..." So this is what he is doing, this young man. Of course, this is a parable and we can look at this from the point of attitudes because it is all about attitudes that we choose, the way we think. **I will pull down my barns and build greater...** I'm going to expand my ability to hold these crops... **and there I will store all my crops and my goods.** Now, this is about self-reliance. This is about relying on self and trusting in self and considering what a person will do apart from God's will, well, not bringing God *into* a person's life or into a person's decision making.

Now, we all have to make decisions in life, and of course, the most important things is to always put God first. To consider whatever it is, whatever choice it is, we know that it's no matter what choice it is, as long as it's not sin – so it doesn't matter what the choice is, as long as it's *not sin* – we know that God will be with us and work with us within that environment. So when we make decisions it doesn't mean to

say that God *has* put into our minds that very thought process. Now, there *are* times when that does happen, and to work out which one is and which one isn't is one of the aspects of being in God's Church. We sometimes make decisions that we're really not sure whether God is totally in that decision or whether God is not. And some people have written (I know I've read different things) where people have said it would be so much easier if God was just to, you know, switch a light or turn a light on and let us know, "Yes, that's the right thing to do," or "No, that's the wrong thing to do." It's *not* that simple because of free choice. God gave us the ability to choose, and it's through those choices that we *learn* to understand more about God's ways. Because of our choices, the things that we decide to do, we can see that we grow in those things.

Now, in the lifetime that I have had I have had many choices that I've made, and when I sat back the other week and had to analyze various aspects of my life to where I am now at the age of 60, looking back over time, I realize that *so many choices* God had *nothing* to do with those choices. They were free moral agency choices. They're choices *I* made. I made the decisions and then God remained to work with me in those situations and I learned from them. But I realized that in making many of the decisions, I wasn't too wise. I was not wise. I wasn't bringing God into the picture to the degree that I should. And those times that I did bring God into the picture and made a decision, it doesn't mean to say that everything is going to be rosy, because that's not what life's about. Well, life was not meant to be easy! The decisions we make, whether they're financial, physical, whatever they may be, it just simply is a choice that we make and God will be with us in that choice, but it doesn't mean to say that He automatically *influenced* that choice.

Now, sometimes God does do that. But working out whether God has made the decision or not, well, that's something we learn in time and in the end we realize that everything is a personal choice. We have a choice. And when God desires a particular outcome, God will influence an outcome, but it doesn't mean to say that He is in every single decision of a member of the Body of Christ because we learn through our choices, the choices *we* make.

Often our choices, although we bring God into the picture and we rely on God in our thinking, many of the choices that we make are based on *covetousness*. It's what *we* want. It's based on what is best for *us*, and those desires are deep in our inner thinking that we actually can't see at the time we make that decision. But they're not always based on a Godly outcome at all, they're based on a human reasoning. Just like this young man says, "I will do 'this' because of 'this.'" Because it looks good, it looks like the right thing to do, but hey, sometimes we're not sure, and therefore, we have this choice and that's what life is about, making choices.

I also, I remember writing not long back to someone where I said, "Life was easy if you don't have to make a decision." Because making decisions is difficult! Who knows, one day you could do 'this' and it could work out, one day you can do 'that' and it could work out. One day you do something else and it may not work out. That's what life's about. We live in hope... we live in hope. We have to plan, but we live in hope.

Well, here this young man, he's saying, "I will do 'this,'" and he's going to do it. He's left God completely out of his decision making, and therefore, that is where sin is involved. Leaving God out of our decisions, leaving God out of our life, is wrong for us as members of the Body. We need to bring God into our life and then we just simply need to make decisions knowing they're not based on sin, and we should know that; therefore, God will still be with us in that decision in the sense that He will work with us on a spiritual level. That is the purpose of life, to be worked with on a spiritual level.

Verse 19 – And I will say to my soul, Soul, or life, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease, in other words, rest, **eat, drink, and be merry.** Now, we need to look at this on a spiritual level. And we can look at it and say we're not to let down spiritually, we're not to ease or become at rest, to think that we are "rich and increased with goods" on a spiritual level because we have so much truth. We just went through a sermon series which is covering aspects of this truth, which is *To Know Why*. And we know *why* of many things in life. Well, we shouldn't take a lot of that for granted – which is a human tendency – which is to take ease, to relax, to let down spiritually, to become lukewarm.

Now, many of us have lived through this very period, and the difficulty is because we don't always see that we *are becoming* lukewarm. We didn't see it through that period at the end of Philadelphia. We *just didn't see it*, and we didn't see it *in* Laodicea. We did not see it. Because this lukewarm attitude came into being during Philadelphia. Near the end of Mr. Armstrong's life, this lukewarm attitude had entered the Church and it had entered me and then we went into the period of Laodicea and for that period of time we just *did not see* that we were actually lukewarm, that we were actually asleep on a spiritual level, that we've become *self-reliant*, trusting on the physical, and we thought we had *so much knowledge!* We had 21 Truths in total, we had all this knowledge, we were "rich and increased in goods" on a spiritual level, yet we were naked and poor. We had nothing. It was terrible! We had so much pride it was disgusting! There was no humility in us! And at the time you can't see it. And a proud person often cannot see that they lack humility. They just can't see it because they're proud. Well, being full of pride you don't see the need for humility.

So, we need to be on guard that we never turn around and go at ease or take it at ease. Well, we, brethren, can always remember the most important aspect of our life is the spiritual, and therefore, we need to stay focused on the spiritual. That's the most important thing! The Sabbath's sermons are the most important thing in our life. The posts that come out, they are the most important things in our life. That's what we hunger for. We hunger for spiritual matters. And yes, we're going to have to deal with all the physical things around us, but we still yearn for the spiritual.

Verse 20 – But God said to him, Fool! Unwise! This night your life, or "your soul," it says in scripture here, but it's **your life will be required of you,** because God's in charge of life and death, **then whose will those things be which you have provided?** So who's going to have them? We can be unwise on a spiritual level if we let down by not fighting against our own inner thinking. We should always plan on a physical level, but we should plan on a spiritual level as well, to be in a state of mind or thinking God is first, God's will.

So, let's just look quickly at physical planning. Well, we need to plan physically. We should have a plan, whether it's a weekly, monthly, yearly, or annual five year plan, we should have it on a physical level. I know there was some advice given to someone in my family that was talking about, well, when you're in a state of difficulty you should plan for the worst, plan things around the worst environment that you're in, or that you possibly could be in, but still have that plan. Have a plan to get out of that environment, but hope for the best. That is a great positive way to look at it. We hope for the best, but we should plan around reality. We need to deal with the reality of the situation we are in on a physical level, but place it before God and ask that God's will be done...that we have a plan to manage our life because life will go on in this current present age until the return of Jesus Christ. Now, that could be soon, or it could be later, we still don't know. God has not revealed that to the Church. And when God reveals it to the Church through Mr. Weinland, then we will know. But in the interim, we need to plan life for next week,

next month, next year. We must have plans. But it's all done, of course, in the fact that we put God *into* those plans.

Now, we should have physical plans. We should also have spiritual plans. What are those spiritual plans? Well, God outlines them in His word. The spiritual plan that we have is the Sabbath. We plan the Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath, we plan it! We know when we should cease work, if we're working. We know that we should use Friday as a preparation day on a physical level, that we're going to enter the Sabbath, we know, when the sun sets on that Friday night. We know it. We know that timing so we're planning it. We're working through it. We plan, where possible, to attend with the brethren on an assembly, commanded assembly before God. If we're by ourselves and we're alone, well it's a commanded assembly before God – doesn't mean to say that we can get to fellowship with other people – but we obey the commanded assembly. We come before God, we present ourselves before God on that Sabbath day, and we, if possible, listen to the sermon that God has provided. That's what we do. Now, if we don't have access to the sermon we would simply take that time to make sure that we read and that we study and that we try to even listen to an older sermon. But those things are *planning*! It requires planning! And we need to plan through the Sabbath day.

Then we should have a plan on a spiritual level about attending the annual Holy Days. We're coming up to a period soon where we're going to have to start to plan the Passover. We should be planning in our mind that we're going to attend a Passover, if possible. Now, if we can't, we'll be looking at Passover, keeping it at home or wherever, and then, of course, the First Day of Unleavened Bread and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. They're things that now should be in our thinking, a plan. So, "Yes, this is what I'm doing for Passover. This is what I'm doing for Unleavened Bread." Now, we may not be able to travel, we may not be able to attend fellowship in the sense of coming together as a group, but in the back of our mind we should have that plan in our thinking. "Well, do I need to save \$10.00 a week or \$5.00 a week so that will enable me to attend one of the High Days?" Are we thinking about planning an offering, saying, "Well, if I did this, this is how much I'd be able to give as a Holy Day offering." That's what it is about having a spiritual plan, because if we have that spiritual plan, we are putting God first in our thinking. And that's what it's about; it's about putting God first in our thinking, planning things in our thinking.

Now, also the Feast of Tabernacles, saving our 2nd Tithe is what? God's way of planning! We're planning to attend a commanded assembly called the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, that eight-day period that we all come together. We could now have a plan. Now, there are many people that are unemployed. There are many people that are on pensions. And everyone should have their own plan. I personally know people that are on a pension and that struggle and live in modest accommodation that actually *plan* their attendance to the Feast of Tabernacles. That's their plan. Now, they can't always achieve it because they can only *plan* to save a certain amount, and that's what they do. Some people put \$10.00 a week or \$15.00 a week, or \$5.00 a week away for the Feast of Tabernacles *with the hope* of attending. They *plan* it – doesn't mean to say they will be able to attend it, but they plan it – that's what they're striving to do. And then they place it in God's hands, and if the answer is, "There is not enough funds, it's too far to travel, it can't be funded," that's what they accept. That's reality. But they, in their thinking, there is a spiritual plan to attend every one of God's commanded assemblies. Isn't that incredible? Isn't that *amazing*? Isn't that putting *God* first? That's a choice!

Now, we all have choices. Even the unemployed could put \$1.00 a week away because they're *thinking* of God, God's way of life first! And if you can't put \$1.00 a week away for the Feast of Tabernacles, that's reality, that is life! But we do have choices in those things, brethren, and therefore, we need to stand

back and *plan* on a spiritual level as well as a physical level. And remembering, the most important thing is the spiritual planning. *That* is the most important thing!

So we can plan our prayer life, for example. We can plan that! We can plan our fasting life. These are free choices that we have, if we want to plan our prayer life.

I know in times past when we were first baptized and called into God's Church we had the opportunity to move to a particular town. And we did that, we moved to a country town. And the only way that I could fund that at that time was to virtually buy a caravan. So I bought this caravan and my wife and two children, we went up to Perth in Western Australia. I bought the caravan and drove the caravan back to a country town where I believed that there was a Church, members of the Body met in that area at least, and I remember backing up that caravan, parking it, and jacking it up and putting the annex out the side, and there we were in this caravan in a caravan park with two children and here we were. And we were there because we wanted to have fellowship with God's people because the thinking at that point was that we weren't sure about a lot of things in life, but that's what we knew we wanted to do.

Well, we planned it on a spiritual level because we wanted to attend weekly Sabbath services. Now, whether that was a right choice or a wrong choice, we all have choices. It was just something that we had chosen. Well, because I had not work, I had to go and find some work. And I met a particular guy that I knew and he said that he did have some work for me and it was virtually working in a shop as a shop assistant. And I was so happy that God had provided me an income. Well, we didn't have a lot. It was very low wages, but you know, we managed and God provided for us and we were happy and thankful. And we were happy and thankful because God was providing us what was then called, "the Bible Correspondence Course," and we used to get them and we used to fill them out and then send them back. And you'd have to wait two or three weeks before you got an answer, any of the magazines that came. It was wonderful. It was an exciting time, and we were so thankful. We were poor in a physical level, but boy were we rich on a spiritual level! And it was *amazing* just to have access to the truth! The mind was just so exciting to know all of these things.

One of the difficulties was, because I had to go to work early, the *only* way that I could get my prayer and my study in, in a day, was to get up really early in the morning. So I would get up really early in the morning and I would do my study and my prayer, then I would go to work. And that took *planning*! It took *planning*! It wasn't something that just happens. I had to plan it, because I tried to do it all before my wife and children were awake, because we were in a caravan and it was difficult. So I did all that and I managed to get through that period of time, but it did take planning.

My wife had an advantage because she was at home with the children at that time. They were younger children. She was in the caravan. Well, she was able to create time and virtually go through the correspondence course or read magazines or read booklets, etcetera. So when I came home she would turn around and say, "Did you know...?" And of course, well, I *didn't* know because I hadn't read it all. I was still trying to catch up with all the truth and go through these things. Well, she'd spent time and read it already and she'd say, "Did you know 'this'?" and "Did you know 'that'?" Well, I didn't know, of course, and being who I was, I found it very difficult because she was saying, "Here it all is..." and therefore, I felt this urge to need to read it for myself. And therefore, I would make sure that night I'd probably sit down and try to catch u, or the next morning get up and go through everything that she had said, in the sense of going through the Bible Correspondence Course to try to catch up. So my wife, there was a very intense period of at least three or four months where she was going through the Bible Correspondence Course really quickly and I was really struggling to catch up. I didn't have access to the

day. I was trying to work. But it did work through and we did manage to get through that environment. But all of those things took planning....took planning.

Now, when we ever turn around and say we don't have time for a prayer life it's because of bad spiritual planning. And if we haven't fasted for a long period of time, what's it relating to? Bad spiritual planning. Because fasting takes planning. If you're working, fasting takes planning. If you're not working, fasting takes planning, because it's a thought process and it's a *desire* to draw close to God. It's a desire to repent, to change, and to draw closer to God. That's what fasting is about.

So brethren, *spiritual* is the most important thing. And what this scripture was saying there was, well, all those physical things, the person was being foolish really because they're leaving God out of the picture, because God was going to take his life, and therefore, all that he had, what was going to happen to it? Well, it was going to be distributed to those that are due for the inheritance. And what would happen? Well, generally now-a-days with an inheritance what actually happens is it causes angst. It causes desires that are wrong within families because of covetousness. People want access to the other person's wealth. They haven't earned it, but because of a bloodline they *desire* it because it's *easy* money. And that's why generally inheritances, if people today don't have clear wills, can be nothing but distress and trouble.

Verse 21 – So is he who lays up treasures for himself, and this is he's focused on the physical, **and is not rich toward God**. So we must have this spiritual focus. We must focus on the spiritual. We must *stay* focused on the spiritual. And as we go through the difficulties of life, we must remember to always remain focused on the spiritual.

So how could we know whether we're focused on the spiritual? Well, there is a check and measure that we can use and that is, the first one, is our prayer life. Our prayer life will reveal our focus in life. Because if we have no prayer life, we are focused on *self*, and that's focused on the *physical* because we try to please the self. We can examine our prayer life to say, "What is our true focus?" We can look at the Sabbath and how we keep the Sabbath. Well, what's our priority? What's our focus? Are we focused spiritually? Are we staying focused spiritually? So there *are* checks and balances in our life that we can use to say, "What is our priority? Is our priority God or is our priority the physical?"

Verse 22 – Then He said to His disciples, Therefore I say to you, do not worry about life, what you will eat, nor about the body, what you will put on. So they're all physically focused matters. Now, the word "worry" there is "to be anxious," "to be stressed about," because we can be concerned about things of the physical. We can put the matter before God, but because of who we are, and we're human, there are aspects of being concerned about aspects of life and how will we pay this bill, what will we do, how will we get out of this situation on a financial level, or whether we should move, or whether we shouldn't, whether we should rent, whether we should buy a home, all these things. Well, God's saying, "Don't be anxious." Now, that's different than being concerned because we should give thought to the physical and plan best we can, but always putting it in God's hands. But this is talking about, "Don't be anxious," where we're distressed about it, where we're stressed or we walk in fear of the "what if." Because we can work ourselves up and that working the self up is self-reliance. So this word "worry" really is about this fear, this being really stressed out and leaving God out of the picture.

Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Life for us is about serving God. That's really the difference. This is about a priority. So life is more than food and drink and the physical things of clothing, what you'll wear, what we won't wear, what house we'll live in, what we're not. They're all

aspects of life that we have to deal with, but *this* is about life, is actually about *servicing* God, putting God first. We are to focus on what is pleasing to God by putting God first in our life, *in our thinking*, because that's the answer. The answer is what we think about, what occupies our minds all the day. *Do we involve God in all our decision making?*

Verse 24 – Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? Now, that's an incredible statement, really, *if* we understand what Christ is really saying. Our value to God is much more than the physical creation, because the physical creation was made *for* mankind. We exist for the purpose of being part of the Family of God. Now, this is where we can lose our focus. If we focus in on the physical – now, that's *natural* to do that, by nature, because people are concerned about themselves and providing for their family. That is *normal* because that is required. We have to have those concerns, but it has to be balanced. God has to be involved in all of those decisions.

Now, what actually happens when we focus on the physical so much that we leave God out of the picture, is because we've lost the value that God has placed on our life, on *us*, on our spirit, because God desires to live and dwell in us. God has a purpose for us, *personally!* God is molding and fashioning us into a shape to fit into a position within the Family of God. Now, when we lose that thinking, of putting God first, we lose God's spirit, because it's God's spirit that motivates our life, it's God's spirit that helps us to continue in the truth, but we have to make a choice here. So we are more valuable than all of the animals, all of the birds, all of the planets out there, all of the creation, all of the physical things that the eye can see. God says we are more valuable than all of those, and it's because of His great purpose for the creation. God's purpose for us is to enter Elohim, and this is what we need to stay focused on.

Verse 25 – And which of you by worrying, so this “being stressed” or “anxious” about something, can add one cubit to his stature? If we're 5'9", if we worry about it, and we're anxious and *stressed* about it, what will change? Will it actually increase our height by doing that? Well, that answer, of course, is no. We need to remember that what this parable is about is about greed and covetousness. It's about a wrong motive. It's about our motive in *why* we are doing what we are doing. So we're planning life. *Why* are we planning life on a physical level? Because we have a spiritual life! And when we plan the physical aspects of our life we involve the spiritual, and the spiritual is ahead of the physical, and therefore, that's what drives all our decisions. Therefore, the rest of mankind will not *understand* what we're doing and why we're doing it, how we're prioritizing God first, how we're paying Tithes, why we're saving 2nd Tithes, why we're giving offerings, why we keep the seventh-day Sabbath, why we have annual Holy Days. They can't understand it because, see, they're our priority. Brethren, *they're* our priority. But they're *not* a priority to others because they can't understand God's ways. They can't because they don't have God's spirit.

So this is all about a motive or an attitude. Covetousness *is* an attitude, and the way to counteract it is thankfulness. That's the way to counteract it. With God's spirit we can counteract covetousness or greed by simply having an attitude of being thankful for whatever situation we are in or environment we are in. Let's count the blessings we have on a spiritual level first and then whatever physical blessings we have – life – let's be thankful before God for it. The fact that we exist and have the potential to enter Elohim is an *incredible blessing* just in itself! No matter what our physical environment is, we're in a positive and encouraging environment, just the fact that we have life, the fact that we are called into the Body of Christ and we have the truth and we have access to God's spirit... that is *amazing!* How thankful we should be for that!

And the problem with us as humans is that we will dwell on the physical, and we often dwell on the physical. We look at things we *don't have*. And why do we do that? Because of the natural carnal mind, because of covetousness. We look out and say, "Oh, look at that person. They've got all that!" Or we look out into the world and see what sinners have, you know, those that are in rebellion to God; they are given things or have access to things and God allows it. We, brethren, shouldn't look out for those things. We should look at ourselves and look to what *we have*. We have great value. We have the most precious gift! All the gold in the world, no matter how much money a person has, cannot *purchase* what God has given to us! *Cannot* purchase it! What great value that is!

We should all have plans in life, but balanced with the fact and the knowing God is with us. God will do in our lives what He will do in our lives on a spiritual level if we desire it. "God's will be done," is our attitude. No matter what happens in life our attitude is, "God's will be done." So we can plan our life in a balanced way, showing balance and moderation in *all* things, and desire to put God first, and desire to focus on the spiritual.

Why is the encouragement from God to continue to go over the Truths? Because that's what's valuable. It's like handling gold. I know if you look at the stories about "Richie Rich" and these other stories that are in movies or in cartoons and things like that, "Scrooge McDuck" or "Scrooge," and you look at it and you realize he – I remember looking at this particular cartoon and Scrooge duck went into a vault and there's just mountains of gold and he handled it and he picked it up and he put it on his head and it ran all around him and the cartoon drew back a bit further and there is this massive vault like a house of gold, and there's all this money, and he handled it and he bathed in it. Well, we have more value than that, because it's whether we handle the truth.

If we want to bathe in the riches of God's spirit, we will bathe ourselves in the truth. We will meditate on those truths. We'll go over those truths. David talks about in Psalms 119 about the meditation of God's law. Now, this is something where we can bathe in it.

Firstly, the knowledge of the 10 Commandments is a great blessing – the knowledge of it. The *understanding* of it is *just incredible!* What we understand about the 10 Commandments is incredible! And then to *live it*, to have God's spirit to live wisdom, to *live* the 10 Commandments, now, that is what we could call wealth! That is the most valuable thing in our life! So we can take one of the 10 Commandments and meditate on it...just meditate on it. For example, "Thou shalt not kill." We can take that and bathe ourselves in the riches of the understanding and the wisdom of that Commandment. "Thou shalt not kill" is actually a command, but it also is connected to great mercy! It's about the way we think towards others. It's *amazing!* If we would just meditate on it and dwell on it, and if you go through Psalm 119 we realize that David, through the power of God's holy spirit, was *rejoicing* in the fact that he had this understanding and that he could see it, and it made him more wiser than all the ancients, he talks about. *Just incredible* understanding that David has about the 10 Commandments because he meditated on them day and night because he'd think on them.

Well, we have that potential. We can do that, brethren. Let's just take any one of the Commandments and take the time to meditate on it in our prayer life and just to explore it. Explore the understanding on a spiritual level of any of the 10 Commandments, and it *is* a beautiful thing, therefore, gives us the wealth, and now it's about a priority. We can focus on the 10 Commandments and we can just take one and implement it in our life knowing what it is. It's all about love. It's about how we love God and how we love our neighbour. So, there is a great joy in that. And once we have meditated on it and think about it, we will rejoice, and we'll be so thankful that *we* understand these things. We'll be so thankful

we understand the truth and that we understand the 10 Commandments. Mankind doesn't understand the 10 Commandments. Some of them have an outline of the words but the spiritual intent of it, the *depth* of it, it's just incredible! So these are things that we can mediate on and that we can be thankful for.

So, brethren, as we face these difficulties in life and as we face financial problems, for some it could be the *best thing* that ever happened to them because it involves a struggle, because *then* they will not be self-reliant. I know in my life, and I look back on it, the times when I was struggling on a financial level or on a physical level, I was actually closer to God. And I've *always* thought and I've always known this. There's been times when I've earned very good money and I've had what would be considered probably being quite well off, and in that time there is a danger of human reasoning, that we tend to rely on ourselves. Now, I remember, I've often spoken about in my own life to others saying, "It's so easy to say that we trust God and we rely on God when you've got a million dollars in the bank." Of *course* you can trust God and rely on God then. It seems so easy because you've got a million dollars in the bank. Well, what it really is, is that there is self-reliance in the background.

So people can say, "Oh yes! I trust God and rely on God, but I've got a million dollars in the bank as a backup, just in case things go wrong!" Well, that is self-reliance because deep down the inner motive is saying, "I trust in God... but I trust in my million dollars as my back-up plan just in case things go wrong," which is *self-reliance*. We will tend to take credit to ourselves for our prosperity. That's what actually happens. Also, and of course, what drives that? When we take credit to ourselves for our prosperity – in other words, what I have acquired – what is all that about? Well, that's about pride. That's about what I did, and I *will*, and this is what this parable is saying, "I will..." It's about a self-reliance and leaving God out of the picture.

Verse 26 – If you then are not able to do *the least*, why are you anxious for the rest? So He's saying, "Well, if you worry about adding your height, if you worry about how you might consider gaining prosperity, and you can't change it all because it's actually in God's hands, why are you anxious about all these things on the physical level?" Why are we anxious about (and this, of course, is) distress or anxiety or being in fear of – having housing and having clothing, and having food? Well, we shouldn't be worried about it *IF* we have a relationship with God. And *that's* the secret to it, *IF* we have a relationship with God, *IF* we are involving God in our decisions, *IF* we are totally reliant on God in humility and thankfulness. Then we don't have to worry, we don't have to have this anxiety, we don't have to have this stress, because it's putting God into the picture because God is our provider. God will provide what is best for us on a physical level for a spiritual outcome. Now, there is *great wisdom* and understanding in that statement. God will provide for us on a physical level what is best for us on a spiritual level.

So, to have wealth may not be for some the best thing on a spiritual level because they will wander into self-reliance and leave God out of the picture. Some things, the best things for, sometimes for me, I've known this directly in my own life, I know this, sometimes the *best thing* for me is that I don't have a lot of physical things, because when I don't have those physical things, I know that I have turned to God more. It brings to mind one particular situation when we were living up in the hills in Victoria and I had left a particular employment with a company and I'd started up my own business in paintings, importing paintings from China which were hand-painted pictures and portraits, and I virtually had run out of money. And at that stage I was not part of the true Church of God. I was part of a scattered group, and I was being drawn out of that by God – I didn't know it at the time – but I was actually being awakened and it took a period of time that I was being drawn out and I could see things on a spiritual level as God was revealing things were *wrong* where I was, and I couldn't understand things and I was getting quite

frustrated, my wife was getting frustrated in the organization that we were in, and we were just part of a scattered group. And we were being drawn further *away* from them in certain aspects of the truth and we couldn't understand basic things that they were doing that were just simply wrong, but we thought, well, why are they doing it, and we couldn't, so we were distressed.

Well, I was going through this physical trial. So much so to the point that we were heading off to a particular Feast and I knew that I had to have employment. I knew I had to have employment very quickly because virtually I had no money. Now, I couldn't pay the mortgage and we were struggling greatly on a financial level – so much so that I *knew* that I had to sell the house and get out of it. And one particular time, because I was in this financial difficulty and I did not have God's spirit in the sense of being awakened, but I believe that God was working with me to *draw* me out of the situation I was in to the true Church of God, Church of God – PKG, I remember one particular day when I got up in the morning and I went down to pray, and it was this lounge room, in a small area, and I remember going there, kneeling down, and tabling it more sincerely, probably, than I have done for a long period of time in that particular time. I tabled it before God that I was a broken man, really, because I knew that I had lost my house and I knew that I could not provide for my wife. We were struggling financially. I couldn't pay my bills, and I remember tabling it before God and I remember crying. I remember crying that time. It was a *very* humbling time. And I cried before God that I did not know what to do. I *did not* have a clue. I didn't know whether to turn left, turn right. I just asked God, could He intervene because I *did not know* what to do. I just simply didn't. I didn't know whether I should sell the house, whether I should keep the house. There was no money, I needed a job, and I broke down, literally, because I was so self-reliant up until that time, and here I had to table it all before God and leave it with God, because I knew at that time I couldn't do it. I *just* couldn't do it. I did not know where to go.

Well, from that point I knew that I had to sell the house. So we put the house on the market and we sold it, would you believe, in the coldest and wettest time – it was freezing, there had been hail that day and it was bitter cold – it was a smaller bed roomed house and a family from up in a warmer climate came down and they bought that particular house at the price that I had wanted within seven days. Within seven days that house was sold and we moved and rented somewhere else and I gained employment as well. Basically, within two weeks of that time I gained employment, and I realized then that was the best thing that could have *ever* happened to Wayne Matthews – *best* thing that ever happened. Now, people would look at that and say, "Oh, that's incredible! You had nothing and all that!" But they don't understand the relationship that one has as being awakened or called by God, that you have this relationship. And yes, there are times when we are distressed and there are times we're anxious, but when we're anxious it reflects something. It reflects the physical. It reflects a physical way of thinking.

Now, the reality was, there's been more than once or twice that that has actually happened to me, where I've had very little and I have been brought very low, all for the purpose of being lifted up on a spiritual level.

Verse 27 – Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. What's being said there, the wildflowers don't fuss in their appearance because God made them in a beautiful way. They don't have to worry about what color they are or what design they are like, and yet there is nothing like them! When you look at the creation and the *beauty* of what God has... We have a small flower over here, a plant called a Kangaroo Paw. That's what it's called in Australia. I don't know it's real, the *true* name of what's been designated to it by society. We call it a Kangaroo Paw. And it's a *beautiful* plant and it comes up and it's got a spike on it and it looks like a kangaroo's paw, but its beautiful colors of yellow and red – it's

absolutely gorgeous! Well, it didn't choose it, God chose that. And that Kangaroo Paw doesn't *fuss* about its appearance.

The best dressed men and women in the world, in the country, all that you see out there in society, are *nothing* compared to the glory of what God has created! *Nothing!* Nothing at all! And here it's saying, well, Solomon arrayed himself in all the glory and the gold and the gowns, well, it was *nothing* compared to the beauty of God's creation. And there are many times when we can go out and see God's creation.

We live now near water, where we see the ocean, and there's an inlet that takes through and goes under a bridge, and some days it's just amazing! And because it's very tidal, there's about a two meter tide here that goes up and down during a day period, so at times the rocks are exposed and at other times the rocks are covered, but the colors between these aqua's and the green's and the blue's and the grey's, it's just *amazing!* And in any given day the ocean and the waters entering the inlet are never the same. They never appear exactly the same. Some days the colors are *just amazing*, just *beautiful* colors. Well, this is what God is saying here in the sense of the lilies of the field. They just grow. They don't worry about it. They don't toil and work. God provides. Well, all God is saying is, He will provide, and therefore, all the beauty that He has created, we can look at all that and understand it's beauty and its glory, and none of it worries about what color it is because God created it and God provided for it. Well, God is saying here He will do the same for us. He will provide for us.

Now, God provides on a physical level, but He also provides, more importantly, on a spiritual level. And that's what we're focused on, the spiritual!

Verse 28 – If then God so clothed the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, in other words, destroyed, it's burnt or harvested, got rid of, **how much more will He, God, clothe you, O you of little faith?** Now, God will provide for us but it may not be what *we desire*. Now, that is a key too, in life. God will provide, but it may not be what *we desire*, what *we think we want*, what *we think we need*. And the answer of course, brethren, which we've been over, the answer to handling this is about being thankful, about being thankful for what situation we are in or being thankful for what we have, for what God has allowed us to have access to (is probably a better way to have it). It's only by God's mercy that we have access to anything physical because there are many people that have been born that have access to nothing physical, and by the grace of God go we.

We're in the Body of Christ because of God's mercy. We have what possessions we have on a physical level because of God's mercy. And whenever we become a bit negative or look down on our environment and worry and concern about all the things, all the wrong decisions we've made where we may have no money or we have less than others, or whatever, that is wrong thinking. *That is wrong thinking!* That is the thinking of selfishness because we need to be thankful for what we have. Even if we have nothing, we still have much. Even if we have nothing on a physical level, we still have much. We have God's spirit! We have the truth! And we're wearing clothes. We should be thankful for the clothes we're wearing. We do have access to food. We should be thankful for the food. So we do have much, brethren, it's only about what we see others have or what we think we desire or what we think we need to have. Well, most of that, of course, we don't. We have God. We have God's spirit. We have the truth. We have everything. We are rich! We are *rich* on a spiritual level.

We should desire the spiritual ahead of the physical. We should desire to be clothed in righteousness, *God's thinking, God's mind*. That's what's most important in our life and that's what we need to focus on.

If you'd like to hold your place there and turn to Romans 8. **Romans 8:22-28**. We've been over a lot of these scriptures of recent times where Paul has gone through here with the Romans and explains all about the carnal mind and goes into God's spirit and the purpose of God's spirit. **Verse 22 – For we know, we see, that the whole creation (mankind) groans and labors with birth pains (pangs) together until now.** So this is that 6,000 year period where mankind's been left to himself.

Verse 23 – And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the spirit, so we have God's spirit. We are the first to have God's spirit because mankind will be given access to God's spirit in the future, **even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting the adoption, the redemption of our body.** So we wait for a resurrection. We wait for a resurrection, whether it's the first resurrection or the second resurrection, we look forward to being changed, to being taken out of this body and dealing with the physical. But we have to continue to deal with the physical. We have been appointed as sons. You know, we've been adopted by God the Father and Jesus Christ, and we have been adopted to be brought into a family. So we are currently in a family if we are *in* the Body of Christ, if we have God's spirit living and dwelling in us, we're in the Body of Christ, we're *in* the Church of God; therefore, we have a relationship. We are *in* a family already but we are looking forward to a change to be in a spiritual Family.

Verse 24 – But we who were saved in this hope, and that hope or that *confidence* is a resurrection. That's actually what we have confidence in. That's our *hope*. We look forward to it. We are looking forward to something. Now, this, brethren is about being focused. So our focus is and we are staying focused on a resurrection, and the way to the resurrection is to stay focused on the spiritual. And this is our hope. We live in hope. So we plan for today *hoping* for something better. We plan our life on a physical level and a spiritual level with the *hope* of an improved physical environment, but also a spiritual environment. So we live in hope.

...**but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?** So if we're hoping for something and then we actually have it, we no longer hope for it. We hope for something that we can't see. We cannot see. We haven't gotten it yet, we haven't acquired it yet, which is a resurrection.

But if we hope for what we do not see, which is a resurrection, then **we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.** We're going to endure to the end. We are going to continue in the faith until the end. We will endure to the end.

Verse 26 – Likewise the spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself makes intercession for our spirit with groanings which cannot be uttered. And of course that is in the mind. Brethren, sometimes we just simply don't know what to pray for. When we pray we can say, well, we would like to be out of a particular environment on a physical level, but if we are focused on the spiritual, we know what to pray for, we know to pray for the continuation of the flow of God's spirit into our life, and ask for spiritual gifts. There are scriptures that say if we require wisdom, we're to ask for it, and we won't be asking amiss by asking for God's spirit. Now, to acquire God's spirit and to use God's spirit in our life is the greatest thing that can happen to us. Anything physical is meaningless.

We have to have physical, don't get me wrong. We have to have physical and we need to plan the physical and to be balanced in the physical, but we *need* to be focused on the spiritual to acquire God's

spirit in the sense of praying and asking for God's gifts. They are gifts from God, and therefore, we should ask Him to continue to live in us because our hope is a resurrection, our hope is God's spirit.

Now, often in life we don't know what to pray for. Often in life we believe that we're being led by God for a decision, and in that decision we make, we believe that God is with that decision. Often the intent of why we did it may not come to fruition, to be the intent that God had. We may think that this is what's happening because of this particular reason, and therefore, that's our motive of why we're doing it. It's a good motive, it's a right motive, it's a good intent, but God may use that in another way that He will reveal in the future, that He will use what we did ten years, fifteen years down the path for a *different* outcome.

I know there's been times in my life where I believe that I knew why I was doing something, why I was moving, or selling up and moving to a particular location. For example, in 1992 I believed that I was moving to a particular town in Victoria for a reason. Now, in the Worldwide Church of God in 1992, I believe, in Western Australia where I was, it was possibly between 800-1200 people, thereabouts, because there were various congregations of 3-400 people. There were as many as a thousand, anyway, in all of Western Australia at that time and when I left. It was moving to Victoria where there was more Church of God members, but also more congregations, and we believed that we could have a better employment, better job, and it was the right thing to do for the children and for my wife and for my family, that this was a right decision. And why I thought I was moving actually ended up to be something totally different than the outcome, the reality, but at the time my motive was basically Godly because I wanted to be where God's Church was, I wanted to be in a strong congregation – all of those things, is why I did that. But I also had the physical plans, wanted to have a better job, wanted to have a better income, could pay more tithes...all these motives I had.

Well, the reality was, what happened was that when the Apostasy happened that, actually, we got through that Apostasy *differently* because out of all of what's happened and where we have ended up by the grace of God, by the mercy of God, is that out of all the people in Western Australia, my wife and myself are the only ones that have survived it in the sense of being awakened for a purpose, to be part of the Body of Christ during this period of time. That's incredible! And yet all that time what I thought I was doing and why I was doing it, God had a different motive. I look back now at all the things that happened in Spokesman's Club, how I was being humbled, how my pride was being reduced, how we went through all the different locations, how we've had access to God at various times and then we were in a different congregation in the scattering, how God awakened us out of where we were to come into the Church of God. All of those things I had no understanding, and if knew about them way back when I was first called you'd probably never enter into this lifestyle, you just wouldn't, because you'd look at it all and say, "It's tough!" And it *is* tough. It *is* tough being part of the Body of Christ, being part of God's Church *is* tough. It's *difficult* because it's a daily battle. There is a fight against attitudes because it's so easy to wander. It's so easy not to be focused on the spiritual.

It's easy to get caught up in things. And one of the biggest things to get caught up in is in relationships. When relationships start to go wrong and there is stress and tension it is *difficult* to stay focused on the spiritual because we get bogged down in things and we have wrong attitudes quite quickly and we don't know what we should do, what decision should we make. Well, the answer is, the decision is we've got to take it all before God, we've got to place it before God, and it's reasonably easy. We ask God to intervene on a spiritual level into *our* life, into *our* life, because it's *our* life that's important. It's the way *we* think that is important. It's the way *we* respond to people that is important. And *that's* the priority. It's not how others respond to us or what they say or what they do! They are free moral agents. They

can do it. It's what *we* choose to do. It's what *we* choose to respond to and *how* we respond. So, someone may say something that is sin towards us, and they are sinning, but the real battle then is how do *we* respond? Do we respond with God's spirit or do we respond using the natural carnal mind?

Verse 27 – Now He who searches the hearts knows, or sees, and this is talking about God the Father. **He who searches the hearts**, the mind, the inner thinking, the intent, **knows or sees what the mind of the spirit is**, so God sees our motives and our attitudes and our thoughts. What's really driving us? Are they driven by covetousness? Is it driven by selfishness? **...because He** (Christ) **makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God**. So Jesus Christ is there. He has lived in a physical body. He's had the mind of God, but He has lived in a physical body and He *understands* the pressures and the stresses and the strains of life – but He dealt with them using the mind of God and we don't always do that. But He knows that so He can intervene on our behalf. And God in His great mercy, of course, He created us, He knows, but we have a mediator. We have somebody there that can intervene for us – our elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

And we know, we see, **that all things work together for good**. Now we know that whatever is happening in our life, whatever choices we make, whether they are right or wrong in the sense of which decision is right or wrong, as long as there is not sin involved, there is no right or wrong, really. If there is sin involved it's wrong. If there is no sin, it's neither right nor wrong, it's just a decision. But we know that this will work to good. This physical decision could be based on a spiritual motive, which it should be, but it still could go askew with, or still could be a wrong decision on a physical level later, but it's going to work for our good because God is working with us on a spiritual level. So it's going to work out well on a spiritual level for us if we desire to stay close to God.

...to those who love God, well, how do we love God? We have to have God's spirit. God has to have called us. God has to have awakened us. And God must live and dwell in us with His spirit. His spirit must live and dwell in us. And with that we can love God, and when we love God, we obey God, so we'll be in obedience, we'll be Sabbath keepers, we'll be tithing, we'll be giving our offerings, we will be keeping the annual Holy Days, we'll be showing no ill will to our neighbours, we'll have positive thoughts towards others. And most of all out of this, we'll be *thankful* for the situation we are in because we are rich. We are rich on a spiritual level. We have so much, and we'll be thankful. And because of that we'll be reflecting love towards God and towards our neighbour.

...to those who are the called, so we have to have been called and chosen for this role. God has called us into the Body for a purpose, **according to His purpose**. So it's according to God's will. We are in the Body of Christ because of God's will. We've been called to this. So we can love God. We've been called to this, and we've been called to a purpose. And that purpose is to *stay focused spiritually!* So no matter what is happening in our life, let's just focus on the spiritual and above all, in all of this, let's stay thankful, because *this* is the secret to life. The moment we become *unthankful* about *anything* – **ANYTHING** – we will be in trouble. We can be thankful for the little, and we can be thankful for *every* blessing from God, because *everything* is a blessing from God, no matter what it is. Life itself is a blessing from God - life itself.

Having access to the truth is a *great* blessing from God! Having access to fellowship is a great blessing from God. And focus on the small things of life, and if we're thankful, than when things go wrong, it won't matter as much because we have counted our blessings in the sense that we've expressed our appreciation and continual thanks to God for what God has provided for us.

Turn back to **Luke 12:29**, just pick that up... This is Christ continuing on with the parable and the instructions. **And do not seek**, and that word “seek” is “strive for,” “to strive for it,” in other words, put all this effort and focus and thinking towards it, **what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind**. And that, of course, is “a doubtful or rising up in our thinking” to not believe God. So we're going to be anxious. We're going to be stressed in our minds about something. Well, God's saying that we shouldn't do that and Christ is now instructing them, "Don't be anxious. Don't seek – don't think – don't strive for these physical things." We're to work hard and plan, but this is actually a way of thinking. “To seek” means to “in order to find out by thinking, meditating, reasoning, strive as a priority,” and that's the key – “strive for as a priority.” So we're not to “strive for as a priority” what we should eat, what we should drink, and we should not be anxious. So we're not to strive to meditate, to think, on overly on the physical.

The reason is...**verse 30 - For all these things**, these physical things, **the nations of the world seek after**, because? The natural carnal mind is selfish and inward. It seeks after itself. It seeks to *please* itself. And here is Christ saying, well, we shouldn't be focused this way. We should be focused on the spiritual. And we're not to “strive for as a priority” the physical things **...and your Father knows that you need these things**. So God knows what we need. God knows we need to earn a living, we need to have an income to survive in this world. He knows that we need a roof over our head. Now, what *is* that roof? Does it matter if it's a tent? Does it matter if it's a mansion? Well, it doesn't really. And one of the things in life that we all learn very quickly is that having the mansion, like the man that we referred to in Hawaii that had the 100 acres, having the mansion costs a lot of money.

And if you look at the various programs, which we tend to watch now and again, where there's castles in England and Scotland and Ireland – magnificent buildings, really old buildings, beautifully built – and yet people are going bankrupt. When somebody dies over there, if somebody dies, there is a tax and it has to be paid by the person who inherits the castle. Well, those taxes cripple them, so you have this wealth but you have nothing. And these programs that show you the people that live in the castles and the house, they're trying to restore it, and they owe millions of dollars. And just trying to keep the asset going is costing so much money they have to sell it, and they're selling castles off because they can't maintain it. And man's society is so much so that there are all these “Heritage Overlays.” Here in Australia as well, and in different countries, there is what's called “Heritage Overlays,” where something is considered not to be touched, not to be altered because of history, or heritage. They turn around and say, "Well, you're not allowed to do 'this.' You're not allowed to do 'that.'" And they would rather see the building collapse and crumble and decay to *nothing* than have somebody own it. So, rather than *support* a person who's trying to fix it, they actually put all these rules and regulations of what they're *not* allowed to do so that it falls in and collapses and in the end there is nothing left. Because the thinking of man, of course, is not balanced; it's not right. And of course, there is a balance in that, what should be kept, and what shouldn't be kept.

The important aspect of this life is that we need to make sure what our priority is. Yes, we need to earn a living, but we need to stay focused. The word “seek” there, “we're not to 'seek' after these things.” The world seeks after these things. It is “to enquire for, to seek, to seek for, to seek diligently, to *wish* for.” And the word “wish” is a carnal thinking, a desire – we have *hope*, brethren, we have hope – crave on a physical level. They're all wrong desires. They're all about selfishness really. The world seeks after... it's about a natural carnal mind craving or seeking after or “striving as a priority” after these things. Well, God knows what we need, what is best for us on a *spiritual* level. Because *we* think we need things on a physical level – God *knows* what we need on a physical level and He *knows* what is best for us on a spiritual level.

Verse 31 – But seek the Kingdom of God, and these things, these physical matters, shall be added to you, joined to you, joined together on a spiritual and physical level. They'll be joined. And that's the important part, that if we have a spiritual focus, if we stay focused spiritually, put as a priority God and God's ways first, all of these things, all of these physical things that we've just covered – work, food, clothing – will be added to you. They'll be *joined* to you. The most important part of this, of course, is to a level that is best for you *spiritually*. Now, when you can look at that... people will say... in the world they'll look at this scripture and say, "But seek the Kingdom of God." So they have this focus. They go to church. All these things, "and all these things," all these physical things, the castles and the wealth and the car and the money, "will be added to you." Well, that's not what God is saying. That's *not* what Jesus Christ is referring to here. He is saying that if you focus on the spiritual, we stay focused on that spiritual, the things that are necessary for life you will have. But it doesn't mean to say what you *desire*, what we *crave*, will be added to us. No, we'll be provided for on a physical level to the needs that will reflect what we need in life on a physical level for a *spiritual outcome*. Because, "All things work to the good of those who love God." We seek the spiritual and the physical God will look after, whether we consider it least or not enough or too much – none of that's relevant – because it's what God allows us to have access to. And the most important thing, if God doesn't allow us to have *anything* in life, we'll be *thankful* and *appreciate it* because God is allowing it.

So this is about putting God first. This is about seeking God's Kingdom. And being thankful to God for *all* things, physical and spiritual, *is* seeking the Kingdom of God. And planning...you know, to seek something, to seek the Kingdom of God, is to plan.

So, let's look at it on a physical level. So when somebody seeks to do something on a physical level – let's just say they seek a particular role of employment – well, the first thing that they do is they're going to have to have an education. So they will seek out an education. What will they do? They'll have to plan. They have to plan how they're going to *acquire* that education. They're going to have to do something. They're going to have to study. They're going to have to plan their time. They're going to have to plan to buy certain equipment – books, education, computers. All of those things. They're going to have to do because they are *seeking* a particular role or employment. They know what they have to do.

Well, we're the same, brethren. We're to seek the Kingdom of God. We need to plan for it. We need to plan *how* do we acquire it? Well, we acquire it by obedience to God. Number one – God is number one priority in our life no matter what happens. That is *planning*. Because we're seeking it, we're seeking the Kingdom of God, we're seeking a spiritual outcome; therefore, we need to plan it. And we plan it by seeking it and we seek it by planning it. We plan to have God's spirit. We plan to obey God. We plan to put God first. We plan our prayer life. We plan a Sabbath attendance. We plan Holy Day attendance. Because that is our priority.

Verse 32 – Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Now, isn't this encouraging? Isn't this encouraging! God's *desire for us*. He desires that we enter Elohim! So God is *for us*, who can be against us? We covered those scriptures before. Isn't it amazing? God is for us! We shouldn't fear. Christ is saying, "Don't fear, little flock." Little flock, we are. We're small, a small flock, and we follow Christ, we follow Christ's example, and we do that because it's God's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. That's what God *desires*! God desires to give us Elohim, spiritual life, life everlasting in His Family. God desires that we enter into a spirit life. Isn't that amazing that God has set this as a purpose? His plan? Because we didn't exist before God. Without God there is nothing! There is nothing!

And there *was* nothing! Without God there *was* nothing; it was just God. Now, God has created all this for a purpose and the purpose is He wants to give us the Kingdom. He wants to give us life everlasting.

It is His to give and no one else's. It's *God's* gift to us. No one else can give us life everlasting. It comes from God, and yet it's His good pleasure. *That's* His motive. That's *His* intent. That's His *desire*. Isn't that encouraging? Only God can do the works in us. Only God can do the spiritual works in us. So God will achieve what God will achieve.

Verse 33: Now, this scripture is actually misunderstood by the world, because they just don't understand the spiritual aspect of this particular scripture. **Verse 33 – Sell what you have and give alms.** Now, people say, "Well, it means you've got to sell everything, give everything, give it all away." **Provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old**, and that's what really Christ is referring to, the spiritual, **a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth enters.** Now, what this is really saying is it's about a focus, a spiritual focus. So what He's saying is, "sell," or this is actually, "barter in trade." It's not about just getting rid of everything. It's about when you do trade you are to barter in trade. So you're trading one thing for another, and it's about what? "Trade what you have and give alms." Well, what are we to give on a spiritual level? We're to give mercy. We're to be generous. So it's really saying, "Well, we're to trade, and when we have that opportunity, we should be generous." That's a physical thing, but on a spiritual level, "We shouldn't provide moneybags that grow old." In other words, not to focus on the physical! We're not to provide for ourselves on a physical level because the physical is passing away and the spiritual is not. We are to focus on the spiritual.

What are we to focus on? "A treasure in heaven that does not fail." So when we focus on the spiritual, God will reward that spiritual effort. The effort we put in, the planning we put in on a spiritual level, God says, "It won't fail and no thief can approach and take it away, and moths can't destroy it." Moths can come in as it does on a physical level. You put your clothes in the wardrobe and you might think you've got all these nice clothes, and a moth comes in, or a silverfish comes in, and all of a sudden you pull it out and there is a big hole in it and it's destroyed! You've got to throw it away because a moth's eaten it and the silverfish have got in and chewed a hole in your clothing. Well, on the spiritual, that's what Christ is saying, "Nothing can take away from the spiritual because it comes from God and it belongs to God and God will reward us on a spiritual level."

We are to focus on our attitudes at this time, the attitudes we choose. We all have attitudes and we can choose what attitude we generate out to others and out to God. What's our intent? What's our motive? And you know, when somebody has a bad attitude and it's obvious on their face, what we can do is show mercy and gentleness and kindness to it, and even though they're wrong in their attitude, it doesn't need to affect us. We've got to be careful that *we* don't then have a wrong attitude because of *their* attitude. Because their attitude is an issue between them and God.

Now, there is a time within the Church, the Body of Christ, to deal with an attitude that exists in the Church. And that of course, is about going to your brother alone. And there are sermons on the website that cover going to your brother alone, which is a spiritual attitude. And of course, the most important thing is *our* attitude. Our attitude *before* we approach anybody else about *their* attitude, because yes, somebody else might have an attitude that is wrong, they might have a wrong attitude towards us, *but* the real issue is *our* attitude towards them. And we should be very, very careful about *how* we approach somebody else because we want to make sure that it's not based on our reasoning or our own human judgment. We want to make sure *our* spiritual attitude is correct, one of humility with *no* pride, *before* we approach somebody else.

So this is about a focus that God says we shouldn't prove on a physical level and be focused on the physical level. Yes, we should trade and we should work and plan, and we should give where necessary, if we're able. We shouldn't sell our house and just give everything to the poor and be in poverty – that's unbalanced, that's not normal, that's not the way God says to live life.

We are to be generous where we can and we are to be open and honest and sincere, but we're to focus on the spiritual, where it cannot be taken from us. No robber can break in. No one can take from us on a spiritual level.

The spiritual principle now is covered by Jesus Christ in **verse 34 – For where your treasure is, there your heart, your inner thinking, will be.** So this is about what we focus on, what we set as a priority, what we *think* about, what we have set as a priority in our life. So where is our treasure, brethren? Is our treasure *on* physical or is it *on* the spiritual? Because it's about our inner thinking, what we dwell on the most.

Now, we can have physical plans and we can think on the physical. It's not saying that we shouldn't. We should. But in that the priority is pleasing God. Our decisions are based on pleasing God. Now, there are lots of choices in life that we can make that are not involving sin, and therefore, are they a right decision? Are they a correct decision? Well, who knows! That's the decisions of life! It could be good. It could be bad.

I know in various times in conversations we've had here and people have said, "Well, maybe we can do 'this' and maybe we could do 'that,' and what do you think?" And I've said, "Well, it could be good. It could be bad. Who knows?" Because as long as there is no sin involved, what's the outcome? Don't know. Could be good. Could be bad. For example, we have relocated a few times because of neighbours with barking dogs and it hasn't gone well, and in the end we've said, "Look, it's better that we sell and move somewhere else." And you go out and you explore the house, you look at the area, and you think, well... we often park the car at night-time and sit there and listen to see if there is any rowdy music or if there is any dogs and we do all the planning on a physical level we can, and think, "Well, no, there's no loud music. There are no young people with revved up cars living next door." We do all these physical tests and trials and all that. There is no sin involved. But we think, "Okay, we'll rent this house or we'll buy this house," and we've done it and then within months or within a certain period of time the two houses up the renter moves out and a new renter moves in and there are young people with fast cars and loud cars and play loud music and they've got three dogs. Could be good. Could be bad. But there was no sin involved in the decision.

So brethren, we have free moral agency. We can choose to do whatever we choose, and we look at it on a spiritual level and say, "Well, is there sin involved?" And that's the point.

So here Christ is saying it's where our treasure is, where our main priority is, where our *focus* is, that is where our heart will be, our inner thinking – that's where our treasure is. So our *inner* thinking is our treasure. Our *inner* thinking, our motives, *is* our treasure. So our inner thinking – what are we focused on? Well, that's what our treasure is. That's what we love the most, is another way of putting it. What we love the most is what we're going to think about. So what is it that we are focused on? What is our priority?

Verse 35 – Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning, so we are to be ready. We're to be on guard, and we are to be focused on the spiritual. We're to be ready spiritually. Let's "gird up the waist," prepare yourself, "and your lamps burning." We're to stand, therefore, with our waists girded. In Ephesians 6 it says, "Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with the truth." So we're to focus on the spiritual. We're to be ready, and to have our lamps burning.

Well, I think we'll finish that there and it looks like we're going to have a *Stay Focused – Part 2*. So the title of this sermon is *Stay Focused – Part 1*, and next time we'll handle *Stay Focused – Part 2*, and in *Part 2* we'll pick up from this particular scripture where we are here, from verse 35, and we're going to go into a lot more detail about "girding the waist" and "having lamps burning," and what it really is implying about "having our lamps burning."

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