

Welcome to the Sabbath, brethren.

The title of today's sermon will be *Personal Responsibility*, and this will be *Part 3*.

In *Part 1* and *2* we looked at the analogy of the fact that the Levites were called to take care of the temple, the sanctuary, and we, brethren, have been called to take care of our sanctuary, which we are, or temple, which we are...which is our minds. We have been called to take personal responsibility for the care of our minds. And the way that we care for our minds, the way that we care for “the temple” is what we're going to be measured by. So we are accountable for this care. Our calling is based on this work (care).

The analogy that we have looked at is the Levites were called to work to care for the temple. We have been called to care for our minds. We will be held accountable for the work (or the *lack* of work) in our minds.

God made it clear to Israel that each person would have to pay the penalty for their own sins. God has also told us that we will be held accountable for our choices, what we allow to go on within our minds.

We're going to pick up this sermon in **Numbers 18:6—Behold, I Myself**, talking about God, Yahweh Elohim, **have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting.** God gives us the gift of His holy spirit. This enables us to do the work in the temple, in our minds. So just as God had given the Levites to Aaron to do the work (they were given as a gift and they were given by God), for the purpose of working in the tabernacle, because within that tabernacle area (and in the future within the temple) there was a lot of work to be done. They were accountable for the accepting of the offerings that came from the people, the tribes of Israel. They also then had to present various things at various times on the altar, and then, of course, once a year Aaron as high priest would go into the Most Holy Place.

Well, there was a lot of work to be done and on particular times the number of sacrifices that were done, they were very, very busy, and it was a lot of physical work that had to be achieved. So there was an age limit about who was to serve in the area of the tabernacle (the temple in the future), and because of this age it was to do with physical strength because there was a lot of lifting and a lot of work to be done.

So God has, likewise, given us this ability, this gift to us, which is the gift of the holy spirit, which He has given to us, and He has given it to us to do the work of managing our minds, because it is by the power of God's holy spirit that comes to our mind. Whether or not we're going to yield to it or not is our choice. So this is that work, this yielding or choosing to yield is the very work.

Now, the other aspect which we've looked at of work is what we allow into our minds, whether we're going to keep our minds clean (pure) or whether they're going to be unclean or absorbing evil and then dwelling on that evil.

Elders taken from spiritual Israel, the Church of God, are servants of the High Priest, Jesus Christ. So anybody that is called into the ministry are spiritual servants of God. They're taken from spiritual Israel, which is the Church of God, and they are servants of Jesus Christ, the High Priest that we have. They are to work for Christ. Now, this is a key point to remember for anybody that has been called into a role of service within the ministry. We actually work for Jesus Christ and God the Father, and it's something that can be easily forgotten, because when we forget who we really work for, we can actually let down in our role of service.

I know in previous jobs people would say, "Who do you work for?" Well, that's how people measure you. So you get into a conversation with somebody and one of the first things they do to maintain a conversation, they'll ask, "Well, how are you?" They may talk about the weather. One question they ask is, "Who do you work for?" Now, that question can be one for general conversation, for the purpose of keeping a conversation going, or it can be triggered by an interest that they may have in you as an individual, but underneath sometimes it can be, it's a level of "Who you work for?" means, "Well, where do you stand in society? Who do you work for?" "I work for the government." Well, what does that really mean, "I work for such and such"? And other people say, "Well, I just work for the garbage collector." So people categorize or prioritize people based on how they work.

Now, we, brethren, should stand back and consider that. When the question is asked, whether we are members of the Body or being called into the ministry, we are actually under our High Priest, Jesus Christ. We're under God. We're under Jesus Christ. So when you're called into the ministry (anybody that's called into the ministry) as a role of service to the brethren, we work for Jesus Christ. Now, if somebody said, "Who do you work for?" At the moment, they wouldn't understand if I turned around and said, "I work for Jesus Christ." They would think I was crazy and arrogant to say such a thing. Well, the reality is those that have been called into the ministry *do work for* Jesus Christ. But underneath that all of us, brethren, called to be part in a relationship with God and with Jesus Christ, in some ways we yield to God the Father and Jesus Christ; therefore, in some ways we *work* for them, because we work within our minds to control our thinking so that we can yield to God's way of life, this way of being that God is.

Now, one of the keys about being a servant of Jesus Christ is how we live our life. For example, somebody that is called into the ministry will be held as accountable to whether or not they have yielded to God's spirit and whether they are an example to others about God's way of life. So the work that a minister should be doing (anybody that's called into the role of service as a minister), their work is to yield to God's spirit, and it will be seen by an example that is placed within the Church, an example for others.

Now, somebody that is not called into a role of service at this time (in the sense of the ministry), the same standard applies, because it is about whether or not a person yields to God's holy spirit and

whether or not they are an example to others of God's way of life. So that is the key about being within the ministry. It is actually about an example. It's not about taking credit to self, about, "Well, I'm a minister," or "I'm 'this'," or "I'm 'that'." It's actually the opposite. It's actually about an example of behavior, an example of the way we live our life out to the benefit of others. If we live our life out to the benefit of others, it'll be God's spirit living and dwelling in us that is that example.

Now, we're either one example or the other. We're either an example of God's way of life or an example of our own selfishness. As elders of God, we must take personal responsibility for the work that we have been given, therefore, within this calling we're going to be held as accountable for what we do.

Let's have a look at 1Timothy 3:1, which is an outline that Paul gives with regards to someone that is called into the role of service within the Church. **1 Timothy 3:1—This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop...** Well, that there can be seen as "an overseer" or "someone that is to care for others." So it actually is a role of service, and it's "desiring," which is about this intent, that the intent is to serve. The desire is to serve. Now, if we have this desire to serve and we're not in the ministry, it's the same thing. It's a *good* thing. **...it's a good work**, because it's about a desire to serve. So we don't have to be in the ministry to be desiring to serve or willing to serve, because our life, our calling is about service. It's about sacrificing the self to the benefit of others, which is putting the self down to benefit others, which is this role of service. So if we desire this role of service, whether we're called in the ministry or not is not relevant. It's really about this desire we must have within ourselves to serve others, to put others before our own desires.

Well, if we have this and we are called into the role of service within the ministry, it's a good thing, because it enables good works. It empowers good works because of this desire to serve can now be fulfilled. Now, within the role of the ministry some are called for different reasons, just like within the Levitical priesthood. The Levites were called for different roles of service. Some did one particular job, some did another particular job; some were to kill the animals, some were to carry the animals. Everyone had something different. So this role of service can vary, and there's not one better than the other. This is just simply about God's holy spirit. It's about whether or not we are yielding to God's holy spirit.

Verse 2—A bishop then must be blameless, a husband of one wife, now, this is referring to basically obedience to God's way of life, **temperate**, which is that moderation, **sober-minded, of good behavior**, which is their demonstration of their example of obedience to God and yielding to God's spirit, **hospitable**, which is this willing to serve, this desire to be in unity with others, this desire to be in fellowship with others, and this giving. Because being hospitable, which is being outgoing to others, is about serving. It's about putting down the self to serve others, to benefit others. **...able to teach**, and the best way of "able to teach," it can apply to two things. It can apply to the ability to instruct in God's word, which is having the knowledge of God, of God's way of life, having the spiritual understanding of God's way of life, and able to teach by example. Because if a person is called into the truth and ordained as a minister of God, it is so important that they have this ability to teach by example, because of what

they do. Now, a bad example is *not* the ability to teach because they're showing something different. Well, we have been given 57 Truths, so we have this knowledge and we have the spiritual understanding that God has given us about the "why" of the knowledge... well, now it's about living it. And that's the best example any of us can be.

Verse 3—*not given to wine*, which is this excess which we have covered in previous sermons, this ability to have self-control, not being drunk, not given over to alcohol where we're dependant on alcohol to live our life. ...***not violent***, and that can be "not angry," not having an angry disposition where we don't have this self-control. ...***not greedy for money***, which is about greed, about the desire to take or to have. We should have the complete opposite attitude, which is, we should be one of generosity, willing to give. Our priority will not be that of gaining wealth. And again, we've looked at that very scripture about, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." So this role of ministry is about a focus and God's way of life, which is demonstrated by the way a person lives.

...***but gentle, not quarrelsome***; in other words, not being lifted up with pride, not arguing, not wanting it their own way, but yielding. Because when we're quarrelsome or when we're argumentative it's about pride, it's about "my way," it's "the way I see it," and wanting to "prove a point," by raising the voice or arguing. Well, God's saying, well, we're not that way. We're actually the opposite. We're gentle. We're calm. We don't get into debate about things. ...***not coveting***; in other words, our priority in life is not about *self*, it's about *service*. We're not trying to get for self, which is that covetous. We're willing to give of self, willing to serve.

...***one who rules his own house well***, and that word "rule" really is "take care of," "one who takes care of his own house." And how does he do that? Because he lives (by example) love within his family. ...***having children in submission with all reverence***, with respect. So here is somebody that is *living* God's way of life within his family.

Verse 5—*For if a man does not know how to rule*, which is how to care for in love with God's holy spirit, ***his own house, how will he take care of...*** because that's what this is about, which is that "taking care of," a man has to "take care of his house," has to take care of his children and have his children respect him because of his love towards his family, well, how can a man who does not rule their own house (who does not take care of their own house on a physical level), how will he take care of **the Church of God**? In other words, how will he take care of it? How will he demonstrate love? If he's not living love within his family, how could he then be able to take care of the Church of God? In other words, if he's not sacrificing for his family, how could he then take care of the Church of God, which is his spiritual family?

Verse 6—*not a novice*, which is somebody newly planted. So that word there is really "newly planted." Not "newly planted." Somebody that has just been called, been baptized, and received God's holy spirit within one year or so. It wouldn't be that they should be given the role of "a bishop" because they're novice. They're novice in understanding, they're novice in knowledge, and they're novice in the way of

being a “young plant,” being a “child” within the truth, within the Word of God, the Logos of God living and dwelling in them, because of a lack of experience.

Now, there *are* times when (based on certain situations), that a younger person within the faith *may* be ordained for a particular role, for a particular *purpose*, depending on the environment. But here it's saying as a general principle, somebody new being called into the Church would not be ordained because of this being a novice or newly planted because of their lack of knowledge and spiritual understanding of particular matters, and they haven't had that opportunity yet to be able to live by example or demonstrate by example the way of life that needs to be lived.

And the reason that God's Church would not ordain somebody that is newly planted, **lest being puffed up with pride...** Now, this is the biggest issue within *all* mankind, is pride. Well, somebody new in a role, they generally take it to themselves because they *then* lift themselves up in importance, not realizing the very beginning (which we went through), which was about this role of service. It's not about taking to self; it's about sacrificing self. Well, somebody that doesn't have that spiritual understanding and that point of view may take it to themselves. In other words, they'll be puffed up with pride. ...**he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil**, which is this pride, the lifting up of self, taking to self, "Look at me. Don't you know that I'm an associate elder? Don't you know that I'm an elder? Don't you know that I'm an evangelist? Don't you *know* that I'm in the ministry?" Well, that's how people take it to themselves because of the wrong thinking. They haven't yet had the experience to come to understand the self, the knowledge of themselves, the natural carnal mind. Therefore, pride is our biggest enemy.

Even if we've been in the Church for 10, 20, 30, 40 years, our biggest enemy is ourselves because of our natural carnal mind, which is based on selfishness, which is based on pride. Pride is our biggest enemy. And the moment we come to "see" that we are who we really are, selfish, that all our motivations from the natural carnal mind is selfish and only God is good and only good can come from God by the power of God's holy spirit, that we yield to it, we can then live this example of righteousness, we can live this example of being loving towards our family, our physical family and the Family of God, the Church of God, which involves everybody within the Body of Christ.

Verse 7—Moreover, he must have a good testimony (good witness or evidence) **among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.** So this is a good report, having a good report or a good testimony, which is they're having a witness of who they are out to others within the world. So those who are outside are those of the world who haven't been called at this time, that we should have a good witness, that people would look... and yes, they might think we're strange and we're odd, but the reality is that we don't argue. We don't raise our voice. We don't use foul language. We don't take God's name in vain. Many of these things they see on a physical level—and that's what I'm referring to here more than anything, is on this physical level, because deep down it's a spiritual matter, but they can only see the physical. So yes, they might think we're a little strange, but we have a good report because we're open, we're honest, we're sincere, we're gentle, we're showing respect to others, we're not argumentative, we're not focused on money, we're not greedy, we're not angry...all of these

things which the world sees. They then can look at us and say, it's a good report. They won't speak evil of us from *that* point of view.

Now, they may speak evil of us because of Sabbath keeping, Holy Day keeping, and other things, weird religion, cult, all those things. Well, that's fine. That's expected. But as far as a good testimony, it's about the way we live. It's the example we demonstrate to others, the way we live towards others.

So that is the role of the ministry today, which is a role of service. Well, just as the Levitical priesthood (from the Levites they were taken), they were to serve and they were given as a gift for the purpose of serving.

Numbers 18:7—Therefore, you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. And that's the key point of the ministry. That's a key point for all of us, really, whether we're in the ministry or not. This is a role of service. So we are the temple of God if God lives and dwells in us, if we have God's holy spirit.

Now, we have been called to serve. We have been called to put down the self and to serve. Now, whether we're in the "priesthood" or not, currently, because we have God's holy spirit, we are considered by God as servants of God; therefore, we have been given over to *serve* others, to serve others in everything we do by the way we live to them.

Continuing on in verse 7...**I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.** Just reviewing this: Ordination is a gift from God and its purpose is to serve God's Temple, God's people. If an ordination is taken to self, it becomes a worthless role. It's a role of *self*-service. So the moment we take credit to self for an ordination (for example), it actually becomes a worthless thing because we begin to serve self because pride has got in the way. It will be the same in the Millennium. Without God's spirit we are only on a wrong path. So to be on the right path we need God's holy spirit. We cannot come near God or His temple without the right "clothes" on, which is righteousness. So this role of service going into the Millennium is exactly the same. An outsider (someone that is not called) can't come near God, can't enter the Most Holy Place, which we can enter now because of the very power that God has given us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So access now has been given to us, where once before it was only the high priest that went into the Most Holy Place once a year. Well, as we understand, we now can go to God at any time and we have access. Well, the outsider cannot come near God, and this point here, it says, "They should be put to death." Well, an outsider really doesn't have *life* living in them. If we don't have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in us, there *is* no life, and in some ways they are already facing death.

Let's have a look at **1 Chronicles 29:1—This is the offerings for the building of the Temple. Therefore, King David said to all the congregation: My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the LORD God.** Well, it's the same, brethren, for us today. "The temple is not for man." Our temple (which we

are), our minds “are not for man; it is for the LORD God.” It is for Yahweh Elohim. So we have been called for the purpose of God living and dwelling in us. That is the key to understanding life. Once we are called it is about God living and dwelling in us through the power of His holy spirit. That’s why we have to be ensuring within ourselves that we are working. “The work *is* great.” This is a great battle that has to take place. This is a constant work that has to be done because this temple has got nothing to do with the world. We don’t want anything to do with man’s way; it is all about whether God lives and dwells in us or not. So we have been called. We have been chosen for this very reason, to work.

Now, when we’re inexperienced, we always will refer back to our natural carnal mind, the needle in the groove, the way we think, the way we are by nature. Well, because of this inexperience God gives us time. God shows us mercy and over time we begin to change, we begin to transform, we begin to clean the temple, we begin to clean our minds. Because the most important thing in life is to keep our minds clean.

Drop down to **verse 10**—Now, this is David’s praise to God. **Therefore, David blessed the LORD before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.** So David now is blessing God (praising God) because of His great glory, for what He has done.

Verse 11—Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, and the glory, the victory, and the majesty; For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *are Yours*. Now, this applies to us, brethren. All that is on the earth is God’s. Well, we are God’s at this point. We are God’s because we have been called into a relationship with Him, and God *is* all powerful and all the glory, and the victory, and the majesty all belongs to God because it’s God that’s doing the work in us. We have our part in yielding (in choosing) but all the glory goes to God. Because without a calling, what are we? What do we have? Absolutely nothing. It requires a calling from God to be able to have this dwelling of God in us.

Continuing on... **Yours is the Kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all.** God is all-powerful. David is really revealing a lot here in the sense of his humility. Because humility is, and can only be established within us, by the way we think, in the way we think, and the way we see ourselves. So pride exists because we see ourselves wrongly. We see ourselves as something we are not. We take credit to self. We think we’re better than we are. That’s pride...taking credit to self. Well, humility is seeing this. So David here, by his words, is demonstrating his humility, because in verse 11 he says, “Yours O LORD, is the greatness.” So it’s not about self. “The power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours. Yours is the Kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all.” Now, that is humility. Being able to see that on a spiritual level is humility, because there’s no self involved at all, because David is seeing here that God is all-powerful, and all-mighty and he is nothing...he is nothing. Well, same for us, brethren. We have to come to this point. Because this is what humility is, taking no credit to self for anything, total reliance and dependence on God, knowing who God is versus who we are. That is humility. And it’s a spiritual matter and it takes time to come to this, the depth of it. To be clothed in sackcloth, to be clothed with humility is a state of mind.

Verse 12—Both riches and honor *come* from You... Everything comes from God. Now, we understand this on the point of view when we listen to a Feast sermon, that God says, "Will you rob Me?" "How have we robbed You?" "In tithes and offerings." And the reason for this understanding, this knowledge that we have about tithes and offerings is about this very point, "Both riches and honor come from You," come from God. Everything belongs to God. And this is what David is saying, "Everything belongs to You." "For all that is in heaven and earth is Yours." Well, "Both riches and honor come from God." So we understand all wealth, all money, everything physical comes from God.

Well, it's the same from a spiritual perspective. All riches, all spiritual knowledge, all spiritual understanding, all wisdom comes from God, "and honor." Well, there is an honor associated with an ordination; there is an honor associated with a calling. We have been called. Well, it's come from God. And those that have been honored with the sense of being able to serve God's people more, like the Levites were, there is an honor associated to that. But it's not taken to self. This has all been given from God, all for the purpose of seeing what we will do with it. So a person is called and God then will see what a person will do. What is a person's true motive and intent in life? No different than an ordination, no matter at what level the ordination. It's all about what will the person do. What example will they live? Will they take it to themselves or will they give the glory and honor to God, which is needed in the sense of having humility?

In Your hand *is* power and might; In Your hand *it is* to make great and to give strength to all. So everything comes from God. All things come from God. It's in God's power; it's in God's hand to make great. God lifts up and God pulls down. "And to give strength to all." Where's strength come from? It comes from God. So our strength, our strength, brethren, comes from God. And I'm talking on a spiritual level. The only strength we have on a spiritual level has to come from God, and it's a matter of whether or not we are yielding to the flow of God's holy spirit in our life, which requires work, this working within our minds.

Now, God calls us for this very purpose, to work within our mind. All of us have been called for a purpose, and that is that transformation, coming to see ourselves, who we really are—pride, selfishness—and then to move to a state of humility where we will give all the glory and all the honor to God. We'll recognize God's *power* within us. His mind within us is our power. Our strength is God in us, because without God in us, we are nothing. We have no power, no strength.

Verse 13—Now, therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. We give God thanks for the calling we have been given. We give God thanks for forgiveness of sin that He has placed before us, the gift of repentance. We thank God for Passover. We thank God for His plan. We thank God for one another because we need each other. We're part of a body, the Body of Christ. "And praise Your glorious name." We give thanks to God's name because He is the Almighty God. He *is* all mighty.

Verse 14—But who *am* I, and who *are* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? Because at this point they had willingly given for the purpose of building this very temple, and they had

given of a free and generous heart, which is what we have to do. We have to be willing to give. Now, there are physical things, which are a demonstration of the inner thinking, but we have to be willing to give of ourselves in a role of service. No matter whether or not we're ordained or not, we are called to serve. We are called to clean this temple. We are called to keep this temple clean. And I'm referring to something spiritual, which is the way we think, our attitudes that we have and what we let into our eyes and what we listen to. Those are the things, the way we can keep the temple clean.

For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You, because it all belonged to God anyway. It's God inspired it. He owned it all. He inspired others to give willingly. Well, it's all His anyway and we're just giving back to God what God requires of us. **For we are aliens (sojourners) and pilgrims before You**, because we are only temporary. This life is temporary. We're passing through. And if we get to seventy years, anything past that, it's by strength. It's a blessing from God. **...as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope. O LORD our God, all this abundance that You have prepared to build a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own.** It's all belonging to God. So everything that we do on a physical level, well, God owns it all anyway. Here David is acknowledging that everything that has been given has come from God in the first place. And what a blessing it is that they were given this opportunity to give for the purpose of building the temple. How much more important it is that we care for the temple that we are? How much more important it is to guard our minds?

Verse 17—I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, and I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent and the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You. So this is now requiring... Of course, they could only do it from the point of view of something physical, and they had a willing heart in the sense that God gave them the thinking to be able to give freely. Because the natural carnal mind, it doesn't want to give freely. It wants to give to get. Well, here, this is something on a spiritual level. We need God's holy spirit to achieve this, to "keep this forever in the heart and the thoughts of the heart of Your people." That's us, brethren. We are God's people. We are the called out ones. "And fix their heart towards You," towards God. Well, that's what we've been called to do, to fix our heart, our motive and intent towards God. "Seek first the Kingdom of God."

Verse 19—And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments, and Your testimony, and Your statutes, to do all these things and to build the temple for which I have made provisions. Then David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. So all the assembly blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king. So this, brethren, is about the temple, which we are. We are to continue to work, to give of ourselves. We have been given a calling for the purpose of serving, of building this thinking by changing it. So we're to build up the thinking of God in us. Now, God will empower it. He'll provide His holy spirit so it can be achieved; we have to learn to yield to it.

Mark 7:1. We're looking at this for the purpose of understanding, of keeping our minds clean, because it is all about the temple, which we are, and our duty of care for this temple. **Mark 7:1—Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now, when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled (that's their perception) that is, with unwashed hands, they found guilt (“they found fault”),** because they had laws and rituals about washing your hands before eating. The way that they had to do it was a particular ritual or rite. This is beyond health laws. This is far beyond it. This is now a ritual, which is taking something and expanding it beyond what God requires. And they have made *this* their religion. So the washing of hands became the religion and they'd lost the real meaning behind the health laws themselves.

Verse 3—For the Pharisees and the Jews did not eat unless they washed *their* hands in a special way, so this is that ritual that they went through, which was they would start with their fist and they'd work up right up their arm. So there was a particular way that they had to wash, which is in a special way, **holding the traditions of the elders,** because of this religious ritual. Not the way that God had said; they'd actually expanded it.

Verse 4—When they came from the marketplace, they did not eat unless they washed. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. So they were fanatical about the way that they handled particular things. And you could wash the bowl or a cup or a pitcher a particular way. You couldn't just rinse it out and wash it and put it down to dry; there had to be a ritual. And this ritual, of course, was their level of self-righteousness. This is their demonstration they were righteous, *more* righteous than the people, because of these very rituals. And if you didn't follow their particular rituals the way that they had established, well, of course you were unclean. You were *not* righteous.

Verse 5—Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him (Jesus Christ), Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? So that's the question. Why are they not following the tradition of the elders, which is this demonstration of righteousness that they saw or had established.

Verse 6—He answered and said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, the fact that they were hypocrites, they were acting out a role, hypocrites, as it is written... Now, to be a hypocrite, we understand, is to act out a role, which is one based on not being sincere. Because a hypocrite is an actor, someone that is taking on a role and pretending to be something else, which is not sincere; it is not genuine. **This people honors Me with *their* lips, but their heart,** which is their inner thinking, their motive and intent, **is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me,** this emptiness, "they worship Me." It was all a waste of time, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.** So this is not something that has come from God. It's a commandment or an instruction of men. And God is saying here through Jesus Christ that they are worshipping God in vain. It's all just an empty exercise of self-righteousness.

And how are they doing it? **Verse 8—For laying aside the commandments of God,** which is God's way of being, God's way of thinking based on love, **you hold the traditions of men — as the washing of**

pitchers, of cups, and many other such things you do. So they had these rituals that they would do, and this is their demonstration of *their* religious belief, their example to others. "You have to do it this way. This is the righteous way to do things." But God is saying these are traditions of men and they are laying aside the command of God, the commandments of God.

Verse 9—And He said to them, *All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you keep to your tradition.* So they reject God's way. They reject these things and they have their own laws, their own way of doing things. Now, from this, brethren, we can see that we are required to obey God. Simple things in life are often the most complicated. Because the reality is, as humans, the only thing we have to do, really, is obey God. It sounds so simple! The only thing we have to do is obey God. And the connection to this is, in spirit and truth. Well, that's the difficulty, because the natural carnal mind does *not* want to obey God, and if it does try to obey God, it does it on its *own thinking*, which is the traditions of men. So their obedience to God was demonstrated by rituals and all the rules and regulations of particular ways to do things; it had nothing to do with the spirit of the law, the motive and intent behind it. And that was the problem. They were doing it for righteousness—*self-righteousness*, "Look at me!" They were doing it because of pride! Pride had elevated them. "So *this* is the way to do it. Don't you see that I am *better* than you because I follow these ways? But Your disciples, they don't follow the ways of the traditions, therefore..." saying they are unrighteous or unclean.

Verse 10—For Moses said, Honor your father and mother; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, If a man says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me *is Corban— (that is, dedicated to the temple)*... In other words, it was going to be a "gift to God." They were actually letting their parents suffer and it should have been given to the parents to support them and care for them. They were saying, "Well, it's okay to do that. It's okay to let your parents suffer as long as you're giving it to God," which is this level of self-righteousness. "Well, you see, I've given it as a gift to God, therefore, it's approved." They're overruling God's instruction. Because God says here we're to honor our mother and father, which is we have to make sure we care for them physically and spiritually. There's always this care on a spiritual level that we need to have for them. Well, they'd overruled this and said, "Well, I've given it to God. I've given it all to the Church of God. I've put it into the temple, and therefore, it's all okay."

And by doing this... **and you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother.** Because where did the money go that went into the temple? It went to the priesthood and they were using it. So they would support somebody taking what should have been given to the parents, or the support needed to the parents. They would support it because they were gaining from it; they were getting from it.

Verse 13—making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down, these manmade rules and rituals, which is this demonstration of righteousness. They're overruling God's command to love one another, to love God and to love our neighbor as our self. They are overruling this by the way that they did things on a physical level. **And many such things you do.**

And when He (Christ) had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, Hear Me, everyone, and understand. Now, they're not going to be able to understand this because it's a parable and it was

given on a physical level with a spiritual meaning; therefore, they're not going to understand it. So when they hear this they're going to be quite confused...quite confused.

Verse 15—There is nothing that enters a man from without, talking about food in the mouth, consumed, **which can defile him**, now that's overrules the laws of the Bible, which is: Anything that enters a man cannot defile him, which is unclean foods. Can you eat unclean foods now? ...**but the things which come out of him**, which is excretion, **those are the things that defile a man**. So this is a parable. They would have been quite confused about this defiling. "What do you mean you can't be defiled? Because unclean foods is a defiling!" **If anyone has an ear to hear, let him hear!**

Verse 17—And when He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning this parable, which He had spoken. Physical to point to something spiritual. **So He said to them, Are you thus without understanding also?** Christ is now going to say it's not about physical food and it's *not* about the eating of food, and it's not about the excreting of food, but it is about the spiritual. **Do you perceive that whatever enters a man from without cannot defile him**, which is talking about food. What enters a man from without (enters the body), cannot defile him, **because it does not enter his heart**, because it's about the mind. Now, this is what we are on guard about. This is that work that we have. This is that caring for the temple, which is this inner thinking, which is our intent, what goes on in our minds. ...**because it does not enter his heart**. So physical food, it's eaten and then it's excreted. ...**but into the stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?** Because the body works at it and cleans it out. Now, this does not give the overruling of God's law, because God's law makes it very clear about clean and unclean foods. And Jesus Christ is not overruling the laws of clean and unclean foods on a physical level. This is a parable (which is an example), and He's pointing to something spiritual. So it's not about changing the health laws or clean and unclean food laws, it's just simply an analogy pointing to something. "Because it does not enter his heart," into his inner thinking because this is the problem. The *mind* is our problem, "but it goes into his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods."

And He (Christ) said, What comes out of a man, that defiles him, that's what makes him unclean, because it's talking about words or the intent of the heart, why we do what we do.

Verse 21—For from within, which is in our minds, **out of the heart**, which is our inner thinking, our intent, our motive and intent, **out of the heart of men, proceed** (so these are the things that make us unclean), **evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders**, which is hate or ill will or words that are hurtful, **thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye**, which is this motive of envy or desire to harm, which is this motive and intent behind why we're thinking, what we're doing, why we want to hurt others, **blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these things come from within**, within the mind, which we are to guard, **and defile a man**. So this is why it is so important (why we have been called), is to guard the mind, to work within the mind, to continue to keep the mind clean. Because to be clean, is to be pure. To be defiled (to be unclean) is the issue. One is pure (God's thinking), clean; one is unclean, which is selfish thinking. Because in the end it is all about our minds, the way we think, our intent of why we do what we do. So in the end it goes back to the spirit of the matter. Are we keeping our minds clean? Are we on guard? And that is why we need to be so careful

about what enters our minds through our eyes and through our ears and through our thoughts. Because we can have our eyes closed and we can have our ears blocked, but we *still* can think unclean thoughts and then dwell on them, and then that will manifest into sin.

Back to Numbers 18:8—**And the LORD spoke to Aaron, Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel. I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever.** So these are the heave offerings which the children of Israel would bring in. Well, they were given to the priesthood for their consumption. Now, this is like tithes and offerings.

Verse 9—This shall be yours for the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering are theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they (the children of Israel) render to Me, so it was given to God, that was their intent, why they were doing it, **shall be most holy for you and your sons.** Now, this is the priesthood that were to use these things. Israel would bring in their offerings, give them to God via the ministry. Well, it's the same today. Tithes and offerings, they will be used by the ministry according to what God inspires the use of them.

Verse 10—In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and your daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. Now, when they were "clean" was the point of whether or not they were defiled or not. When we think we either think clean or unclean. It's not about food. But the point being this is all spiritual. The principle of being clean or unclean is spiritual. We're either without sin or with sin. We're either clean or unclean.

Verse 12—All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits, their 1st Tithe, which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you, which is the priesthood.

Verse 13—Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. Now, we can look at this on a spiritual level. Brethren, we have to be clean to be able to consume God's holy spirit. We have to be without sin. Because if we're unclean with unrepented sin, well, we can't consume or have God's holy spirit because we're living in sin. God says He can't live with sin. So we have to make sure our house (our minds) are clean by repentance. And the beauty of repentance is something that we grow to see, because without repentance, we have nothing. If we can't "see" sin, we can't repent. But God gives us the gift, the power of His holy spirit to be able to "see" sin, "see" sin within ourselves, hence, when we are given this gift of repentance and we choose to yield (choose to repent), we become clean. So if we're clean we can consume, we can eat of the food of God, the word of God. God's holy spirit can live and dwell in us.

So, "Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it." So everybody within the Body of Christ, the Church of God can consume God's spirit, can have God's holy spirit living and dwelling in them if they yield by repenting, by having the forgiveness of sin applied to them because they are in a state of repentance.

Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the LORD, whether man or beast— remembering that we'd been through this before, about if it was a firstborn of man they would be redeemed (in other words, they would be exchanged)— shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man shall surely be redeemed, and the firstborn of the unclean animals you shall redeem. And we have covered these scriptures before.

Verse 16—And those redeemed, and of the devoted things, you shall redeem when one month old... So they were given a timing of when they were to do it, that the things that were to be given to God, and they were unclean (the unclean animal), they were to be redeemed at the point of when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, which is talking about an exchange of money, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

Verse 17—But the firstborn of the cow, this is something that is now clean, the firstborn of the sheep, or the firstborn of the goat you shall *not* redeem. Now, the others were considered unclean, they'd have to be exchanged for a value. They had to be redeemed. Well, now these are clean animals, therefore, they don't have to be exchanged, but they were to be given as an offering. They *are* holy. They are clean; they are pure based on God's word. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours. All the heave offering of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever. So this is, the family (the tribe of Levi), was now able to consume the clean gifts that were given to the temple, which was those that were offered as tithes and offerings, were given to the priesthood. And they were to consume part of it. Some of it was burnt as an offering to God; others were to be eaten. Now, the unclean animals that were redeemed or exchanged for money so they could live off the income, "I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever." It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.

Then the LORD said to Aaron: You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them, which is the children of Israel. I *am* your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. So this principle really was that they were to be looked after by Israel. They didn't have to go out and farm and to own properties around for the purpose of having a portion of land to grow and to consume, because they were supported by God, by the tithes and offerings of the children of Israel.

Verse 21—Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance, so this principle applies today, brethren, that the children of Israel (the Church of God) would give tithes and offerings, and this was to be used by the priesthood (by the ministry) according to the inspiration of God, in return for work which they perform, which is this work of service, this work that they have to do with regards to living an example of God living and dwelling in them, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. Now, we all have a responsibility to do the work of God. Now, that work of God in us is the transformation of the mind. We are called to work. We are called to keep the temple clean. We are called to keep our minds clean, to not have the pollutions and defile our thinking.

Now, the principle that is being applied there in verse 21 is "a labourer is worthy of his hire," payment for work. Effort towards overcoming will receive a payment from God. We are to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Now, the effort we put into keeping our minds clean and working in our minds, guarding our minds, and making sure we don't defile our minds, and guard our intent and our motive, that (if we do those things) there is a payment which is to be received from God, which is twofold. Firstly, God can live and dwell in us if we keep our minds clean, if we are in a state of repentance. And the second reward is the gift of life, life in Elohim.

Verse 22—Here after the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. So as members of the Body of Christ we need to be very careful *how* we fulfill our part in the Body of Christ. The point being we're not to be presumptuous and *assume a role* that is not ours to fulfill. We must not take a role that has not been appointed to us. Now, this is that act of being presumptuous. When we're presumptuous we take a role that has not been appointed to us.

Numbers 18:23—But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. So if they do something wrong there is a penalty to be paid. So everyone is accountable for what they do. Everyone is going to be held accountable for their thoughts, words, and actions. Well, here they're going to "bear their iniquity," they're going to be held accountable for the way that they serve within the tabernacle of meeting. *...it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*

Verse 24—For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites, which is God has given it to the Levites, God has given it to the priesthood, as an inheritance; therefore, I have said to them, **Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.** Now, everything belongs to God, and the children of Israel were to give their tithes and offerings to the priesthood, to the Levites. And today that same tithing system exists, offerings exist, and it's given to the Church. And God's apostle allocates to the ministry according to the needs of the work of God, the role of service. So funds are allocated as a role of service for the brethren and the work that has to be done, because the ministry work.

Now, the most important part of the ministry's work is to work within themselves, this role of service, this working within the mind, because we have to overcome the natural carnal mind through the power of God's holy spirit. So this yielding, this working in the mind is something that is held as accountable to the ministry, this role of we'll work within the mind, the ministry will be held accountable. The ministry will be held accountable, *because* the responsibility and the accountability of an elder within the Body of Christ is *higher* than that of a member of the Body. Because this role of service, this ordination, this being a "Levite working within the temple," there is an accountability, and we're going to be held to it. Therefore, it's so important that the ministry demonstrate (as it was outlined in 1 Timothy), that they live the example of God living and dwelling in them, and therefore, the example, the way that they think, what they do, what they say, their intent and motive, they're going to be held as more accountable than a member of the Body because of the appointment of the role of service, the appointment of *being an example* of where God dwells, where God *is*. It is so much more important.

So the responsibility and the accountability of being a minister or an elder, of an ordination within God's Church is great. The burden of responsibility is great. Now, we're going to look at an aspect of this in the Old Testament. **Leviticus 9:23—And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offerings and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.** So here is clear evidence of where God is working, because, "Moses and Aaron had gone into the tabernacle and they had blessed the people and the glory of God had appeared," in the sense of the consuming fire had come down before them and they had seen this "consuming of the burnt offerings, and the fat was all taken up. When the people saw it"—this is all on a physical level—"they shouted for joy and fell on their faces." This is an aspect of fear and respect for God.

Well, brethren, for us today it's the same thing. We, brethren, are working within our minds, the temple of God which we are, and therefore, within that temple we can offer offerings of praise to God, give God the glory. And when we see that we have been called and we "see" our minds and we "see" what we are, we can fall down before God in repentance, and therefore, we can shout for joy within our minds that God is merciful, that He can forgive us. We can have the *evidence* of where God works by the way we think. By the power of God's holy spirit we know who we are. We know whether or not we should be working in our minds or not. We know what we should be working on. So these are the things we can praise God for. And we can go before God in prayer at any time to worship Him, to thank Him for our calling, for the gift of mercy, the gift of repentance that we have, and for His way of life. And we can ask God to live in us so that we can demonstrate, we can *live* righteousness out to others, which is to live mercy, to live love, to live patience out to others, that we can live a pure life out to others, which is our motive and intent is not to harm, not to hurt anybody. And the other things that were listed as unclean, we don't want to *defile* our minds, defile our thinking by the words that come out of our mouth.

Leviticus 10:1—Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (and Aaron at this point, of course, is the high priest) each took his censer, put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He (God) had not commanded them. So now this is this role of being presumptuous. They'd been presumptuous of taking on a role that was not theirs to do.

Now, we can do this in life, brethren. We can do it on the physical job where we take on something that we think should be done another way or could be done better, or we just assume it and do it without anyone appointing us to the role, and that's the whole point about being presumptuous. To be presumptuous is to take something on that we have not been *appointed to*. We just assume it, we take it, and we just act presumptuously and just do it.

Well, here we have the two sons of Aaron doing exactly that. They took something to themselves. They took on the responsibility to do it when it wasn't theirs. They had not been appointed to this role. They had not been appointed to do this role. That hadn't been *commanded* of them. They hadn't been appointed to it. God had *not* given them this responsibility.

Verse 2—So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Now, this is because of their actions, of what they did. They assumed or presumed. They became presumptuous, and therefore, God destroyed it.

Now, how much more important it is for us, brethren, not to be presumptuous, not to take something to self that hasn't been given to us. Not to take an *authority* to ourselves that hasn't been given to us. Not to *assume* something or *presume* something, and therefore, just do it. If we're not appointed to a role of service in a particular area within the ministry, we shouldn't do it. If we've been appointed to it, we should do it, because that's our accountability, that's our responsibility. Now, we have all been called to serve. *That* is our role. *That* is our responsibility. *That* is our accountability. We've all been called to serve one another. We've all been called to *sacrifice* the self, and that's how we're going to be measured. Whether or not we work in our minds, whether we sacrifice ourselves, whether we give up ourselves to the benefit of others, well, that's how we're going to be measured, and therefore, we're not acting presumptuously on this because this is what we have been called to.

Now, to act presumptuously is when we take on something we haven't been appointed to. For example, we haven't been appointed to the role of writing religious material. We are not to do that. We're not to go out and try to lecture or teach others in the world. That's not our role, not what we've been called to. We've been called to keep clean the mind, to guard our minds, to make sure our minds are cleaned, to allow God to live in us. *That's* what we've been called to.

So here, where we have the sons of Aaron acting presumptuously, God says, He will destroy them. Well, that is a demonstration; that is an example for us that we need to be very careful what we do within our minds, the temple which we are. We have to be careful that we don't go and do things, expand things when they shouldn't be expanded, or limit things when we shouldn't, add to or take away from what God gives, because it's a dangerous thing.

Now, to add to what God has given, and then to expand it in our own thinking is acting presumptuously. We're taking on a role that hasn't been given to us. Now, if we are to take away from what God has given it's the same thing. We're being very presumptuous to think that we have that authority when God has told us clearly that we shouldn't add to or take away; we should just take what God has given and stay with what God has given.

Now, we've all acted presumptuously in life in one way or the other. I know that I have done it within the ministry, even where I've acted presumptuously and I was wrong, repented of that because I wasn't appointed to a particular role, and yet I did it. I shouldn't have done it. I was wrong and I sinned. But from that I've learned that acting presumptuously can happen on a physical level, but it can happen on a spiritual level as well without even knowing it. But it all goes back to why does a person act presumptuously? What is presumptuousness? It's about pride. It's about pride, because it's taking to self, taking a role to self that we haven't been allocated or appointed. And this is what this example here, of this Nadab and Abihu were doing, which is they were being presumptuous.

Verse 3—Then the LORD said to Aaron, This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me (to God) I (God) must be regarded as holy. So we're to set it aside for a pure purpose. We're to show

respect and set aside God as higher than anything else. So, "I must be regarded as holy." We must treat God with respect. We're not to be presumptuous and just do things any way we think. We have to do things the right way, in spirit and truth. **And before all the people I must be glorified.** We must be honored...we must honor God. So this goes back to this whole aspect of who we are. We are members of the Body of Christ. We are called out for a purpose, and that purpose is to live a righteous example, to live God *in us*, to have God dwell in us out to the benefit of others. So we will be known by the world, we'll be known by the Church (within the Church), and we'll be known by God. How? By how we are yielding to God's holy spirit. Because that is the key to life, yielding to God's holy spirit.

So we have a mind that we need to guard. We have a *mind* that needs to be worked at. And we have to continually keep sweeping and cleaning, and we have to keep sweeping out the unclean (the dust, the sin) that enters our mind. We've got to be working hard within this temple, just like the Levites were, and they were held accountable for what they did. And here we have two sons of Aaron who do something in a presumptuous way and God dealt with them, because "the wages of sin is death." Now, being presumptuous is *sin* because it's about pride.

Deuteronomy 17:1—You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish or defect, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. Now, this principle is they were not to take something that had a blemish or a defect—in other words, it might be lame, for example. Well, they weren't to actually take it because it was actually something that was *not of a high standard*. And the attitude behind this, this choosing the blemished or this lame or this animal that had a fault was the fact that it had an attitude behind it. Because the attitude of what we do here... Let's just say there were ten lambs that had been born in the same period, and the tenth one was to be offered, which is the tithe. Well, if it had a blemish, let's just say it had a faulty leg or a broken leg or something was wrong with it, it was slightly deformed, well, that defected animal was not to be given. We would look at the ten lambs of the same age, born at the same time, and we would choose the best, because this is all about an attitude. And the attitude is, "close enough is not good enough," whereas the natural carnal mind is, "close enough is good enough." That's the attitude. "Oh well, its close," therefore, "that will do." In other words, it's not the best. So then we have to look back at the attitude, the intent, the motive of why we're doing it and how we're doing it, because it's all about this working. It's a way we think.

So they weren't to give a sacrifice that had a blemish or a defect because it was an abomination; it's detestable to God because it showed an attitude. And that attitude was a lack of respect for God. It was a lack of understanding that God provided all things.

Verse 2—If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, His agreement, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or the moon or any host of heaven, which I have not commanded... So here is somebody going off in false religion. They're putting their trust in something else. They've giving their *credit* to something that is false, because any credit given to anything other than God is giving credit to something that is false. The moment we give our minds over to anything other than worshiping God, and if we give it over to, for

example, the sun and the moon, which is (following star signs is a classic example of going after a false god) because it's trusting in something else. Now, when people look up in astrology and they have their star signs and it says, "Your lucky number is 7, and you should do 'this,' and you should do 'that.'" Well, the moment we give heed to any of those things we're giving heed to soothsayers, we're giving heed to witchcraft, we're giving heed to astrology. This is idolatry because it's trusting in something else. We've gone after and served other gods. We've worshipped them because we've given them credit. Because all those star signs, there's no credit to that. It's all demonic. It's all demonic. It's the thinking of man. It's putting his trust in something else other than Yahweh Elohim, the Almighty God.

Verse 4 ...and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true, so in other words, you've got to establish the facts. It can't be just on gossip. It cannot be just one person coming up and saying something and then believing it and then acting. It has to be proven. There has to be facts. **And if indeed it is true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, (verse 5) then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. Whoever is worthy of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; but he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness,** one lot of evidence given, one person just giving evidence, one person saying something. It actually has to be proven. Therefore, somebody isn't put to death at the mouth of one person. Just because somebody says it, it's not good enough. God requires witness or evidence to be provided by the mouth of two or three.

Now, this, brethren, is about being accountable. We, within the Body of Christ, are going to be held accountable if we *know* something that somebody is doing and we have proof and facts. Now, there's been many a time where things have been said that haven't been proved, and therefore, cannot be acted on. And then some people get upset and say, "Well, why aren't you doing something about that?" Well because it can't be established as *fact*. It has to be fact, it has to be provable, or it has to be admitted to by the person. Now, if it's not, what can the ministry do? Nothing. Because according to God's word, it has to be fact. It has to be very *provable*, and therefore, God works through His ministry and it takes time to work through some issues. Other issues are resolved quite quickly; others take time.

People can be doing things wrong and God will allow time for them to repent, and therefore, it requires time to work through certain situations within the Church. But in the end, if it is provable by the mouth of two or three witnesses and it is obvious an open sin exists, well, the death that it's talking about today can be that of disfellowshipment. Because disfellowshipment is a death. It's being cut off from a relationship with God, the Body of Christ.

Verse 7—The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away evil, you shall put away the evil person from among you (or evil from you). So the person that made the accusation, that came with the evidence, who gave proof that this was actually taking place, they were to cast the first stone. They were to cast the first stone and then others were to join in for the removal of sin, the removal of sin from the children of Israel.

Verse 8—If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge between degrees of blood guiltiness, between one judgment or another, in other words, should they be put to death or shouldn't they, between one punishment or another, what is the best level of punishment, matters of controversy within your gates, in other words, you can't make the decision, then you shall rise and go up to the place where the LORD your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests. So they're to go to the ministry. So there's an issue within the Church. It's not about acting presumptuously and taking authority we don't have to ourselves, but we're to bring it to the priest, because it is a matter that has arisen that we just don't know what to do in that particular environment, well, we go and seek counsel. We take it to the priesthood. You shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those days, because there were certain judges at different times appointed, and to inquire *of them*; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. So now they're going to give the advice, "This is the ruling..." "This is the binding and loosening of this matter." "This is what needs to be done."

You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in the place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order. So this is about this advice about how to handle a matter. Now, this is what we should do. We should handle it according to the advice, not to go off and do our own thing, because that is the tendency of human nature. Not to listen is the tendency of human nature.

Verse 11—According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, so they're acting on God's word, they're using God's word as their guide, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounced upon you. So this is the ruling, what we need to do, what we need to do in certain situations, because we don't know. We've gone to the ministry. We've sought this advice. It's based on God's word. This is what we should do in this matter, therefore, we should follow it. It's not about turning off and doing our own thing, the way we see it, which is all this human reasoning.

Verse 12—Now the man who acts presumptuously, which is to take something to themselves... Now, they've been given instructions. They've been given this guidance based on God's word. Now, to act presumptuously is to take to self an authority, "I'm going to do it this way." "I'm taking this authority, not using God's word. I'm using my own reasoning. I'm going to do it this way." That is acting presumptuously. Now, the man/woman who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man/woman shall die. So this going off and acting presumptuously, using our own natural mind, *will* lead to death, a spiritual death, because we're ignoring the word of God, we're leaning on our own understanding. So when we lean on our own understanding after hearing the word of God, we're being very presumptuous, because we're taking to ourselves the decision. *We're* making the ruling. *We're* making the judgment. *We're ignoring* what God has told us. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.

So, for example, if this was to happen and somebody ignored the instructions of the judge or the priesthood and went off and did what they wanted, *that* person would be put to death because they acted presumptuously, they *ignored* the ruling of God. They would not listen to God. They *refused* to

listen to God. Well, if they were put to death on the physical level there, all the people would go, "Whoa! It's best to follow the instructions of God through the ministry. It's best to do it, because the outcome is *I'm* going to suffer a penalty! *I'm* going to die! Best to be in fear. I'm best to *fear God* working through the ministry and I'd better not act presumptuously. I better not take to self an authority or something to self that I haven't been appointed to. I need to be very careful."

So this all points back to our minds, brethren. We need to be guarding our minds that *we're* listening to God, we're going where God is leading us, we're heeding God through the ministry, what God teaches us through the ministry, and instructions are given by God on the Sabbath, through the posts. This is what God is leading us in, this is what we're to do, which is to guard our minds.

The role of "why" we were called is to obey God. And the way we obey God? By listening to the instructions, what God says from His word, spiritual instructions. And the spiritual instruction given to us is that we are called to serve. Every one of us is called to serve. We have been called to guard our minds, the temple (which we are when God lives and dwells in us). We're to make sure it's clean. We are not to defile it by allowing something unclean into it; hence, we are to guard our thinking.

So we'll end this sermon series here, which is in relation to taking personal responsibility for ourselves. We are accountable for ourselves. God is going to hold us accountable for what goes on in our minds. We are to consume clean food, the word of God, what is pure, into our minds. And we are *not* to defile those minds. Because if we do, what will come out from us, from our words because of our thoughts, what will come out is words or actions that demonstrate that God does not live and dwell in this location. Hence, we are to take responsibility for our calling, and we're going to be held accountable for *everything* that goes on within our minds.□