

In the last two part sermons on being watchful, of being spiritually alert and on guard, primarily with a focus of how much we are truly yielding and working to exercise God's love in our relationships toward one another, it was mentioned how that series would lead into (tie into) what we'll be covering today. And today I'm not certain whether this will be a Part 1. You'll know by the end of the sermon if I mention this is going to be Part 1. But at this point here, if I can get everything done in one sermon, great! I really don't know at this point.

But it was stated that there are lessons. And the reason we did that is because, again, they do tie in very strongly with what we're going to discuss right now. Because those are the kinds of things on occasion we look at in the Church anyway, a relationship with one another, how we work with one another, how we think toward one another, to the extent and level that God's love is working in our life, because that's the most important thing. That's the most important thing that reflects our spiritual life. It isn't the degree of faith we might have grown in. It isn't the degree of a strength of our belief, in that respect (and we'll talk about that a little bit more as we go along here). It has to do with how we're living our life day by day, and *especially* in our attitude toward others around us in the world, and *especially* in our attitude and thinking toward one another in the Body of Christ. Because that reflects our attitude - whether we grasp it or not - on a spiritual plane toward God. That's how it works! How we think toward others who are God's, who belong to God. We all belong to God! We are God's family. We are God's children. We are God's begotten children. And how we think toward others in the Body has a great deal to do with, obviously then, a direct correlation and relationship to how we think toward God. That's just how it works.

And so it's an exciting thing, an awesome thing to be able to look into a subject like this in that respect, especially in what we're going to go into here today. And again, so important that God's love be working in our life. That's one thing to talk about it. It's one thing to read about it. It's another thing to live it, to exercise it and to be on guard spiritually in our lives day by day as to how we think toward one another.

So, it was stated that there are lessons we can learn from what has happened in and through a process of how God has worked within the Church concerning the ministry over the past many years. And actually, for right around seven years now. God has used this - and we're learning much about how God works - God is revealing much to us, and has been over a long period of time now in the posts, and the like, of how He works in our lives. He's giving us an insight more into the process so that we can learn how God deals with human life, how God works within those whom He has given the begettal of His holy spirit. And this is valuable in an awesome way because it helps us to learn how to better work with others in the future because that's what we're being prepared for. That's what we're getting ready for - to be able to better serve as servants of God, whether it be part of the

144,000 or whether it be a part of those who live into a new age (which will be most people) on into the Millennium. And so the more we grasp how to work with others, how to deal with others in life the way God wants us to, the way God does, and if we understand that process, what kind of a value can we place on that? It truly is awesome.

And so it's an exciting thing. It gives us much understanding in other areas as well. As you go through this process, and even as you go back and read past posts and begin to understand that process even deeper, you will come to understand this even more. Things on all that series about fellowship God revealed an incredible amount there on life and about relationships and how He wants us to work within those relationships as well. So there is so much to learn. We're ever learning. That's what's exciting about this way of life; it never comes to a stop.

It never comes to a point like it *did* in Worldwide with so many in the ministry who would go back and repeat sermons. Because this is what would happen, typically: Over a period of time, over generally a period of about seven years, ministers would be transferred to another area. And it was common knowledge amongst the ministry then that they would begin to go back through all those sermons again. It wasn't a matter of building upon them. It wasn't a matter of something that had to do with growth and development as part of a Body. It doesn't mean you're not going to repeat certain things. But to go back and give the exact same sermon again? And have that as part of a pattern for the next seven years? That's stagnant! That causes stagnation in the minister himself and within the Church. Because after a while it doesn't have life in it! It becomes a matter of routine. And we have to be careful of those things in our life.

And so if we can continue to grow and build (which is what we're to do), upon what God gives to us, and as we mature in life - whether it be the ministry or the body... but the body is largely dependent upon the growth within the ministry. It really is! If we understand how God works, if you were in a period of time in Worldwide, our ability to grow depends a great deal upon what we're fed. And if people poured their lives into that, of what they're being able to be a tool for in serving others and God is giving that, then there is the ability to grow more because God's giving more. It isn't a matter of just keeping us at a certain level, because that can lead into *Laodicea*. And that's what happened! Rich and increased with goods and didn't realize, no, we need to grow! We're not rich! We have *so much* to grow in! We're not where we need to be by any measure! But we couldn't "see" it as a body for many years after Mr. Armstrong died. It got to the point where it began to be leveling out. And you can't level out in God's way of life! You can't sit on the fence in God's way of life! You have to grow! God's spirit demands growth.

I'm sounding a little excited there, but I get excited about it because that's the way it works. We have to grow! God's spirit demands growth! There is never a time when we can kind of just level off in life and start to take it easy and relax. This way is not about a way of relaxing! On the contrary! It's about being on guard. Do you know what that means in a war, in battle? You can't let down. You *can't relax*, because if you do you're going to be caught off guard. And that's *exactly* what we covered last two Sabbaths. We can't afford to be caught off guard spiritually. We *have* to be on guard,

constantly in a state of understanding (in the mind) of a battle that we're in. Mostly fighting our own nature! Because our nature *sucks!* It *stinks!* It's based on *selfishness!* And we *choose* God's nature, the way of agape, the way of His outgoing love without getting something back in return, although we do. We get something back in return but it's God's way. It flows automatically. But not for that purpose of getting something back.

It's like the example of a limited kind of love where people give to someone in order... because when time comes it's like, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." In time it's kind of like expecting something back of some kind of equal measure. That's not God's way! That's not the way it works! We don't give to get something back, although on a spiritual plane you do! It's automatic. But the human mind does it out of selfishness.

I hope you understand everything. I know you do, as a whole.

So, again, there is so much we go through and so much we can learn. And again, there's never an end to what God is giving to us and the growth that is there, can be there in our lives, and that we can't stay the same, and we have to constantly be on guard. And so much of that goes back to our relationships and how we think about one another. Because, really, how we think about God's, and what belongs to God - see, it's "dressing..." That word. I hate that word because it's not a good translation, and I can't remember the one Jeremy told me, we decided... Cultivate and keep. I think that's what we decided upon. Anyway, they had trouble in translating that in different languages because it doesn't give, it doesn't give the right meaning whatsoever. But as long as we understand what that meaning is they can translate it right.

But again, it's how we think toward what belongs to God. The creation around us. Our own homes. Our own room. As a child growing up, how do you take care of something that God has given you in life to be blessed with? The care, the protection, the food, the ability.... Because there are many, many people in this world that would love to trade places with any one of you. Billions! There are into the billions of people who would *LOVE* to trade places with you, whoever you are out there, because you live in a country that God has blessed and gave great blessings to anyway. And we take a lot of these things for granted, a lot of what we have. You don't have to look very far going south, get into other countries around the world, throughout Africa, throughout Asia, Central and South America, and so many children, so many young people that don't have much in life whatsoever, that grow up in *horrible* conditions. Parents who struggle. Things that they go through in life just to exist, that we take for granted here.

So again, how do we take care of what belongs to God? Because, see, that reflects a lot in the mind, doesn't it? "This is God's. How thankful am I for the things I do have? Because I am exceedingly blessed." We all are exceedingly blessed.

The fact that you have running water. Sometimes we take that for granted and we don't realize how blessed we are that we can have that as a people. There are people who would love to have running

water, *clean* water that you can expect to use, that's decent, coming out of the tap. If you live in Rio right now that's not so safe, if you've done some reading on some of those things and the kind of water and the problems they have there. Isn't that where they are having the Olympics? I cannot believe they're having it there! They must be going to keep them in just one little part of the city, one little niche of an area, and if anybody travels out from there, I feel sorry for them because of what they may come into as far as what they're going to drink and what they're going to eat and everything else that goes along. Because of some of the poisons right now that are coming in through the water systems are heinous. And that's just on a small... That's just in one little area of the world. Course, that's not so little because there are millions and millions and millions that have flooded in there.

We are awesomely blessed! The fact you can turn on a switch and have electricity. Incredible! Things we take for granted. All the mechanical things we have, or electronic things we have that so many in the world have nothing like it.

And so again, God wants to know our thinking. How do we think? How do we think towards what is His, what He has given to us that we don't deserve? But He's given it to us, okay, because He loves us and He has a promise that He's given - primarily to Ephraim and Manasseh and to the rest of the scattered nations of Israel, and much of the other world that has benefitted from some of those things through time. How much more within the Church then and how we think about what is His? Because the most important of what is His and why all this exists in the first place is for His family.

So how much more do you think God thinks about us then and our thinking and attitude toward one another in a body that is His, because it's His Body? And a lot has been sacrificed to have that Body over millennia and much longer. We just don't know the length of time, if you compared it with earth years.

So today's sermon is entitled, *Lessons From A Ministry*. Because God has used that, because of all the changes over seven years that have constantly happened within the ministry, has brought things to the surface that has enabled us (if we can grasp it) - we are going to be able to grasp it more deeply now as a result of this - but the quicker we are able to grasp some of those things as they happen and learn from some of those things as they happen we are able to benefit spiritually on a higher plane than we otherwise could. God has used this tool within the Church to refine the Church in a powerful way that otherwise would not have happened. Because these things never happened in Worldwide. They never happened like this in Worldwide, although there were things like this that happened, but over a lot longer period of time. But not to the same extent. Not to the same level. Not in the same way because of them being different - vastly different from how they used to be within the Body, within the Church and how God worked with a Church.

But this was accelerated! When we can grasp that, and a powerful tool that God has used to accelerate our ability to grow, this becomes awesome, because He has been molding and fashioning. And I'll tell you, the name that He's blessed us to have, "Preparing, Preparing for His Kingdom," it's

what better describes what God has been doing with us in a very powerful way over a shorter period of time, in an intensified way that hasn't happened in the same way ever in times past. We are so blessed to live at this time because there has never been... because no one has ever lived at this time. No one has ever lived at the end of the age when God is preparing for His Son to come back. No one has ever been living and alive at a time when such a gargantuan awesome occurrence is about to occur on this earth, and what God is doing then in preparing for that change.

Because He's giving us much so that the world will already have the potential to receive much when His Son returns. There will be much already that's written, that's already been given, that they'll be able to come in on the scene at a time that's unique to them. People came in the Church at different times throughout the ages in the past 2,000 years. And I think of the group of Ephesus, the first group. They came in at different times, people that were drawn in. They couldn't benefit from some of the things that happened during the period of Thyatira or Sardis or whatever it might be, or Pergamos before that, and some of the different things that happened. There is a history that people have been able to grow in, especially when we came to the time of Philadelphia, toward the end of a time, a period of time in preparation for and beginning to focus in more on the coming of Jesus Christ.

Wow, this sermon is taking on a totally different focus here. But it's a preparation for what we need to go into to understand what God is doing. Because it is awesome what we're living. And so God is pouring out much more. And so people who came in in the 1940's, they were awesomely blessed because truth was being restored to the Church that'd been lost, as a whole throughout the end of Thyatira, and especially during Sardis. But by the time Philadelphia was there and Mr. Armstrong was being drawn, and finally information, because of the changes in the world as far as how education or information can be put out there. (The word's not coming to my mind. Anyway.) What an awesome thing! He can go to a library, get encyclopedia's, get different books that had been written, and so forth, about different histories of what had happened through time, and things that weren't equally available to or automatically available to people back in the 1600's or 1400's and especially not in the 1200's and 1100's and before that. They just didn't have those resources.

And so we look at this age, and I think of the computer age now. Look at the period we're in now and how fast that knowledge can be sent out, can be made available just at the push of a button. Incredible what we live in. And God is using that. God is using that as a powerful tool, prepared us for this period of time to be able to use what He was going to give to mankind to have access to, to that kind of knowledge and understanding and ability. God knew exactly where He was going to lead mankind, into what kind of a period of time and what kind of technology He would bless the world with, because He began to introduce it through different ones over a period of time, knowing mankind and knowing how mankind worked. You think of some of the great scientists through time. And finally taking time for those things to begin to grow and begin to practice, begin to learn from experiences, from trial and error, and how that began to grow. And God continuing to give even along the way, more knowledge, whether it be through mathematics itself, physics itself.

Man didn't come up with all these things solely by himself, but he pats himself on the back, "Look at how great I am." It's just like the truth you have! There is absolutely *no difference*! God gave that knowledge, the basis of certain knowledge to mankind that was *withheld* from mankind for several thousand years before that! Man... That's the proof of it all, that man couldn't do it before that until God began to give it. That's an awesome thing to understand, that man didn't have the *capacity* and the *ability* to go that far, as to where we are today. We can tend to think, or especially people in the world and scientists can tend to think, "Oh, yes we did! We can do that! *We have done this.*" *No, you didn't! God did it because of a purpose!* It was purposely withheld from you, just as certain truth, literally, has been withheld from mankind. God didn't give everything to Moses! God didn't give everything throughout different periods of time, whenever you want to look at a particular period. He didn't give all knowledge. He didn't even give Abraham more knowledge of who He was, in the sense of His name and what it meant. That's an awesome thing when you read about some of that, when you read about what God said to Moses, and He said even Abraham didn't know Him by His name that He revealed, The Eternal Self-Existing God. Incredible!

So, again, by the time of Christ, Christ gave much more, but he spoke in parables so that the whole story wasn't there, so that people could easily read into whatever they wanted to read into it. And they're doing it to this day. "Nice little parables," they talk about, and go back to the manger and that's where they began, you know, life's little sweet stories, you know, that lull people to sleep on a spiritual plane. They don't "see" it and they can't because God has to give it. Anyway, how blessed are we? And then to be in a family where we live in an age where so much is being given to us. Awesome! And how we treat the knowledge and the truth that God gives to us says *a lot* about our attitude directly toward God. How we treat one another in a fellowship reflects *everything* spiritually on a spiritual plane in our thinking *toward God!* Because, you see, it's all about God! It's all about cultivating and keeping what He gives to us at the present time we live in, whatever that is, with the present truth that we have. Because that's how God has worked with us, has worked with mankind from the beginning. You're judged by what you're given at the time you're given it. That's why it gives me hope and excitement for some who may have opportunity to be a part of something that may even still be alive in some cases, who aren't with us at this day, because they could have come to a certain point where God had judged them, and from that point on they can go ahead and live out their physical life. Anyway, didn't need to get into that.

So again, this sermon today is entitled, *Lessons From A Ministry*. Awesome what God did in letting us experience something that has never been experienced before. It's never been experienced in God's Church, the ordination of women. Never been experienced! And yet we go through it and live through it, and maybe after a time, after you've lived through it, it becomes common and natural. We don't think a whole lot of it in the same way as we did when it first started happening and it began to challenge our thinking, perhaps. Whatever we went through. That's a *gigantic* change and it has *everything* to do with preparing for a new age because it goes way beyond anything to do with the ministry. It has to do with God's purpose and plan of what He is changing, from what began in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Now, that's awesome if we see it! Truly awesome!

So, again, over the past many years there is much that's been given to the Church as to how and why God has worked with the ministry of the Church throughout this time. Today... [You know what? Sometimes when I write in my notes I do a lousy job. I should go back over it. Try to read what I wrote down, I thought, "What kind of a sentence is that?!" That's why I'd really rather just have certain scriptures here and do what I've been doing anyway, just preaching. But sometimes I go back and try to find out where I was and look at a sentence like this and try to get back into it and I think, "What in the world did you write there?!"]

So, anyway, we were coming to a point, we *are* coming to a point where we can learn even greater lessons. And that's what this is all about. God is... We're always growing, and that's exciting. Always able to grow more. And we learn, if not most, so much when we're able to look back from what we've already gone through. Really, that's how God worked with us in the beginning, especially after the Apostasy, and especially after 1998. He began to show us bits and pieces so that we could understand what happened to us, so we could begin to understand what we went through. And much of life and what He teaches us is in that manner. Because once you've experienced it you may not understand what you've gone through. We don't understand a lot of the things we go through and experience. Just like for me and the past few years. I've learned a lot of things. I've experienced a lot of things. I see a lot of things that God has done. But I know I haven't learned it all yet. I haven't "seen" it all yet because at some point I'm going to be able to look back and think, "Wow!" Even more so than what I can already. And that's the way our lives are. Sometimes we don't understand what God is doing with us.

I remember the time before I was ever in the ministry, working after leaving Ambassador College, and I was supposed to have gone out in the ministry at that particular time. I think I mentioned that in the book. I don't know if I did, to what extent. I don't recollect now. But, anyway, tell you a little bit more of the story. After leaving college... At that point in time in 1974 and '75 they were beginning to talk about the need to train and work with a ministry. That rather than going from Ambassador College directly out as a minister at age 21, 22, and serving in a Church area - because they were learning something from that. It didn't work that well. There was a time to do it out of necessity. Mr. Armstrong had to have those he trained and worked with who could go out and take care of what God was bringing into the Church, but it wasn't the best. And that's what they came to understand. There was a need to go beyond this now and let these individuals who have graduated, with the teaching they received, and to go back out in the areas and prove themselves. And *then* if God shows and reveals that this is their purpose and their calling, if you will - because to be in the ministry on a full-time basis has to do with a calling, because of its uniqueness of what God is going to do in them. It has to be something that God does.

And so the point was their ability to distinguish those things and to decide those things would be better fitted for them to be able to see, what are you doing in a Church area? Are you applying? Are you doing? Are you able to do this job? Because, you see, the history was not everybody was really ready for that. Not everybody was really equipped for that. So they were able to help out for a

time... Anyway, it gets pretty complicated. But for seven years I was able to go out, because they told us at that time who was to go out and I was to be one of them that was to go into the ministry at that point in time - so they were going to start at some point later one. But they started talking about it and then right toward graduation, right toward the end of the year they decided to cut out half. I was part of that half that was cut out. And to go back out in the Church areas and to find my own work, to find my own occupation and to begin serving within the Church to whatever degree I wanted to, whatever degree I chose to do so. In other words, it was a personal choice as to what you did, how you made yourself available and the like, and whether it was still something that was becoming aware, being made aware to others that yes, this would be good for you. And so seven years.

And I used to wonder at working at certain jobs, "How is this going to help me to be able to serve in the ministry?" I couldn't "see" it. I didn't realize what God was teaching me. And later on I had one particular employer toward the end, in about a year and a half's time, or almost two years, I guess, I worked for them, a company out of Chicago, though I was based in Houston. I worked for them in trying, working to start up a new company, a new arm of a company in the Houston area, that they wanted to extend out a little farther. And this individual, because of his insight of how to work with people, helped me to learn how to work with people in a more direct way. He used to use this expression, "When you go and talk to people about what you're doing, talk to them like a Dutch uncle." Now, that kind of hit me. I thought, "Wow." In other words, he said, "Let it out there! Put it out there so they know where you're coming from. Be right up front with them. Tell them," in essence, "put it out there on the table and let them know what you want and what you're striving to achieve. Then they can decide. But if you don't put it all out there, how are they going to know?" And, anyway, you think, well, how can that help you in the ministry? Helped me immensely. Because it's better to communicate, have things out there. And there are certain situations in life that come up where you have to put it out there and help to show it to individuals - not holding back and thinking that people grasp and understand what you're talking about - put it out there. And then people can make a better decision and better choice about things.

Even if it has to do with counselling in their personal life, be open. Because I realize that as human beings we don't tend to do that, hence the series of things we just went through. We don't generally tend to be assertive by nature, as a whole. Now, some people grow up in homes where they learn some of that, and that's great! But as a whole human nature doesn't tend to be that way, especially even once we come into the Church. Because oftentimes we're very concerned about not hurting someone's feelings because of wanting to live love toward others, and sometimes we can become a little more sensitive to that. But you know what, sometimes it's just better to put something out there and to be open about something and not hide it. Because if you're offended by something, in the sense of something bothers you - I don't mean in the sense of harshly judging someone else - but something hurts you because of something that someone has said, it's hard sometimes for individuals to go up to someone and say, "You know what? That hurt." We tend to play around a little bit and maybe we didn't understand them correctly, and blah, blah, blah, all these different things we go

through in the mind. Do you understand what I'm saying and talking about? Okay. So often it's better just to be open. Open. To the point. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. And not to hurt someone but let the chips fall where they may, but to be open about something because how can anyone know if you're not honest about it, if you're not truthful about it, if you're not open about it? And then people can deal with it and maybe it can start some kind of a conversation back and forth where maybe you can begin to grasp and understand each other in a better plane, in a better way.

And those are the best ways things are so often resolved. It has to be open or how can you resolve differences. Because that's what a lot of life is about, is resolving differences, and how you go about it. But if you hide certain things, if you're passive and you hide certain things because whatever, that's not good. If you try to push your own way all the time, being aggressive, that's not good, you know, if that's one's primary nature. Because then others around you, they're going to be tiptoeing because, "I don't want that aggression to come on me," you know. So all these things we go through in human life - ever learning. Ever learning. It's awesome!

So more than *any other tool* that's been used within the Church to teach great lessons and to mold the Church in the past seven years, the ministry is one of the most powerful, indeed. It's one of the most powerful tools that God has used to bring things to the surface in our own lives individually so that we can see it, or in our thinking about others, or in how others receive things and may treat you as a result. Because there are all kinds of things to learn in this about relationships and thinking and what goes on in the midst of all this that's powerful. It truly is. This is one of the most powerful tools that God has used. It's helped to teach and refine many of the areas of how God's government works, because, you know, that was the first one that's attributed to what God gave through Mr. Armstrong after the name of the Church, tithing... What was the other one? Oh, the Sabbath! The first three. Duh! Once Sardis was over and we got into Philadelphia, the first one, government. And I marvel at that one because all the way back even during times of Philadelphia, but especially when we got in toward the end of Laodicea and then got into that period of time and after the Apostasy, we didn't understand government as fully and as deeply as we needed to. We weren't as convicted of it as we needed to be. We truly weren't. And there was much to be learned yet. And many who thought they understood it, many who thought they understood it, didn't grasp it at all! And so sometimes we can read through something and think we get it, until we're tested in it, until we're tried in it. And yet this is one of the most important: How does God work? How does God function? How does His spirit work within a Body? Because, you see, it comes from Him through His Son to the Church. How does that work? Because it's not just a matter of how God inspires and works with and teaches us, it's also a matter of how He governs within our life within a Body and what we can learn from that and how we function together within a body. It's an awesome thing, it truly is. So, again, a very powerful tool.

So in the sermon series preceding this, as we have focused on how we live toward each other, as to the strength or weakness of how God's love, or to the level, in that respect, of God's love that's dwelling within us. The tool in how much of the ministry was brought into being, and the vast streamlining of it over the past three to five, seven years, especially in the last three to five years

that's been ongoing, and especially through the sixth prophetic end-time period of the measuring of the Temple - especially through that period - much has happened to bring much to the surface that we otherwise couldn't see. And so God allows us to go through life sometimes to experience different things and to work with us so that we *can* experience certain things so that we can "see." Because it's not just a matter of God putting knowledge into our mind. So much has to be learned because we experience something where it forces us to determine, "What is my choice in this matter?" "What is my conviction in this matter?" And until you're at that point, knowledge is just knowledge, but *conviction* of that knowledge or understanding of it, because you've experienced something, is a totally different realm, is a totally different matter. And that's the way we are able to be transformed and come into a greater oneness and unity with God through that process. We have to experience certain things in life.

So again, certain things are brought to the surface. Things are brought to the surface in your life so that you're able to see something in a mirror that you otherwise would never have the potential to "see" and it would just continue to exist. It's like I've mentioned in times past, how sometimes we lift up this lid, this heavy lid, you know, in a sewer system, and sometimes put our head down there and get a big whiff of what we're like. It's not a pleasant thing. It's not an easy thing to go through. But it's a needful thing. It's a must! We have to be able to "see" our rotten, sick, stinking human nature. Because that's what it is! Selfishness is *rotten*! It *stinks*! It stinks! It really does. What's in a toilet before it's flushed - it smells better, looks better than what we have as our selfish human nature. And I hope you understand that! Because we don't tend to think in those areas, in that way.

That's a physical thing. I'm talking about something that's spiritual that stinks. And selfishness stinks! It really is ugly! Because selfishness is the *cause* of sin. Selfishness is the *cause* of division. Selfishness is the *cause* of envy and jealousy. Selfishness is the *cause* of pride. Selfishness is the *cause* of all these things that raise their ugly head up in life and we begin to live them on a regular basis, that when God calls us that we have to begin getting rid of. But we have to experience certain things sometime to be able to see it in ourselves. And then when we "see" it, it doesn't feel too good. It doesn't feel good at all. It doesn't smell good. And that's good. Because the more it stinks, the more it's repulsive to you, the greater your conviction can be that it not be a part of your life.

And that's a growing thing. And sometimes certain areas of your life, that can be a continual refining thing for all of your life because of your nature, because of your battles, because of who you are, because of what made you who you are. And frankly, what made us who we are started when we were very young, especially as we began to enter into teen years and all those things that happened from 13 to 19. Those things make you who you are! Those experiences in your life you will deal with for the *rest of your life*! You will! Till you die or until you are changed. That's just the way it is. Because that's what molds you into who you are, as a whole. Now, what happens before that molds you as well, and much of your thinking, but it comes to life finally when people are in their teens. And there are battles I've had in my life and my thinking that I've had to overcome, and it's become more refined through time to where it's minimalized in comparison to what it was when I first came

into the Church. But there's still inklings here and there of life that still go back. That's just because we're human, because we're physical.

And until we're changed we're not going to get rid of all of it. And then a day for celebration when you're no longer in the physical, but you're a spirit being and you no longer have that physical part of you that stirs and motivates selfishness. Because, you see, as long as that exists it'll always be a battle. And that's something you have to be on guard toward - always, always, always. It's always a fight. It's always a battle. And when you let down in that battle, when you cease fighting it that's when it'll get you.

So before we focus upon and consider some of the great lessons that can be learned from the functioning of the ministry within the Church, as it's been for several years now, as I mentioned, starting, really, basically about seven years ago, we're going to look at some very basic truth regarding each and every one of us. And I think it would be good that we have deeply embedded in our minds before we go forward in this because it's powerful. If we can grasp this and understand what's being said then it puts the ministry in a proper perspective of things. Because that tends to bring things to the surface, when finally things happen within a ministry. And we'll go into that later. And you'll be able to reflect upon some things and begin to learn even more as we go forward.

So, again, this is a very basic truth. And I know we know it, but, again, the ability to make a distinction here, and to understand it more deeply, that's another matter. We need to really grasp more deeply the magnitude of our calling and what that means for each and every person. We really do. We need to understand what this means in the scheme of things more deeply in the sense of grasping what God tells us about being called, each one of us individually.

Let's start back in the book of Peter, 1 Peter 1. We're going to look at what God inspired Peter to record concerning the Church. Chapter 1 and verse 1, let's just start there. **[1 Peter 1:1]—Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, always telling them the responsibility, the authority, and how this should be received to the Church, and apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God.** "Elect." "Select." By God. They're there because God's brought them there. They've come together because of what God has done. **The elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.** "The foreknowledge," because that was determined long, long ago that there would be those with whom He'd work with through the period of 2,000 years that would lead up to the time of Christ coming when a 144,000 - and they were basically called to become a part of that. Now, others were called, there were those called during this period of time, that some would be *chosen* to be a part of the 144,000. Others would be chosen for something else or have to experience something else in life depending on their choices. Some, it would come to a time when they would be a part of a Hundred-year period at the end, to be able to continue on, but having a great head start, having a great opportunity, in that respect, when that age comes about. And there will be people who will fit into that in a very unique and effective way when that time comes.

Elect, again, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit. Now, this is part of that foreknowledge. This is a part of what God foreordained before time began, in essence. That's what we're being told. Before His entire plan, if you go back and put all these scriptures together, what God is telling us, a story that's there. That God determined a plan to have a family to be able to share with Him in a very unique way. And it wasn't experimentation along the way, as so many even with the Church through time's past have oftentimes treated it as. It was pre-purposed, planned by God, that there was a systematic process that He would work through in creating an angelic realm first (or spirit realm first and then an angelic realm to dwell within it). Awesome! And *then* He began something of a physical creation. Awesome! To understand something that the angels had not experienced to this point in time, but glorious! They shouted for joy, it said. It's an exciting part of God's plan, what He's created. And it's not going to disappear once God's family comes together. All that is out there for a purpose yet that we don't know everything about, that God will reveal in His time that has much more to do with things that will happen in the future. Not to be speculated about, because people go bananas sometimes in thinking about different things. We just have to wait. We have to wait until God gives it and then it'll be exciting! See? Because generally what we speculate and think about doesn't happen anyway. God has a perfect purpose and plan, and so He teaches us and we learn from it as time goes along. But it's all out there for a purpose.

I remember there were times when people talked about, that there were some who speculated when it talks about the elements - and I think Peter is even one that talks about this, things being burned with fire. It's like the earth and everything all of a sudden is going to be burned up with fire. Baloney! It doesn't mean something literally that happens and all of a sudden, pfft, it all caught fire! The oceans are fire and, just, the earth just melted away and everything element in it, and it's gone. Duh. That's not what it was about. We read things into things that just aren't realistic and truthful sometimes. And it's not talking all of a sudden that God's through with the universe and it had a point and purpose up to that point in time... Oh no, there's so much more, so much more. Anyway...

Elect unto the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the spirit, we had to be, go through a process of being sanctified. We're sanctified, as John talks about, by the truth, through the truth that God gives. It's a process of His holy spirit working in our minds and transforming us. Sanctification, this also comes as a part of the process we go through in being forgiven of sin and how we're able to do that being set apart, uniquely so because we can have our sins forgiven us. It goes on to explain some of that, I think. Yes, **unto obedience**, so there's a response we have to have toward God for what He's doing in our life and it's one of obedience. The world doesn't think about obedience. They just don't think about it.

I've had a unique experience over the past three years that has jammed that in my mind in a deeper way than ever before. People *do not* contemplate thinking about obeying God, let alone other things. But God, no one's going to tell people how to live their lives, as a whole. Well, if they want what God offers them they'll have to make a choice in that sooner or later.

...unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. This is a... that which is that foreknowledge of God, that there would come a time. So after the angelic realm God had purposed that there would be mankind, all for the purpose of Elohim. The main purpose from the very beginning has been Elohim, His Family. And so to bring it about, this foreknowledge, it had to be through sanctification of the spirit, how God's holy spirit is able to work in our lives, transform the mind, the thinking unto obedience so that we would respond by obedience and through obedience be able to grow more as we yielded to God, as we wanted God's way, as we became convicted that only His way works, through practicing it, proving it, living it.

...and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Because we'll always have sin in our life and always have to have our sins forgiven us, but we become more and more refined and we grow more and more as time goes along. We must! **Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.** That's God's desire. That was Peter's desire. That should be our desire toward one another that we should want to see peace in people's lives. It's a wonderful, beautiful thing when people have greater peace, when they're able to go through various battles and conquer them and come through whatever it is their going through. It's a beautiful thing! It's a rewarding thing! Not just for the individual who experiences it but for others in the body that see that they've experienced it. It should mean that not only to them but to us to rejoice in it with them. It's a beautiful thing when someone is able to conquer something and grow to a higher plateau.

I *love* to see the growth in people's lives! I *love* the change! Those are some of the most enduring, inspiring things for me as a pastor of anything within the Church, even during that period of time I was absent and some of the letters I received. Because, you know what, I could see in the letters, by things that people shared... and people tended to... I don't know why exactly, but sometimes people tend to share more in letters of what's inside them, than what they do face to face. And I understand that in part.

But the beautiful thing is to see the growth and then to hear various things coming back at times - not always good - and sometimes then good when people were able to deal with the things that weren't always good, because they made them good through time and through battle. And so it is. And those are the times to rejoice. They truly are. Because we should *want* that in one another. No matter what you're going through, no matter what you've experienced in life, it's to see you come through it. It's to see you conquer it. Because we've all been down that road. The battles we experience, that we've gone through in life, the more... you're going to be far more effective in helping others the more battles you conquer in your life because you've been there. You've done that. You can empathize. You can grasp it and have mercy, but also to require, as well, a certain standard of life that must be lived, and uphold that. It never excuses error or wrong. So this is what family is all about.

It's just like with children. There are good and bad times. There are times of a better response and sometimes that old human nature grabs up there and whatever. Because human nature wants its own way and if it doesn't get its own way, it doesn't care who's telling it to them. Parents love them with

all their being - there's some friction at times, and so we go through those things in life, even within the Church, obviously.

Blessed be the God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy... I'm amazed sometimes. I just marvel at God's mercy. I truly do. Because more than anything else His dealing with human beings has been this hallmark of life, one of incredible mercy. Patience and mercy, longsuffering and mercy. And you know what? He wants us to have the *exact same attitude and spirit* toward others. Same. Because that's Him! That's who He is! It reflects His being and how He works with us, who are not there yet, not in His family yet but blessed to be called to be able to become a part of that in time. **Blessed be the God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively, or "living," as it is, hope.** That's what the word is, a living hope. That's something that's awesome about God's spirit, when, you know...

When I was about thirteen somebody gave me a book, little red New Testament and (an Aunt of mine, from graduation from the eighth grade). I don't know if people have that now where they graduate from the eighth grade before they go into High School, then you have a graduation... Okay, you still have it then graduation. Because that was a long time ago. Anyway, graduation from High School, people are pretty much accustomed to that. But anyway, she gave me a red Bible. And I remember one time when I was right at 13 and in my bedroom and I picked it up and I started reading it. Started going through the lineage of Mary and different things there. Went through some others things and I thought, "This is..." It was written in English but it was Greek to me. I don't know, bad. That's bad, I know. Anyway. I thought this... I don't get anything out of this. But I was curious. I wanted to know what...? I never was much for church; didn't grow up in that environment. Went to church... I don't know if I even went once a year growing up. But anyway, it didn't mean anything so I put it aside.

And I'm pretty certain I never picked up another one till I turned nineteen and went home, as I mentioned in the book. Okay. So then it began to mean something. Because you know what? Now I could read things and they came alive, something that was alive. You know, God's spirit makes something come alive, that otherwise people read the Bible and they read certain things into it and they read nice little stories and they have these good fuzzy feelings that aren't spiritual, but they think they are, and sometimes they.... I won't go there. But anyway, there are things that people go through. But what really makes it come alive and have great meaning in the mind is God's spirit because He gives you the truth. He gives it in your mind.

Just like I mentioned in the book, when I first heard about the Sabbath I knew it was true. I don't know that I'd ever heard that before, about the seventh day Sabbath, but when I heard it I thought, "That's true." When I heard about the British and the United States and this whole process of Ephraim and Manasseh, I knew just by hearing it - I didn't read it first - I knew it was true. How is that possible? Because it's something that God makes come alive through the power of His spirit. And that's an awesome thing when you experience it, when you *know* something because of God's spirit.

And that's the *only* reason we know it. And then the more you read, as you're drawn, or the more you become, the more you're able to grasp, it just comes alive more and more. Each Sabbath as we go through things like this - I'm experiencing it now - God's spirit makes it come alive! It's exciting! It comes alive! It's not something that you work up physically. You can't. It's something that God gives to you that inspires, that moves, that motivates. It has depth and meaning to it. And it's because it comes from God. God is the source. And it's an exciting thing that He gives to us of His spirit to make something alive - a living hope, a living truth that He gives to us. We "see" things that others can't see.

So again here, **has begotten us again**, by His spirit through begetting, **unto a living hope**. Again, because we were begotten before and have a physical life, but this is another begetting that gives you a spirit life, the beginning of a spirit life.

I love Mr. Armstrong's examples and what God gave to him in that, in talking about even as a Church we are the Church of God in embryo, the Kingdom of God, if you will, in embryo. Because we're not born yet, spirit. But we have this beginning, this begetting. And it's like being in the womb and we're learning and growing and maturing and it's a process we go through. It's a living thing within us. **...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. That's what made it all possible so that God could dwell in us. I love that too! What an awesome thing, to realize the purpose of his death, the blood spilling to the earth was, yes, so we can be forgiven of sin, but the purpose, the overall purpose of *that* is so that God and Christ and the power of God's spirit can live and dwell within us on a continuing basis.

Verse 4—To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. God's purpose and God's plan to be given in His time, like to the 144,000 first and then to others later, etcetera, etcetera. **...who are kept by the power of God.** So God keeps all of this. God has all of this in His power to give, to teach, to share with us. And then, once we have completed a physical life and it returns, the spirit returns to Him, the spirit essence (not alive), but He keeps it until a particular time, and then when the 144,000, the most of those that are, have been dead for a long time come back - spirit life, spirit beings - but that same mind and where they were and what they had, but it's a mind now that's not based— nothing with selfishness. Nothing with human flesh anymore or human pulls. Nothing of that. It's all a matter of God dwelling *powerfully* in and through them. **...who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.** And it is need be. We have to go through it. We have to go through hard times. We're not called into this to have it easy. We're called into this to have battle. We're called in this to have war. We're called in this to fight. It is a spiritual warfare - powerfully so. And only by the power of God's spirit can we accomplish it, can we do it.

That the trial of your faith... There's something it does, whatever you go through, whatever you've gone through as well in your life because of experiences, because of how God has worked with us even within a ministry that He gave to the Church, has been unique, and ever changing for that

purpose. Awesome! **That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes.** It's because of what God is molding and fashioning. Because that trial that we go through in life, or the trials we go through, those are the things that help to bring things to the surface so that we can deal with them and so that God can deal with them too. God doesn't predetermine our choices. We're free. And He doesn't predetermine to know all those choices either. We're free. And a lot of people have made a lot of *wrong* choices in life. And so it's ever seeking to continually choose God and God's way and yieldedness to that process. And those trials, though they are hard, no matter what they are - and frankly, we bring most of them upon ourselves because of our human nature. That's just the way we are. But then God lets us experience those so it brings something to the surface so we can say, "That's not right. I don't want that in me. I want to be what God says I need to become, and that's what I want to yield to. I want to be forgiven of the wrong and I want help to change. And if I have to go before Him several times a day to say, 'Forgive me,' so be it!" Fight the fight! Because when you don't fight it you can't conquer it, you can't overcome it, you can't grow. It won't produce what it needs to produce.

That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried in the fire. So again, you know, these examples that God gives us. You're going to be tried in the fire. There is no one that can become a part of God's family in the first, especially, in that respect, of what we're talking about as to what happened, what will happen with 144,000 He's worked with in the last 6,000 years, that haven't had to go through *great* fire, *great* tribulation. Even that's a verse that has been misused in the past, about great tribulation, because so often it's just about in the context of what everybody has to go through. In God's Church we have to go through great tribulation, because it's not talking about something that happens just at the end-time, it's talking about what you have to go through throughout your life as you yield to God. It's going to be a battle from the beginning to the end, but the fight, the rewards, the blessings that come with time, little by little, you can't put a price on those, the value and what it leads to.

Whom having not seen... Again, though it be tried in fire might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen you love. Isn't that an awesome thing? You've never seen God. You've never seen Christ. But through a process of faith and through a process of God's spirit, and because of this connection, this power within the mind of God's holy spirit, there is that which you learn through time toward them. It's not a matter of having to see them. It's not about physical sight. It's about the mind. It's about the mind and what happens within the mind and the thinking and the spirit that's there. **Whom having not seen you love,** so we learn to love God.

I think I mentioned this in times past. Because of my upbringing, because of my life, because of my experiences in my life I was not able to tell God I loved Him until after I'd been ordained. Long after Ambassador College. Long after seven years of working out there. A short period of time then, a little bit later, after having been ordained and in the fulltime ministry, finally came to a point where I was able to deal with that. Because it had to be true. Wasn't going to be words. A little stubborn, maybe,

in some of those things, but anyway, we all have different things we go through in life. But it had to be genuine and true before I'd ever say it, and it finally came to that point. Awesome what we go through in life to learn what we have to learn. And I marvel at the patience and the mercy God gave to me throughout the entire period of time. Because He loved me. That's what we have to see. Because God has a purpose in us and He sees.

That's something my wife and I enjoy so much, the reward, the blessing of watching people change and grow within the Body. And I think, especially, when people are first called. And we've seen a lot of that since the period of 2008. And I think it becomes even more evident oftentimes in younger people, young people as they change and grow. It is in all of us, but there's a uniqueness because, probably, because of our age and because of our thinking about children and grandchildren and so forth in life on a spiritual plane. That that's how you begin to look at people. Those who are older, you know, it's there, but it's not in the same way, because, probably because of our physical make up. But what an awesome thing to watch people change, to watch people grow. How rewarding it is to see those things take place in people's lives. It is a joy. It truly is a joy. And the more that people conquer and fight and overcome the obstacles that are in front of them, and yield to God's spirit, and the more they grow the more exciting and rewarding that is. It's an awesome thing to experience.

So, In whom having not seen you love, though now you do not see him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Again, that's a spiritual thing that God has to give. It's something you experience through time and you grow in more in time. **Receiving the end purpose of your faith,** or "receiving the end," in other words, the purpose. That's what it's talking about. It's what it's all about, the purpose, why God is working in your life strengthening you, helping you to become stronger in faith. So, again, receiving that end of your faith, the purpose of your faith, the purpose of why God works in those things in our life and what it does in the mind. **...even the salvation of your lives.**

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently. Diligently. There are some who have wanted to know certain things and they weren't given. They weren't given anything close to what we have, but there were certain things they were able to see spiritually that God gave, of things that would happen in the future, although on a plane much smaller than what we're experiencing at this date. But again, things that they would have loved to have known, pieces and bits and pieces here of things they even searched for, wanted to have, desired to have and couldn't have it because it wasn't time. **...who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.** Especially those individuals when God gave them something. Just like Daniel. His yearning to want to know. We should know that yearning was very, very deep, especially because of how he experienced some of those things and what was given to him. The very angels themselves coming and talking at times and discussing things with him - and unique to him at that particular time - and then all this that was given. I think about when it goes through and talks about the seventy-weeks prophecy, all those things that were given and the rise and fall of kingdoms. And talking about these things would exist to the end and how much would happen in a timeframe of certain things at the end and it's

like, "You've given me all this. What does it mean? What is all this? I want to know more!" But they couldn't know it because it wasn't time yet. But we've been given, we've been given so much, it's incredible. Matter of fact, it was given for this time because this is what we're living in.

Searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify. So it was revealed, that spirit that was given, about Christ, about the things that were to happen in the future. And yet they could only know a little bit. And that was a very little bit. Because they couldn't put it all together. **...when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.** You know, the things that Isaiah wrote and we turn to during Passover. And we talk about the very things that were prophesied that would happen to him. What an incredible thing! The suffering that he would have to go through. **Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things.** For us! Now, Peter is writing to the Church because it was beginning to be given to them then, but not to the level it's given to us now because we're at the end of this period of time now and awaiting, looking to his actual return and the establishment of the Kingdom that God has revealed much more about now. **...But unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by those who have preached the gospel unto you with the holy spirit sent down from heaven...** That's how they were able to do it. Because it's God that has to do it. It's *God!* It's not about *us!* It's about God and what God does. **...which things the angels desire to look into.** Isn't that amazing? Because, you see, there are a lot of things that are not given until they're given to those whom God sends, as He reveals it. Progressive revelation. They've been excited, those who have remained faithful. Even those who haven't been desire to know more as God gives it, and have through time. But especially those who do rejoice, who are part of God's family, who have experienced things for billions of years, of things that God is doing and the excitement of life they have had because of their minds and their faithfulness to God and their sharing in what God is doing, and especially now with mankind and what God is doing and that excitement they have. They *desire* mightily to hear, to know, to see those things that are given as God gives them, as He reveals them. That's awesome! Things that sometimes we can begin to take for granted. We can! That's what happened to Philadelphia, what they had to that point in time, to that present point in time, whatever that point in time was that led into Laodicea.

Verse 13—Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. It's how we think, that admonition to put on the armor of God, again, in a different fashion. It's stated in a different way here. **Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, sober minded.** Don't take it for granted. Don't sit and rest in the sense of taking it easy. Be sober. Understand what our battle is. Understand what we are and the battle that has to be there and our desire to fight it. **...and hope to the end for the grace that is brought to you unto the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children,** that should be our desire above everything, to be obedient, and where we're not, to repent and to seek change and help to change. **...not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.** Because sometimes we haven't fully conquered certain things in our life or haven't yet *seen* certain traits in ourselves until God sets up the mirror and we're able to see it. Certain things that have happened, as an example, in the context of this sermon right now being given, in the ministry that can help people to

see where they are, who they are in a refined way. Not that we haven't been fighting and conquering things all along, but this helps to bring out other things that must be rooted out, out of the mind... out of the mind.

But as He who has called you is holy, so become you holy in all manner of conduct. It's "conversation" here in this, but it's the word that also entails conduct because it comes from the mind. Oftentimes it comes out in things we speak or in other actions or just within the mind itself and what we have within the mind and how we think. But that's what it's about. It's about the mind. "Gird up the loins of your *mind*." Be careful of what comes out of your *mind*. When it is wrong thinking, before it actually gets to the point of communication or speaking it, or especially in other kind of action, stop it or refine it or address it and make it right, whatever. **...because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy.** That's what it's all about. We're to become more God-like, our thinking. We're to come into greater unity and oneness with God. That's, when we talk about Atonement, we talk about those things. Be - just breaking the word down there in a physical way as far as the English language - at-one with God, in essence, that at-one-ment with God, you know, in our thinking. We tend to do that. We break that down in that fashion because that basically has the meaning of that anyway. Whether it's formed for that purpose or not, it's immaterial. Anyway, being reconciled, being brought into greater unity and oneness in thinking. It's about this mind being transformed, isn't it? It's a beautiful thing.

So again, all this about a calling, all this about a process through time that God has worked with us and brought us along and continues to help us to see things, as obedient children that we grow in that.

Let's drop on down here now, **verse 17—And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges.** That's an awesome thing. God has a purpose of how He works with us, and basically, not a real good translation here in one respect, but **judges according to every man's work.** In other words, there are things that God does in our life. And how He works with us has much to do with how we respond. Because how we respond determines to the degree, in many ways, as to how much God *can* work with us. If we do not yield to Him in certain things He can't work with us. If we don't deal with certain matters of pride He can't work with us until that is conquered or gotten out of the way. And as we're able to grow in a certain area and become to a higher level of humility as far as life is concerned and how we think in life in a right way, in a sound way, the more God can work with us. So the less the pride, the more God can work with us.

So again, that's how God works with us in life. And so much of it has to do with how we respond and what's being produced in our life, the work, what we put into it, the effort, the response, all those things that are necessary for growth. It doesn't just happen. It can't just be given to you in your mind; you have to go through something. You have to go through a lot of something all your life, fighting, fighting, fighting, seeking to obey, seeking to yield to God. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Because before we were called, as a whole (if we were called out of the world), we were in deep ignorance and we just lived

according to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." That controlled us. We didn't control it. We just lived according to its whims. We yield ourselves according to the whims of human nature. That's the way we are. We make choices and decisions as human beings according to that until God comes along and says, no, you're to have a standard of life you're to live and it is regulated by law. It is regulated by a way of thinking that is right. And everything else that is wrong is to be gotten rid of. And that which is in unity and oneness with God's mind, the way of agape, the way of God's love, which is totally unselfish, we're to yield to that and become that through time, through a transformation in the way we think.

And so that doesn't happen overnight. Otherwise, that's what we do, not fashioning yourselves. Don't yield yourself to the former lusts of your ignorance, God calls it, because you didn't know then. Now we know because we're called. There are things we have to deal with now because we're called. "But as He who has called you is holy, so you become holy in all manner of conduct." Conversation. Actions that come out of your mind and how you live toward others. "Because it is written, Be you holy, for I am holy." I guess I read that again, second time. Sorry. Guess we needed to refresh our minds.

Let's go on. **And if you call on the Father, who without respect, as it says here, judges each person according to every man's work, that's where we were, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.** Fear of not doing things the way God says. Fear of not yielding to God's holy spirit. Fear of not working and fighting in the way God says we should. We should fear becoming stagnant. We should fear not girding up the loins of our mind, not putting on the whole armor of God, not seeking to draw closer to God. We should fear not crying out to God and asking for help and guidance and inspiration in our life. **Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation (conduct) received by the tradition of your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ.** So, again, that's good that we be reminded of why we're here, how we're able to be here. It's because of what he went through, that God reminds us of every year in a very powerful way. Passover. Because He doesn't want us to forget *how* it all begins. Because you can't go on to the rest of God's plan, to the Days of Unleavened Bread, to Pentecost, to all the rest, without starting there. That's your beginning. That is your foundation. That is your strength through human life all the way, that ability to be able to be forgiven of your sins so that God the Father and Christ can dwell within you on a continuing basis.

...but as the precious blood of Christ, good to reflect upon that from time to time, truly, and we should every time we go and repent. And how often do we repent? Often. **...as a lamb without blemish and without spot.** Lived in a way of life that we desire to have within us and we strive for, but do not attain to and cannot attain to the same level in this human life. But we should work for it. We should strive for it. We should cry out for it. **...as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who, verily, in other words, truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world.** Again, going back to what Peter said at the beginning here, same thing. Predetermined. It was something that God preplanned, pre-purposed from the very beginning before He ever began it all. And so was

this, obviously, the very beginning of it, the very foundation of it all, the *cornerstone* of it all. It's in Christ, or it couldn't happen.

Who, verily, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. So they referred to the period they were in as "the last times." A lot of that had to do, too, with the vision they had at that time. Because they didn't know it was going to go on for nearly 2,000 more years. *They didn't know that!* They thought it was going to happen in their time. That's how they lived their lives. Paul finally came along and God gave something to him and said, basically, it isn't going to happen. That day is not going to happen until there come a great falling away, an apostasy first, and the man of sin, the son of perdition be revealed. That's where it began to come out. And then John started speaking of those who are antichrists. But he says, because he was referring back to what Paul said, because that was *the* antichrist, if you will, if you want to speak of *the* antichrist that would come, that would be there in time. But he said, but already, before that's even happened, there are many antichrists.

So he was explaining something on a spiritual plane to help us to grasp something on a spiritual plane that we couldn't see. But they have always thought Christ would be coming in their time. I don't think a human being would be able to deal with their life, in a lot of respects, if they didn't have that hope. If you thought it was 2,000 years away? It's kind of like different churches out here, scattered Churches, teaching now twenty years away, a hundred years away? Might not happen for another hundred years? That's motivating! That's exciting! You mean all this time I believed, as Mr. Armstrong, and he was looking forward to it happening, his life was focused on it could happen, things could begin happening in the world at any time, and we're looking at that and motivated by that and pressing forward because of that. And we need that as human beings! To have a sense of urgency! He was always blessed to have a sense of urgency. Every letter you ever read from him had a sense of urgency because that's the way we have to think. And if we don't have that, what happens? Laodicea. "Snore. Snore." Fall asleep. And that's where people are; they're asleep and don't even know they're asleep. Sad.

Verse 21, I'll read here - manifest these last times for you, because I think that's where I was. **Who by/through him do believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.** So, yes, we believe those things. We see those things in a way that others in the world really can't see it.

Seeing you have purified your lives - this is the way we go through it and do it - **in obeying the truth through the spirit,** because he said, "as obedient children." How do we accomplish that? In obeying the truth, whatever truth that God gives to us, that we begin to focus upon and live as a way of life and bring into our life and see it and live it. Ever how that affects us through the spirit, because you can't do it physically. The only way you can do that in a genuine manner and truly hold fast to what is true is by God's spirit. ...**unto un**—notice this because this is very much the objective of it all. It isn't just that we be able to conquer and overcome and be there at the end. Yes, that's our desire and that's our focus in so many respects, of we want what God is offering us. We desire

that. But to get from here to there, this is what we have to live. ...unto **unfeigned love of the brethren**. Unfeigned. Not fake. Not false, but genuine, true, *living* within us and growing within us. And we must *grow* in that and how we respond to God and how we respond to others on an ever refined plateau, if you will, or in an ever refined manner. Becoming better. Becoming changed. Becoming and reflecting more of God's spirit in our life because of more of God's spirit being there and of lessons we've learned.

Seeing you have purified your lives in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto, because this is, this is your testing ground. This is your arena in life spiritually. And we don't have a large arena anymore. We used to go the Feast of Tabernacles, be with 11-12-13-14-15,000 people at one time. And so happy when we'd leave the parking lots... anyway, another story. Those things would test us, unfeigned love of the brethren. Patience. Longsuffering. Patience. Things we would go through and whether we did it in a joyful manner or a complaining manner reflected things within us. And we've lived through those kinds of things in our life. But again, what's it all about? A pure... going on, **seeing that you love one another**, so unfeigned love of the brethren, "see that you love one another." This is our arena in life. This is what God expects of us. This is what God desires of us. Because this reflects our true mind toward Him. It truly does. There is much more in this than I think what we have grasped or do grasp and need to grasp a lot more of, of how this is directly connected in our attitude and spirit toward God. Directly! Because we're all God's. And how we treat His, how we cultivate and keep His says everything about who we are and where we are spiritually.

See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently. "Intently." That's what the word means."Intently so." *Throw yourself into it!* Don't do it half way! Don't just live life as though, you know, we just do this as a routine every Sabbath and we come together. Work to put a little more into it. Work to put a little more into getting around and visiting with one another and being with one another and into seeing one another, and at times making sure that you strive to grow in that. And we're small. We're able to do that in ways... I remember being in a group in Wichita, Kansas, when I first came in. 500 to 600 people in one congregation. Wichita back in 1970. Long time ago. Even here in Cincinnati we finally got to a point where they started breaking it down. Generally you would try not to have more than about 300, but we even surpassed that at times because of needs or because finances or whatever it might be. In times that it would grow up to 400-500 in a congregation, but generally they would try to keep it down, you know, around 300. That's how Cincinnati was, was it eventually five churches? Five churches, around 12-1500 people total that would come together on a High Day, all of Cincinnati. You think, isn't that amazing? Look around now. Incredible what we've gone through as a people. Incredible! It really is!

And I rejoice in the fact that by the time we're through the book that we're going to better understand that God is very merciful in giving many of those who are blind, who are asleep right now, and some who have totally abandoned - have gone back to Christmas and Easter - that some, some few even in those groups, in some of those, will be able to be shocked back into a reality. Amazing what God can do through His power. Some have so rebelled they are not going to be given

that opportunity. Some have so purposely fought against God, they'll not be given that opportunity. But we know about how many *will* come through it, or have opportunity. Not that they'll have completely conquered and overcome what they need to conquer, because they'll have plenty of time to do that in the Millennium. They're going to get a start at some point, begin to come to repentance and begin to accept what God has done and how God has done it over the past many years. Amazing! And they'll embrace it and one day they'll rejoice in it. Awesome! Whereas right now they would look down upon you, and do, very much so. But that's because of human nature.

Verse 22—Seeing you have purified your lives in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart intently. To be intent about it means this really needs to be at the forefront of your mind. This needs to be a major focus in your life, a major part of your thinking in your life. **Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.** That's what it means. That's what it would reflect. That's what it reflects. That, because we live it, and understanding then what has been given to us. We don't want corruption in our thinking, in our mind. We want to get rid of it. **...by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.**

Finally, **verse 24—For all flesh is as the grass.** We're here and we're gone. I marvel in looking back. *I don't know* where the last nearly 48 years have gone since I've been in God's Church. 47, whatever it is at this point. Whew! Amazing! It went by pretty fast, so it seems. And yet in other ways I know it's been a long time. But it's here and then it's gone. Died twice, basically. Came to that point. Incredible! "For all flesh is as grass." It's here and then it's gone. Here and then it's gone. Incredible. **...and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away.** We're here and we're gone. Think about human history. Think about all the graveyards out here. And the ones you see, and you go by certain ones... There are times my father-in-law used to like to think about... What was it, Atonement? On Atonement to go to a graveyard just to have it more deeply imbedded in his mind, think about, consider certain things. Took some of his children with him, if not all. Was it all? All? See? Teaching them. Teaching them along the way and talking about what some of that meant, that Last Great Day, and looking at various markers.

And I've done that. We've gone through various areas at times where you see certain old cemeteries and you go through and you look at markers, and some, where because of rain and wear, you can't make out the letters anymore, you can't pick out the years, you can't pick out anything that's said. Others that are written in better stone. If it's sandstone a lot of times the weather so takes that away just through time, breaks apart. And others, you know, certain things that are written, it means that time, means that much more. You tend to think about, you meditate upon that time and what that time means and people you've known. But you come to a realization, or you think about at least, think about all the time, all the billions of people who have lived and died and they're forgotten, except a few who might be written in history or a few that are written in this book here, the Bible, you know, as far as God's truth is concerned and God's way of life is concerned. And we're here and we're gone and we forget.

Looking at some pictures the other day of family that I never knew, but they're old pictures going back to, what was it? Late 1800's? Somewhere in there. And I was thinking about certain striking similarities of things that are passed down generation to generation of how people look, and certain things that are within a family. Anyway, moments to reflect upon something - God's plan and what God is doing. And you think about what an awesome thing through time, but how easy it is to forget those who've gone. Because it's like grass; it's here and it's gone. Things change. You live in the present.

But the word of the Lord endures forever. God's way and God's truth and God's Family. That's the objective. To be able to live everlasting life. To have that as a goal and to desire that everyone be able to be in it. I hate to think that people won't be in it. But you know what? When it's all said and done those who really want it, when either conditions are right, whether it be in the Millennium when things are changed, or in the Great White Throne, those who really don't choose it, it's better off. It's better off they not be there. I feel badly that people make wrong choices, but if they make those wrong choices because they really don't want it, then what is best for the Body is that it not be there and that they not have that torment to live in a life, nor others have to experience that from them.

You know, God has experienced the torment of mankind, how, what man, His creation has done to itself for the past 6,000 years. That's not a pleasant thing. It's not a pleasant thing to watch what you have created do what it's done - the atrocities, the atrocities that have happened in war. I mean, horrifying atrocities of how human beings are. It gets extremely ugly, violent, evil, *evil* things that have happened and how... And what would it *be* like to watch that? To see that? To see that self-destructiveness that exists? But to know what's beyond that and to know that this has to be there in order for mankind to be able to make a sound and a right choice for something that is true and right when that time is given to them. Because that's the marvel of what God is doing. And so He's had great patience, great longsuffering.

And so there are feelings and emotions we can have toward others around us, but the bottom line is that everyone has to make their own choice. No matter how much you might want people to make a different choice, that's the only way they can learn. We all have to learn through the choices we make. And so many of those choices in human life are not good choices until we really, really, really begin yielding to God, obviously.

And so we go through this process, through this process of change. But even once people have been begotten, look what's happened. Look at all the choices that have been made out there. What's it show that we're like? We're pretty small. All said and done we're pretty insignificant in one respect. The only way that we have significance is because of God's calling, is because of God's purpose. Then our life takes on significance. It takes on its meaning. It takes on its purpose of why it's here in the first place. Before that it's just existence, and that existence is not good. It really isn't. Thankfully, we're just about beyond that, just about beyond that as we are able to slide into, move on into the Millennial period where there will be a just government on this earth, where there'll be righteous

judgment on this earth, where everything that is judged will be able to know *exactly* what is true and what is wrong, where it'll be carried out swiftly, and if need be, powerfully, to help people, to help the family.

So again, a stark realization here in life is that we're here and we're gone. When you're young you don't think about it, that it's going to slide away very fast. People aren't so concerned about certain things in their life, about retirement and the like - and, of course, now in the Church we understand differently, a little differently there anyway. But I was just talking about human nature as a whole and how people think and tend to think. But eventually you will have creaks. Eventually your body won't function as well as it did before. Eventually there'll be different pains that will pop up. And eventually, believe it or not, you'll begin, probably, talking about some of the medications you take and some of the treatments you're taking and things you're trying to do and how you're trying to get around and what things are hurting. Something that young people really love to hear. "Why are they talking about all their aches and pains?" Well, it's a part of life. You get old and your body doesn't work as well. It happens to everyone.

And you know what else happens to everyone as a whole? You die. Your life will end. Every one of you sitting here, your life will end. Or for a very few, that life is going to be changed. There are very few throughout the entire history of mankind that will ever experience that one. And I don't know how many it will be that are going to be changed from mortal to immortal, what God prophesied through, in essence, in that respect, showing something to Paul that would happen in time. A truth, "in the moment, in a twinkling of an eye," a few are going to be changed from mortal to immortal. That's about as close to "Star Trek" as you can get! Anyway, I just... I mean, "Star Trek" is about the only thing we can even relate to, to think about someone being transported or changed from one position or another, but in this case you change from something that is physical into spirit essence, into spirit life. How can you describe that? Nobody's ever experienced it, that we know, that we've spoken to. We know it by what God says about Christ's life and how he's able to manifest himself then physically, but he's spirit. Just as God manifested Himself physically, even as Melchizedek, even as He came and talked to Abraham at times. Incredible!

"All flesh is as grass." The point being it's here and then it's gone. Everyone dies. So it's what do we want in life? What do you want in life? When you're offered what is rich and meaningful in life, what an incredible thing, when you're shown God's way of life, you see what He is offering, when you're able to see what can be and what you can live, peace of mind, soundness of mind, purpose, direction. No matter what the trials and hardships are in this life and the hope - not just a hope, but an absolute knowing of what's ahead for you and the peace that goes with that.

Chapter 2 (and this will be a two part sermon). [1 Peter 2:1]—Wherefore, laying aside all malice. You notice the context here, of what it's been going through, and talking about how we live and in leading up to, talking about the importance of all this and having unfeigned love of the brethren and that you love one another with a pure heart: pure, genuine, fervently. You can't do that physically. You can't work that up. Now, you can try to practice and do things that maybe you're not accustomed

to, or normally wouldn't do on a physical plane of certain things, but only with God's spirit and praying about it, the reason for wanting to do it or doing it is a desire to utilize God's spirit and wanting to serve or wanting to be able to be a better light or a better example or a better help to others wherever that can be, whatever that means in your particular life. That's something that each person has to ask God for, for help in. But all gearing up toward what it's talking about now.

Wherefore, laying aside all malice. Why? Because we're talking about how you live life, how you live life, what your relationships are like, because these things reflect or act upon relationships. "Laying aside all malice." That means all evil, all that is bad, all that is wrong in life. ...**and all guile.** See, when it talks about unfeigned love of the brethren, not pretentious but genuine and true, I look back just since the Apostasy and I think of those who have lied, lied to me in my face. Coming to Sabbath services Sabbath by Sabbath, who have *lied*. Who come to me and speak about certain things and are lying about being a part of something and living a certain way of life while they're doing something totally opposite and different, while they're in total *disagreement* with everything that's taking place, where they do not want *you* to serve them, where they want it some other way or they want you to do something else. I've dealt with that. Over and over again my wife and I have dealt with that for a long, long time. Because that's human nature at its ugliest, and yet it's existed within the Body! Those whom I have layed hands upon to ordain who have turned.

Mr. Armstrong experienced that over and over and over again. Almost *every person he taught* in class at Ambassador College *turned* against him because they knew *better than* him, later on in life. *Almost every evangelist* turned against him in time. Every one that he taught, who sat at - who they sat at his feet while he stood and taught at Ambassador College when it was first beginning. I marvel at what took place, and you should too, because it can happen to any human being. But it was because of human nature and because of time and because of what God allowed human beings to do as something grew from what it was to what it became and how that affected the human mind. Because, you see, others *wanted* it. That was the underlying core. They *wanted the power*. They *wanted the glory*, what they thought was the glory. They *wanted* what they saw there. There were individuals toward the end who were plotting and planning upon his death to take charge, to take control, or to support the one whom they thought should be the one to take control.

God wasn't in the picture! Not at all! And some even went beyond to cause, to *cause* even local governments to turn against God's Church, to where they tried to come after God's Church because of the lying and because the deception - which I believe has happened again. But again, that's human nature. That's life. See, that's life. Those things happen and God allows those things so that we can learn the deceitfulness of human nature. So we can learn to *hate* the deceitfulness of human nature. So that we will fight against the deceitfulness of human nature. So that we will fight against that which is in a matter of pretence or fake or not real. "Unto unfeigned love of the brethren." It must be true. It must be genuine. It must be honest. Because if it is not God will deal with it. He will.

And so, brethren, our lessons are not over with yet. We can ever learn and grow. And we have seen many things, especially during the time period of the measuring of the temple. You've seen a lot of

things happen. If you reflect back on it a little bit, you've seen a lot of things happen. I have seen some leave out of jealousy - in the ministry! Jealousy that they were not ordained to a higher rank! Individual that turned against another close friend because of jealousy that they were ordained - that the other friend was ordained and they were not. See? Those things have happened in God's Church. How can such a thing happen in *God's Church*? How could anyone with God's spirit working within them, and having the added benefit and blessing of ordination...? Because, you see, what happens in ordination God gives an extra measure of His spirit to perform a job that you otherwise cannot perform in the same manner, because of the purpose of why it's there. Your ability to see and deal with or see certain things is only given by God. My ability to see certain things in the Body comes through time, experience, but it's because of God's spirit, as a whole, come to see where people are.

Sometimes I get surprised, especially going back to when all this began back in after 1995 and 1996, 1997, 1998, in through there, and the things we went through as a body. And we even talk about different things. Had one minister that was finally ordained. He was passive-aggressive. I didn't know what passive-aggressive was until after all this had happened. But it came out in time he hated me. He hated the way I did things. He wasn't in agreement with how I did things. Believed that things should be done in a different way, but always there speaking nicely to me, eating in his home, or ours, or wherever we might be. But oftentimes because of location of the ministers coming together that was a particular place and location that some came in together for various meetings and so forth and to be together. And I marvel how someone can put on a face or a way that is supposedly in agreement and unity and that loves you, and behind your back is twisting and distorting and trying to undermine everything that's being done. I was shocked at that one. But I learned what passive-aggressive was. It's very destructive. That's one that's gotten to be gotten control of as quickly as a person can in their life. Because, we all have different things in our life, and that portion of it you don't want it to be a part of your life. You want to fight against it. You want to conquer it and overcome it.

So, again, aggressive is bad. So you look at the things that are bad. Assertive... Again, we understand being passive is not good. It's bad. It's not healthy for you. It's not healthy for others. So again, we all see these different things in our life that we need to fight. And that's just the way we are as human beings. We accept it. It's just what we are.

But our ability, as I was starting to say, to see certain things and to know where people are, and to know what they're going through, God has given it. God has given us an ability because of ordination, because of purpose, and because of where we are, for a purpose, for the sake of the Church, for the health of the Church. And we learn to have patience and time and express and experience the same things that God has done with us. But we have to learn to do those things. And that's the way we all should do toward one another - the patience and the time and the love and the hope and desire that people conquer and overcome whatever weaknesses or whatever battles they're going through. And sometimes that can cause difficulty in relationships too, because sometimes when a minister gets to

know a person too well, then they don't feel comfortable around a minister. And I understand that. But that shouldn't be there. If you're begotten of God's spirit and you're fighting the fight, should walk with your head up. You should walk strong. You should walk confidently. Let the past be the past. It's gone. It's not held against you. God doesn't do that and we should all strive to be exactly the same way. It's gone - it's gone. Hope you understand what I'm saying there - and I feel you do, obviously.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, again, all evil speaking, **and all guile**, in other words, deceitful practices as in trying to manipulate and control others. Because when you talk about "guile," that's what this is really about as far as the word that's used here in the Greek language, "deceitful practices." You know, not being genuine, not being true, and oftentimes it has to do with manipulating things and trying to be in control of certain things. And it's just another way of human nature trying to get things to go on our own way. And *sometimes*, and maybe too often, we have done that within the Church and in our relationships, and maybe within the ministry. See? So we all have to examine these things and look what it all... what is brought to the surface by it.

We're going to stop there today because there is much more to go through. It's exciting. It's inspiring what God does, how He works with us and why He's used certain tools to teach us things in an accelerated manner. Because we need it, because of what He's preparing.

I can't get ahead, but I think of some of the chapters you have yet to read in the book because it'll help to bring all this process together. When you get to chapter 6 and you begin to understand what God did to us in the Church and worked with us in the Church and why it was changed, the period of time, seven more years of mercy was granted, it becomes more exciting. It truly is. And then our ability to grow far beyond where we were and what we'd been brought to by that point in time because of what we'd experienced, God did a lot. He did things with us that are astounding, truly, to where we're able to be together and be one body and going forward. That's God's doing, really. I mean, that's just awesome! And, anyway, I'll get back to this next Sabbath.