

Today we're going to continue on with the sermon series that we started last week. Last Sabbath's sermon basically set the stage for what we're going to be covering a little bit of here today scripturally. And I didn't really know that it was going to take this amount of time to get into where the focus of the beginning of the sermon's all about, because the point of much of this is how we see ourselves, how we grasp who we are and the incredible calling that God has given to us so that we can continue on looking at some of the lessons from a ministry that God gave to us that is unique to us during this time period. Because everything that's really happened to us, is happening to us, has been happening to us for a long time is unique to us as far as the Church is concerned. The Church has never gone through things like this in the same way. Every era of God's Church has been different, and once we went through a period of time when Laodicea had done its part and when it was over we entered into a unique time as far as a final count, if you will, of preparation for the return of Jesus Christ. And everything that God is giving to us is about that.

That's why I am sometimes in awe of how God leads us, guides us, directs us, even in the name of who we are, "the Church of God - Preparing for the Kingdom of God." And God has been doing that in a very powerful way for a long time now, for many years. And that's exciting when you understand all that we're going through and why we're going through it and what God is molding and fashioning within us, and the age that's about to come.

So as it was stated last week concerning the past seven years within the Church, more than any other tool (stating this again), more than any other tool that's been used within the Church to teach great lessons and to mold the Church, the ministry is one of the most powerful, indeed. It has helped to teach and refine many in the areas of how God's government works in a more refined manner, because (as I mentioned last Sabbath) that is one of the most important things that people must come to grasp and understand. It is the first thing, in essence, that was attributed to Mr. Armstrong, of re-establishing within the Church of God, was the matter of government. And yet my experience has been, nearly all the time that I've been in the Church, is that we really haven't grasped that to the depth that we needed to and to the depth that many thought that they did - especially within the ministry, and especially after the Apostasy.

So again, very important to understand it's really a matter of how God works in our life, how our lives are governed and are yielding then to that process. It's how God's spirit works within a body. He works with us individually, but he works with us as a body as well, and it begins starting at the head, which is Jesus Christ, and then on through the Body. And that's how God has always worked. But to understand that is so vitally important, because it's a matter of becoming... How can I state this? At peace with everything about how God's Kingdom functions.

Because within a family government shouldn't be an issue. And yet in times past we have seen things where sometimes it has been an issue in people's lives and we've seen a transition in that, a change in some of that, of how God has been restoring things on a certain spiritual plane within the Church and helping us to grasp and understand a proper role and proper place of women within the Church and within family. But to understand the spiritual part of that is another matter - not just on a physical realm of a structure that existed before, because that was a physical kind of structure that God used and worked with, indeed, but He's showing us in a mature fashion, in a mature manner how His spirit works, period. And it doesn't matter a matter of sex. That's immaterial! If God gives a purpose to someone to fulfill, it's going to be accomplished His way, and if that has to do with an order or a matter of (when you talk about order), a matter of government, how God's spirit is working, then it's a matter of our choice to be yielded to that, to yield to that process. And that's what it boils down to.

And so, within a family there shouldn't be contention or questions about where government exists. It's a non-issue, in essence. It should be, within a family. It shouldn't be a matter of something that's tested and tried. It should be a matter of that's just the way we function, that's just the way we work, if you understand what I'm saying. And I don't want to make a sermon out of that because I've given sermons on this in recent time - before three years. Anyway, to me that's recent. So, at the end of this age.

So, again here, there's so much we've been learning. And the ministry, God has used the ministry to bring many of these things to the surface. Because a lot of times in life we can't deal with things until He reveals them to us. We can't deal with things in our nature, in the way we think, in order to bring about a change until we can see it. If we can't see it then we just muddle on through life. We just kind of continue on being in bondage to whatever we're in bondage to. But then, in time, God will use different tools, different means to bring something to the surface to help us to see something within ourselves, as in a spiritual mirror, so that we can begin to address it and make a decision and a choice as to whether or not we're going to change and yield to God. Because before that, oftentimes, we don't or haven't come to a point where we've been confronted with a need to address something in ourselves that must change.

There are things in our lives that *must change!* And *none* of us - *not a one* of us— is where we need to be yet. As long as you have life in front of you there are things that need to be changed, there are things you can grow in, there are things you *must* grow in, because God's spirit, as discussed last Sabbath, demands growth! It demands change! It demands fruit be produced. If fruit isn't being produced, God's spirit is not active, God's spirit is not working and is becoming stagnant. And we can't afford to let that happen! We must always be growing, which means we must always be changing, be in a process of becoming transformed. Because that's what we're going through.

The whole purpose of our lives is to become transformed, to become something *different* than what we are. And so what we are today is different than what we should be next week and the week after that and the year after that. We should be growing and there should be the ability then to look back

and to see certain things we've conquered and overcome and that we're growing in. Never perfect. Never where we want to be until the change comes. Once we're in a spirit life, in a spirit body, then we have arrived. But until then we have work to do and we have to always be alert and on guard to that. Because if we let down and begin to coast that's when fruit is no longer being produced in our life and God's spirit - which means God's spirit - is not being used and we're not yielding to God working in us.

So, awesome how God has utilized the tool of the ministry to bring many of these things to the surface. And as we go through this sermon today (and I don't know, perhaps next week), but at this point here as we go through this sermon we're going to discuss things. I'm going to discuss things, bring things to light that have happened, that have taken place, that people have had to address. And I don't know, some of you, what you've had to address in your life, but maybe you haven't even yet addressed them! Maybe in some of these things, as they are brought out and discussed, this sermon is going to help us to look at ourselves and to say, "Did I deal with some of these things? Have I dealt with all of these things? Have I indeed answered these things in a manner that God wants me to?" Because that's where we are. It's a matter of a mirror, looking into a spiritual mirror and seeing what we maybe have gone through in the past, that perhaps we saw a glimmer of but maybe didn't address it. And if we saw a glimmer of something, if we did something that was not in unity and harmony with the way God's spirit works, then it's not a matter of just putting that back there in the back somewhere, that that happened to me a year ago, two years ago, or three years ago, five years ago, but maybe nothing was done about it. Now is the time to look at it and say, "Have I dealt squarely with it and repented of the things I needed to repent of?" and to go forward then in unity and harmony and oneness with God. "Are there things I need to look at now that may be a spin-off of that same spirit that need to be conquered, that need to be overcome?"

So that's really the focus, really, of so much of the sermon. Because over the last seven years, again, this has been a powerful tool that God has used within the Church to bring many things to the surface, or at least to make them... not "make them," I guess, but make it possible for us to see things that we otherwise would not be able to see. So that's when, again, we can look at things and make change.

So let's pick it up a little bit, go back through quickly here chapter 1 of 1 Peter that we were looking at last Sabbath, because it's building up to, leading up to something that Peter is going to bring to our attention that we need to grasp first and foremost before we even begin to look more deeply into what this subject matter of this sermon's all about, this sermon of, *Lessons From A Ministry, Part 2*.

1 Peter 1:2—Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience. I love the way... You know, sometimes we tend to read through things quickly, but if we really absorb, drink in what's being said it's awesomely beautiful what is written here and how it's written. Because it's showing the whole purpose of this is so that we can come to learn to obey God, so that we can be - what it's saying is so we can come into unity and oneness with *Lessons From A Ministry, Pt. 2*

God in a greater way, because it's about coming into greater obedience to how we need to live our lives, to bring our lives into control, proper control, of yieldedness, if you will, to the ways of God. ... and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Again, God's will toward us, that we grow in peace, that those things be multiplied in our lives - favor, grace, mercy - all the things that God pours out upon us.

Verse 5—Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And so again, "Kept by the power of God." That's something we have to have in our lives day in and day out, God's power, God's life within us. And again, **through faith until salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** **Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, your heaviness through manifold temptations** (trials, tests). We go through a lot of things in this life. We go through a lot of hardships. But all those hardships, once you're in the Body of Christ, are geared toward helping you see things in yourself, through the power of God's spirit revealing them, that you otherwise could never come to grips with, that you could otherwise never come to the point of really dealing with as we truly need to when God calls us and begins to work with us throughout our life.

That the trial of your faith... That's what it's all about. It's about how we live, how we think, how we think toward God, **being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried in fire might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.** So, in other words, trials are good. Fire is good. Hardship can be good, not bad. It's not fun but it's good when it's as a matter of a part of a process of God working in our life, of Him being able to reveal things to us through the power of His holy spirit that we otherwise couldn't see, that we otherwise couldn't grasp.

Going on here a few verses down, **verse 13**, Peter went on to admonish, **Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind**, so responsibility, something we have to do, whether or not we're doing it. ...**gird up the loins of your mind**, understand how precious this thing is that God has given to you, this mind, the ability to think and reason, the ability to have it transformed and changed and not stay stagnant or the same as what it was at any point in time, but ever changing, ever being refined and changing. **Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.** Be sober *always*. Always in a state of being sober, being sober-minded. It has to do, again, with the mind and the way we think on a spiritual plane, of what we're capable of, of what it means if we're cut off from God's spirit or we begin to let down in the use of God's spirit in our lives or the fact that we're maybe not crying out in genuine earnestness, if you will, an earnest spirit and attitude in a genuine mind in asking God for help because we know we need help!

I need help every day of my life! I can't go on without God's help! You have to have, we have to have God's help! And if we don't grasp that it's easy to let down and begin coasting and thinking we're doing okay, or whatever. And then what's missing is a reality that, no, you need, I need, we need God's help and we have to cry out for that. "*Be sober minded!*" Understand what you're capable of doing! We have a lot of people who aren't with us today that should be in this room, who have left in the last three years! We have a lot of people who should be with us today, that when I first began, my wife and I began to make trips down to Cincinnati from Toledo after the Apostasy, a lot of people

that met in basement and upstairs in a house that should be here today that aren't here, because they weren't sober-minded, because they weren't on guard spiritually, and because they allowed other things to enter into their life. They didn't let God's spirit lead them, or to continue to lead them. They let other things enter in, their own carnal reasoning, and oftentimes, carnal weaknesses that they allowed to control their lives. Because there were certain things in their life they would not give up, did not want to give up, did not want to quit doing in their life. And some of those have hated because they know what they have gone through in their life. That's too bad.

In the ministry we get to know a lot about people's lives, what people's battles are. You know, that's just a part of it, in order to serve, in order to help, in order to admonish and help them to overcome, if they'll yield to that process. Sometimes it gets to a point where people can't take that anymore. They don't like that, you know. And the reason they don't like it is because they're not giving it up; they're not quitting it. And if they don't quit it, if they don't cease from doing evil, cease from doing wrong in their life, what happens? They continue in sin. They're cut off from God's spirit. They do it to themselves.

Be sober-minded because this can happen to anyone. It can happen to anyone. We have the power of choice in our life, you know. We don't have it made. The only ones, and they don't all know who they are, do they, would be the 144,000 who are already set apart as to who might be left within that. And there aren't that many. But whoever is in that as a part of that group, that's another matter. There are certain things going to happen in their life that God is going to work with and continue to work with because they have already been chosen. Okay? It's one thing to be called - called, chosen, and faithful - to be able to continue in that is something God has to give even there, and to ensure. But once a person gets to a certain point and God says, "Now I know you," then He knows how to work with them and what they're going, how they're going to respond to Him in every, *every*, every situation in life that might come their way. It's set. He knows. Okay? That's an awesome thing to understand.

But as a whole, that isn't the case for the Body today, because the vast majority are going on in to a new age... a new age. And so the need to ever be sober-minded and to realize our potential, we, in that respect, in that category, have the potential to not be there still. I don't want to see any more of that. I don't want to see anymore of what's happened in just the last three years in the cleansing of the temple. I don't want to see any more of that take place. I don't want to see any more of individuals who are walking around in the courtyard, who aren't coming into the temple to be a part of it, to exercise their life always within the temple, dedicated to the temple, getting *rid* of this world and putting it behind them, not getting caught back up in this world. Because, you see, that's happening to some degree in some people's lives out here, even within the ministry. Some people are allowing the world to pull back at them and pull them back into it. You have to fight until this is over with! And don't be *convicted*, in the sense of mind, that you're a part of the 144,000! Because you don't know that! Not a one of you (except for one back in the back) knows that. So you can't take

that lightly. You have to fight this fight to the end. And you can't think that you have it made. Okay? Not the case. You have to fight.

And I am tired of seeing people go by the wayside. And yet I think of God. Look at all the people He has called through time. Look at all the people in the last 2,000 years He has called and they've gone by the wayside. "Many are called, and few (in reality) have been chosen," out of all of that. Many! Far more than what have been chosen have been called. And we saw that with what took place with the Worldwide Church of God. That's our evidence even there. But the same thing has existed in all the eras before that starting with Ephesus, once the Church began. So we never have it made. Wrong frame of mind to ever be in. If we're not battling, something's wrong with us. If we're not of a sober mind, something's wrong with us.

So, didn't mean to go in that direction, but there has to be a reason for it, okay? This is where we are. That's what God's revealing to us. These are things we need to look at. These are things we need to look at seriously in our lives because we live in a very dangerous time. We always have in the Church, but now even more so the closer we get... the closer we get.

Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, always an admonition, and so much more as we're getting close to the end here, **be sober**, be sober-minded, and **hope to the end**. "To the end." You want to be there "to the end." Keep forging forward "to the end." It isn't over with until it's over with. **...for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. That's not something that just happens once, it's ongoing in your life. He's continually revealing things to us about himself and about his Father. Jesus Christ is. He's continually revealing things in the Church to us, on a continuing basis of things we don't know, of things we have not known, of things we *never knew* before. That's how God's spirit works. If God's spirit ever ceases to do that something is wrong, isn't it? Just like our growing spiritually. We must individually grow spiritually. And if God would ever cease giving us things as far as a Body, as far as a Church is concerned, it would show where God's Church is not. Because wherever God's Church is He's going to continually be revealing things to us that we didn't know previously.

So again, **Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children...** Again, "as obedient children," desiring to obey God, desiring to fight against our carnal nature, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," that rules carnal human beings. **...not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance**. Before, we didn't know; now we know. Now we understand "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" on a spiritual plane in a way that we can see them and see what we're like as human beings in a way that we couldn't before. The world can't see those things, those things on a spiritual plane. It's as much as not being able to see the truth. You can't see that which is spiritual unless God reveals it to you. God has to give it and to continue to do that ever refining.

Then Peter gave the focus of what was most important in what he was writing to them in all of this; **verse 22—Seeing you have purified your lives**, or "are purifying your lives," because it's a process, it's not complete yet. It's a process we're going through, **seeing you are purifying your lives in obeying the truth through the spirit**. There's no other way to obey the truth except through God's spirit. We can't do it on our own. That's why if we really "see" ourselves and know what we are, and the more we "see" that, the more we'll cry out to God for help and His spirit to help us. **Seeing you have purified your lives** (are purifying your lives) **in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren**, not a put-on, not pretentious, but genuine... genuine, true, real, honest... see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently (intently), as was mentioned last Sabbath. That means you have to put a lot of effort into it. It means you have to go out of your normal carnal way to do things that you otherwise wouldn't even do. You have to make the choices. You have to decide what the extra steps are to go out of your comfort zone, to do something above and beyond - whether it be in fellowship (that's just a beginning), or in other areas of life.

Now let's go on to chapter 2, which is what we were doing last Sabbath, but never got there. Because there's a purpose of going through all of this in advance to come to this point to see what we need to see more clearly, more meaningfully.

[**1 Peter 2:1**]—Wherefore, laying aside all malice. See, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently," in how we think toward one another within the Body. And as a part of that process, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice," in other words, all evil, all that's bad in life, on a continuing basis, **and all guile**; that's a word that has to do with "deceitful practices." Can't be deceitful in life. It must be genuine. It must be true.

This thing we've gone through in discussing things about different personalities and the like. If it's a matter... You know, human nature is selfish by nature, and so often it's about getting our way. And sometimes that's done in a manner that it may be manipulative, deceitful, controlling. Those things have to be rooted out of our lives. They truly do. And so again here, this is all part of a process here that Peter is discussing. In other words, how to love one another with a pure heart fervently, in a fervent manner. And these are the things we have to focus on, the things that are bad in our life, the things that are in error in our lives and seek to receive the help we need to overcome them.

...and hypocrisies, "play-acting." It's a word that means "play-acting, pretending, pretentious, not being genuine, not being truthful." That's what it means. And again, I can't help but think of what we went through in Revelation and discussing some of the things having to do with the cleansing of the temple this past year - past three years (I'm sorry) - past three and a half years (let's get this right). I'm getting closer. ...of this cleansing of the temple that took place and of the measuring of the temple and those who are in the courtyard. What an awesome revelation of something that God gave to us to help us understand in a deeper way that there is a distinction He wanted us to be able to make within the Body and in our own lives - that just being in and going through the motions or being within a fellowship does not mean we're in the temple. It doesn't mean we're worshipping in the temple. It doesn't mean we're living this way of life in the manner that God wants us to. Instead, we

can deceive ourselves mightily and deceive others by walking around out in the courtyard, by kind of being in the same vicinity and play-acting and acting like we're a part. I've seen this for nearly 50 years in God's Church - getting closer to it. I'm closer to 50 than I am 40 or 30 in God's Church and seeing people go through the motions of things and yet they're not really there. They're not really living it like they should be in genuine spirit and truth.

That's why we have to worship God in spirit and in truth. Truth. Truth means to be genuine, it means to be honest, it means there can be no hypocrisy, it means there can be no deceit or deceitful practices. Doesn't mean we're not going to have moments and times when something pops up out of human nature, where pride raises its ugly head sometime or something that happens in our life and we react in a way that hypocrisy reveals itself. We're all going to have different problems and different struggles in time. Nobody is perfect. And it might be in a very refined way, whatever it might be, but it will still be there as far as human beings are concerned. But then we repent of those things. But to practice them on a continuing basis? There's where the problem is. And not to address them, address those things? That's where the problem is.

And so again, God has used the tool of the ministry to reveal these things that in some cases have been *practiced* on a continuing basis that needed to be overcome or *still need* to be addressed and overcome.

Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and deceit and hypocrisies, and envying, jealousies... Woo doggies! Jealousies. Envy. That's a biggie when it comes to the ministry. You know, for years and years and years - matter of fact ever since I've been in the ministry, ever since I was ordained, going back to 1981, from that point forward any time being involved with, working with someone, or discussing something with someone, or working with other ministers when it came to a point of considering someone for ordination, one of the things we always, always, always warned them about, "Your life is about to change in dramatic ways. Your friendships are about to change in dramatic ways." Now, we maybe didn't say it in exactly those words, but basically that's the message we tried to warn them about. "Because they're going to change. Some are not going to be able to take the fact that you are ordained. Some are not going to be able to deal with that now and they're going to look at your friendship in a different way now. Some are going to be jealous, again, some are going to be envious. Some are going to think, 'Why you? Why are you there? I know you. I know some of your problems and faults.'" But you know what? When God calls someone to do a specific job, it doesn't matter what it is. Hey, every one of us have problems and faults or we wouldn't be called! I mean, we wouldn't have been. Even the fact that we're here, we have problems and faults in our human life. Is it easy to find those things? Well, the more you know one another, the more you're going to see faults. And not only that, you're going to remember the history in a lot of cases and won't ever forget it and will never put it aside! Or when someone's young you won't forget what they were like when they were young and growing up, and then you saw them, and now all of a sudden where *God* has placed them. And sometimes those things are hard to take. Sometimes human nature has a difficult time with that. And if we only could understand why we might ever have a difficult

time with some of those things, it goes back to what's inside of us and what God is helping to reveal inside of us that we otherwise wouldn't even be able to see if it weren't for that experience.

That's why this tool is a very powerful tool, of what's taken place to reveal many of these things within the Church, of things we need to look at and say, "Did I experience those? Have I addressed what I experienced? And if I haven't addressed it and asked God for forgiveness and help to change it, than what profit was it that I go through those trials and the fact that God revealed them to me in the first place?" ...that *God* revealed them to us in the first place? Because these things are here, that God revealed them to us so that we can change. And this is a powerful tool. That's why we're focusing upon this and I'm talking about some of these things, is because God is revealing that this is one of the most powerful tools He's used in the Church to help refine us.

And so it's a matter of our receiving those things and now, if we didn't do it before, to do it now. Now for sure to address those things and to repent of some of those things that happened so that they can never happen... so that you are so convicted they will never happen again. That's what it's about, of coming to loathe and to hate things about human nature so much so that you're so convicted of the ugliness. Because sin is ugly. Let's face it. Jealousy - I have seen so much jealousy in the past 40-some years. But you know what? We see it in a way that the world can't even begin to see it because we see the spirit of it. And in the most refined ways it's still just about as ugly as can be. It's as ugly, outright...

That's why I love the way that God speaks in the Bible about things having to do with murder or killing or the blood. And that's why I think about Ezekiel and some of the things there where the condemnation upon the ministry had been so great, because, in essence, God said, "You have murdered! The blood of God's people," in essence, "is on your hands! Because of what you have done or *failed* to do in what you didn't stand for, in what you didn't protect, and so forth." Go back and read some of those things. I think it's chapter 37 and some of those chapters, chapter 35 and on through there, and how God speaks of some of those things. Because they're about the end-time as well and they're about things that we have already experienced as far as the Apostasy was concerned. God calls it what it is. Because we don't think that way. We think, "I'd never murder anyone! That'd be so foreign to my thinking, to... you know, blood come out." The idea of that's so gross, but yet what we do on a spiritual plane is just as gross, if we can see it. It's just as hideous. It's just as sick when it comes to not living the way God says we should to one another, see.

So there are many things that can lead to murder on a spiritual plane, and they've happened. They've happened a lot on a spiritual plane. See, the world's totally oblivious to it. They couldn't begin to understand that. But we can understand it. Those things have happened though, in God's Church - God's Church. And He wants us to repent of those things whenever He brings those things to our attention. And He has. Ever since I've been in the Church He's always been bringing in those things to our attention, how to live by His love (agape) and to fight against the carnal natural thinking of how people think toward each other. Because how we think toward each other determines, truly, how we think towards God.

And that's a toughie sometimes for people to really grasp or to be able to draw that line from one point to the other. "No." It's the same. That's what it is. "No, it's them. They just rub me the wrong way. They said 'this' about me. They did 'this' to me." And this ability to not forgive. Or, "I know what they're like. I know them." And maybe hold those things in secretly, whatever it is, and not understand that that's how we're really thinking on a spiritual plane that God says is wrong. And so it has to do with how we think toward God then. Sometimes difficult to be able to put those two dots together in a straight line, that they're connected. But we need to be able to do that.

So this is an opportunity for us as God's people to become more refined, to get rid of some of the areas in our life that we haven't gotten rid of yet. And, again, God is using the ministry to do that.

So jealousies? Absolutely. A few? No. A lot. In the last eight years I can spot it a mile away by the things that people say, how they say it, how they act. And the only reason is because God's given that. See? It's just in order to do the job. Sometimes people don't realize when they're ordained to do a certain thing, have a certain function, it's not because of their ability, it's because of the ability that God has given them to do that, because it's from God. If it's of advantage, if it's true, if it's right, it's because God has given it. It's not because of how good we are or how great our perception is, or anything of that nature. It's what God gives in order to fulfill and accomplish the function, the job, in order to better serve and help the body.

So again, these things have existed. They have existed in the last seven years. They have existed in the last three years. They have existed in the last year and they still pop up from time to time because we're human beings. Those things should never be. Those things should never exist. And if anyone ever has those things begin to bother them, any kind of envy or jealousy - but sometimes those things are justified by other human reactions that says, "Oh, that's not jealousy. That's not envy." And we can deceive ourselves and lie to ourselves. And yet the reaction, the response tells the truth, is the true witness of what is in the heart and in the mind.

So again, if there are areas of that in our lives, anyone's life that we need to look at, then we need to look at it soberly, sober-minded, honest in spirit toward God and say, "Yeah, I've had that happen." And ask God, "Father, Father, Father, forgive me. Forgive me for such a rotten, wretched, selfish, pride-filled, judgmental spirit and attitude." Because, you see, that fights against God's spirit very powerfully so. It's so against God. It's against the way God's spirit is working in our life to give us a spirit family, a spiritual family. Those things fight against that. It fights against unity. It fights against harmony. It helps those things to be crumbled down, to destroy, to hurt, to be divisive. They're everything.... They're *everything* that come from the first one who did it. It's that spirit and that mind (that God wants out of every human being) that entered into Lucifer, that is very much a part of his being, his broadcasting, his mind. And it's very much a part of the human mind, human nature, because by nature we're selfish. And we have to experience those wrong things and to see how ugly they are and be so deeply convicted of how ugly they are and the damage they cause that we loathe them, that we hate them because we see the damage, we see what it does to peace. It doesn't create peace. It creates division. It creates hurt and pain and suffering and sorrow.

So again, an awesome mirror. An awesome mirror into our lives to see where we are and what we need to fight against, because we're ever to become more refined, ever being refined before God.

So again ...**laying aside all malice, all guile, all hypocrisies, and envyings, and evil speaking.** You know, tearing someone down. You know, there's sometimes - going to say this so that others can learn from it as well who haven't had some of that kind of training, be in some of the kind of classes that we've had. But it's something that obviously benefits the entire body that we need to understand and grasp. And there are things sometimes within the ministry that have to be handled in a wise, in a sound way in dealing with certain things in people's lives, if something happens in a certain area or specific situation arises where within a ministry, in order to communicate something, to know what to do and how to handle this, to perhaps go to, whatever, my wife and myself or someone else and say, "There is this situation. There is this friction here. How do I deal with that?" And sometimes that means you're going to have to discuss certain situations in people's lives. It's not a matter to tear down, it's for the purpose of helping. And sometimes people don't, aren't able to separate those because there is incredible responsibility then that comes with individuals when you have a job to do, in the sense of the ministry, of making certain that the purpose, if something is discussed in someone's life - not for the sake of gossip, not for the sake of tearing down - but for the purpose of helping, for the purpose of being able to refine or have things refined within the Body. I hope you understand what I'm saying here. I see a lot of heads nodding, yes. But there is a big difference between gossiping and tearing down or trying to put someone in a bad light. I think of this passive-aggressive thing where behind the back of someone else someone will say something for the purpose of putting someone else in a bad light. Maybe not really attacking them clear on but just saying little things to take away from them, from that individual, whatever it might be. It might be something really small, it doesn't matter what it is, but the attitude and the motive behind it is to justify self - self being better - to pull down someone else maybe in someone else's eyes as well so that others can agree, "Yeah, you were done wrong there." Or, "Yeah, that's not right." Or, "They shouldn't be doing that." Anyway, ever being able to examine ourselves, brethren, in life. That's what these things are about, being able to be on guard - being on guard so that things don't happen that hurt peace, that hurt a family, or hurt the name of anyone within the Family. Isn't that the way a family is? To protect? To stand up for? To be on your side? We need each other fully on one another's side. Truly! And where certain things need to be addressed, that we're open and honest about it. "Hey, I'm coming to you because this was said and I think it really hurt this other person or hurt me. And I'm just trying to be open about it because it needs to be addressed." Not in order to tear someone down but in order to bring something out in the open, to be assertive in a right sort of way, to help someone to be able to maybe see something that they're not addressing that they need to address in their life. Sometimes that takes a lot of guts, because too often we're afraid of losing a friendship or someone is not going to like us, or who are you to say that to me? Well, we're brothers and sisters in the Body, and that's how brothers and sisters should want... They should want to help each other. Anyway.

...as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word. Now, it doesn't matter what it is. In one respect we should always have this attitude. In other words, an attitude that there are things we

always need to learn. "A newborn babe." We don't know it all! We have to be careful we don't ever get into a position where we think we have the answers to things or we understand or we know how something is to be done. I find this all the time within the Church, of how certain things, sometimes people will think certain things should be done or said in a certain way and... Hey, I'm going to do it the way I believe that God's convicted me to do it. And that's what we have to do. And so someone may have a different idea about how something should be done or whatever within the body or who should or who shouldn't be ordained or whatever it might be, or how some other function within the Church should take place or where something should be done or how it should be done. And that's not what it's about. So again, things we can use to examine our own lives. So, in other words, always being of this attitude of a newborn babe, that we don't have all the answers. You know, we have to be before God of a meek spirit. That's what being of a meek spirit is about, of always being able to be of a mind to be teachable. "What can I learn from this? This is the way I think it should be done. This is the way I see it, but what is it that God may be showing me, that God is..."

I think of David. You remember the individual that came up, and the captain, basically, of the guard wanted to chop off the guys head, kill him on the spot because he was throwing rocks at David and cursing him out about different things? David stopped him. Said, "No." He said, "There may be something..." In other words, "He may have something right here that he's saying. Why is he...?" in essence, "Why is he so upset that he would do something so dumb as to throw rocks at a king and to curse out loud? What way is he... What's he... Maybe this is from God. Maybe there is something here I need to see. Maybe there is something here I can learn from." That was his attitude. What an awesome thing, to be able to take it that far to realize that someone's in that position to do something, to go to that point - and then, maybe, again, there isn't, but at least to be willing to listen, to have that attitude of mind. That's an awesome thing. And that's something we need to have in our lives as well, to realize there's... "What is it that I could learn from this? What is it that is different?" To realize we don't have the answers. And frankly, a lot of the things that God does and gives to us it's so we can learn that we don't know, we don't have the answers and He has to show us. He has to show us step by step by step so we can learn that lesson in a very great way.

...as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby. An easier way to grow, to be of a teachable spirit so that we can perhaps learn from some things that we otherwise might ignore and might refuse to even consider. Because if we refuse to consider it we're not going to be able to change if there is something there that we need to change there in our life. **If so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.** So again, it's a matter of learning from God and seeing God in the picture in our lives. God's working with us. God's called us to help us to become something different. He's always there wanting to help us.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. So again, this is about our being called, our being drawn by God, but it's also talking here about Jesus Christ and some of the things that are going to be discussed. But it's so that we can see ourselves as well in the midst of all this and how important that is then to God. That's the

comparisons he's making here. So as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, so again, about Christ. If we can grasp and comprehend the calling of Jesus Christ, the purpose of Christ's life, of what God did from the beginning to the end in Christ's life, what He gave to him, who he was, the Word made flesh.

Then going on in **verse 5** it says, **you also**. So the point is that if we can grasp and comprehend some things about the importance, the magnitude of Christ's life and how important that is to God in the things that have just been stated here, in essence, we need to see ourselves as well and the importance of God's calling and what God is doing in our lives. **You also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house** (are being built up a spiritual house) **a holy priesthood**. What an awesome thing. You don't have to be a minister to be a part of a holy priesthood that is far more important than a ministry. Do we grasp the magnitude of our calling? So within the ministry there are responsibilities of certain things at times in order for the Body to function in the way that God desires at a moment in time, but again, each one in the body is a part of something far beyond that - *far* beyond that. And sometimes we don't put things in their proper perspective and we raise some things to a level that they shouldn't be raised to.

I think of this area. I think of this area about twenty years ago, a little over twenty years ago when I was here. Certain things that were raised and elevated that should never be raised and elevated in people's minds. And people were drawn to that and attracted to that and they wanted to emulate that or copy that in their lives and things that they did. It wasn't the right way, was it? I don't want to get more specific. Those of you who were here, you understand.

You are living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices. That's why we're all called. That's a part of our lives, isn't it, that God's desire is that we what? We give up of self. We give of self to God. Our life is God's. We told God that at baptism, "*Whatever You want. I am Yours* to mold and fashion, to do with as You will. Not as I will, but Your will." And a desire then to yield to that, to realize, to understand the importance of what it means of God is molding and transforming your life, and that you want that. You not only gave yourself to that and desire that, but you *want* that for your life. "To offer up spiritual sacrifices." What does that mean? It means that the normal things you'd want to do in life for yourself that are selfish without consideration, of where God is not in the forefront... In other words, God's always to be first, number one. Every person must always make the stand that God is first in their life, period, above anybody else, above *everything* else, and to make that stand, period! And if we're not willing to do that - and we're tried in those things because God's going to bring those things to the light so we can address them and repent of the areas where we're not doing that in the right way, where God really *isn't* first, perhaps in family or whatever it might be. To make that stand, God is first. God *is* first. That's nothing to back down from or to feel ashamed of. And yet sometimes in life if, we're not careful, we can be ashamed of that, see?

When I first went about three years ago to do something over in Indiana, kind of a shameful thing. I wasn't real nuts about it. Okay? Doesn't bother me one iota, whereas there was an inkling of that in

the beginning because it is a shameful thing. That's what scriptures talk about when different things have happened in life anyway. I think of Christ and what happened to him. We all have to go through that in life in different things in life. Something that might be attributed to how people talk about you because of what you believe. "Oh, you follow that nutcase." "No, I'm following where God leads me." On and on it goes. A willingness to stand and be firm in what you believe and what you're doing and to put God first. It's an awesome thing. And then whatever you go through and whatever bad things might come at you you understand them. "That's the way of the world. They don't understand. But if this can serve and help others, so be it." Then it becomes an honorable thing. Honorable. What you live in your life, the stand you take for what is right. It's not a matter to please others, it's a matter of being pleasing to your God. Because that's what it's all about, your desire to be in His Family, to live life the way He has given you to live. And so we stand firm and we stand tall. We don't cower and we don't put our head down because of how someone looks at us or thinks about us or talks about us. On the contrary. We stand tall because of what we represent. I.... Well, don't want to talk about myself. Anyway.

So it goes on to say, **You as living stones**, again, repeating this, **built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by/through Jesus Christ. Wherefore, also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he who believes on him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.** That's just the way it is. But it's the way it is for us too in how the world thinks. We're following in those footsteps. We're following that course of life. We enter into the sufferings of Christ. That's what the scriptures are about when they talk about, "you enter into the sufferings of Christ," is because the world is not going to accept you. They don't accept God. They don't listen to God. And so they're not going to accept you and they're not going to listen to you, as a whole, are they? That's what this last book is all about.

Verse 8—And a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence. It's offense to people. Can you imagine? I was thinking as I was going over this, just reviewing some of this this morning thinking about some of this. Can you imagine a thirty year old, a thirty-one year old standing up to - matter of fact when he was twelve, but it wasn't the same as when he was thirty and thirty-one, thirty-two and in through there - and here he is a young man standing up before the rulers of that time, the religious rulers of that time, the Pharisees, the Sadducees. "Who does he think he is?" Because a lot of them and their age and their supposed greatness in Judea, and here he was teaching something totally different than what they believed, and saying things about them that they didn't like. They wanted to kill him. They wanted to kill him for a long time. They wanted to put him to death. They wanted him out of the way. But just the fact that he was young was also difficult, if you can understand that, see.

I think of those that went out at that particular time, and sometimes, especially now because of the focus God is giving to us, more and more He's putting a focus on those who are young, because

they're the ones. See? I think of those who were there with Christ. They were young men. They weren't old men. They were very young.

And so again here, sometimes those things can try people, can test people. I remember times past when ministers who went out from Ambassador College, who were twenty-one, twenty-two years old - I guess about twenty-two, twenty-three - and began to work in churches. Some went out that way as pastors. A long time ago they went out as pastors because there was the need, a need in Church areas. And they would go out right away and they were given those responsibilities and those functions in a very big way to teach and work with people. And sometimes one of the biggest things that came up over and over again was their age. And there were older people who were there, and sometimes as time went along in the Church and a new minister came in, and one minister went out and another one came in, a young one, a younger individual, and here, now by this time there are some elders and some deacons in the Church who are older and you get a young guy coming in, younger than them? Sometimes that can cause problems just because of age alone. Like, "Whoa!" Because they knew he maybe didn't have the experiences maybe of marriage or on the job in the world like they had. And they couldn't fully relate to all that, but nevertheless, they were God's ministers to serve God's way of life on a spiritual plane to them. But sometimes people had battles with those things.

So some of you have experience with some of that. Some of you know some of that took place. It can take place today as well. Okay? It's already taken place. Many times! I'll just tell you it's already taken place. It's taken place in the last year many times, too many times as far as I'm concerned. But thankfully there are people who catch themselves in it and realize, "I made a mistake here." You don't want to fight against what God has established. And sometimes we don't recognize God has established it. There are changes. And the reason there have been so many kinds of changes is to bring these things to the surface. What an awesome thing. So much of it has been for that very purpose, to bring things to the surface so that we can see them so that we can deal with them so that we can work with them and so where change needs to come and things can to be refined we can do better. See?

There are examples. Sometimes it's easier to believe that, "God has put me in a position... I can see why God has ordained and put me here." And then when, perhaps, someone is retired, maybe because of age or because of whatever other.... It doesn't really matter what the reason is. And maybe they don't see that God was in that too. It's easier - Do you understand what I'm saying? - it's easier to see when things are going the way we like and enjoy, but when something happens and it's done, it's finished.... That's the way the church, in large part, is, and many places the way God has worked with mankind has been for a long, long time. But sometimes we don't recognize it. Some people had a specific job to do that God has called to do something other than, in addition to, the primary purpose in the first place of being called, to *be in God's Family*. And over the past 6,000 years the ones who primarily have been called have been for the purpose of God's government in that family. It's the formation of the framework of God's government that will exist through time, into

time. And so it began with Christ 2,000 years ago. And then under that will be all the 144,000. We understand that in a very powerful way. But things also happen in those individual's lives, sometimes was just for a specific moment in time. Most of them we don't even know anything about. But if you read in scripture sometimes there were individuals who had something happen that perhaps just happened for a short period of time.

That's why I think about Christ himself. The vast majority of what he did was in the last few weeks. The vast majority of what's recorded about what he said and what he did and all that surrounded his life and the greatest lessons and teachings in this Bible have to do with the last few weeks of his life - three weeks especially. They're jam packed in this book. And the forty days that followed. Because, you see, the disciples were taught a lot of things that they didn't fully understand, that they began to teach later on that Christ taught during those forty days.

Awesome how God works with us! And so the point being is that sometimes we may have a certain window of time to do something, and then above and beyond our calling. Sometimes. And oftentimes not. It's just a part of a process of God taking us from Point A to Point B, and when we're finally in His Family. Because *that* is the greatest of all. That is the most important of all.

I've known a tonne of ministers who will not be in the Millennium. I would say I know several hundred in the ministry itself who simply won't even be allowed to live on into the Millennium, okay, because of a purpose that God has in that. So what does that say? What is the most important thing? It's to be in God's Family, first of all. And then the desire should be to be faithful and to live on into and a desire to be in that period of time, to be at the foundation of a new age, to be at the framework of a new age regardless. *That* is going to be awesome! To be at the beginning of a new age? Even if it's for a year or two or three years, whatever that might be, before one dies? What an awesome thing! Or if it be ten more years in that period, or twenty years into that period, how incredible is that that you have the opportunity to perhaps be at the beginning of that? And then at the end of that thousand years then to be resurrected *in God's Family*, because that's the greatest thing of all! That's what it's all about - to get from Point A to Point B! And what we do on the way isn't a matter of whether we're part of the ministry or not! *That doesn't matter a hill of beans!* It really doesn't! And yet sometimes in human life we make that like that's a great achievement, that's a wonderful thing and should be looked up to and admired. *Not at all!* Just to put it in its proper place.

Twenty years ago in this area here, that wasn't so. Okay? It was made to look like that's everything. Individuals that came out of a particular college would go back into an area, and they had the attitude, as well, of expecting people to look up to them, because they were special. They were special people and they knew it. Because they were told that at college. "You're special. You're not like the rest of the congregation." Slap me silly, the things we've lived through. But that was great immaturity on our part as a people that those things weren't picked up and grasped and understood for what they were.

I think of the fact of... just tell you a little story here. At some of the Feast of Tabernacles they had kind of a reunion type thing, wasn't it, where they would get together, have some of the... Anybody that had been at Ambassador College, they'd have a night for them to come in and visit, whether it be in the ministry or somebody who was still at Ambassador College, to come to a meeting, a gathering. And this... this was even after the Apostasy wasn't it? That one of these happened that time? I'm pretty sure. Yeah. Okay. This one incident that I'm thinking about happened after the Apostasy. And these things can go to your head. They're destructive. They really are. If you begin to think you're something special, that you're above other people in a congregation, that you have a special calling - that is sick, perverted, disgusting, stinks (I think the expression "to high heaven"). Well, anyway, it stinks to the throne of God, before the throne of God. It truly does.

But I think of this particular occasion, my wife and I went into an area, visit with some individuals. And I may have some different time periods mixed up here as to exactly when it took place. But whenever it was it happened more than once. But, primarily, we didn't bother going to those things anyway, those functions. But I wish... My wife is really good on timing of things. But anyway, the one time I remember one example of a person in college in the past coming up to us and talking to us and they knew me. This might have been years before that, the example I have here. I'm butchering the time period here, but it's happened more than once. My wife could set me straight. But this just is the epitome of the example that was there. I introduced them to my wife then, and when they'd come to find out it was like, "Well, when did you graduate from college." "I didn't." Their countenance changed, "Oh, you didn't." Well, then it was like... Didn't this thing about the junior year come up? "Well, then you were at what time period," basically context was, "what three years were you in college? You got married when you were a junior, then, right?" "No, I was a freshman." Like, "You were freshman and you got married?" Because, you see, as a whole some of those things didn't happen back then.

Because I married a freshman, and it was looked down upon. What an incredible thing of attitudes and stuff and people have sometimes because, well, you're not as good... and they just, they didn't even know how to respond to that. Turned around and walked away. How do you respond to that when you think that you're talking to someone who is... Was that in Hawaii? Okay. It was... That was before the Apostasy then, wasn't it? Okay. That was before the Apostasy. I take that back. That one there, that one there really hit me hard. Because I thought, "How sick can you be?" And yet that was not just one person's attitude that just kind of solidified the way the attitude was a lot of times in how the ministry was treated. And we were in the ministry at that time serving and had been sent over there to help out at the Feast one year. That was before the Apostasy. What's that? After? This is before the Apostasy, honey. Yeah, before the Apostasy. Because it's coming back to me, honey. I may not have all these but the one *I'm* thinking of...

But, anyway, you all have different experiences if you've been around the Church for a long time, about things that have happened. Ours was unique because here I was within the ministry giving, speaking at that particular Feast site, and yet someone coming up to us, that we were beneath

them. My wife and I were beneath them because I married a freshman. Going back many, many years from Ambassador College. Duh! But that's kind of the spirit that existed out there.

And I hope we can understand how ugly that was, now, of how ugly it was that individuals would come back into a Church area and feel that they were above dating others in the church area. That happened over and over and over again - because they were special. They had a special calling and shouldn't date someone back in their Church area. They should date someone in Ambassador College. Oh, and if you get married, better be seniors. Anyway, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. But you think, you look back at things that happened in our past and we couldn't see them. People... That wasn't seen within the ministry for as ugly as it really was. But now, because of our growth, we can look back now and see that was horribly ugly.

And things we've seen that have been abused in the past by some ministers and I think of this area here was one of the most abusive areas. Between two ministers, especially. They had fighting going on all the time. Competition with each other. And they put the church in competition with each other on a continuing basis. The choirs were in competition with each other. What they wore. I remember the big battle of what they wore! Some chose to wear certain colorful things, others wanted to go out and have an Italian suit or (what do you call these?) tailor do everything for them. I'm going to the extreme here, but that was kind of what it was like. It had to be so much above and beyond just having certain things made. They had to be perfect. They had to be above and beyond everybody else. We have to make a show of this. Anyway.

You think human nature isn't very much a part of our lives sometimes in things we go through? And we better be able to look at things that were done wrong and realize that should never be done again. The ministry should never be held up on a pedestal. It's wrong. The only thing that God requires is if the matter of government has to be used or there's a purpose for it, that we are submissive, that we yield to it. And generally those things never happen as a matter of anything to do with correction unless there is a problem or difficulty of some sort. But as a whole it's just a matter of how we function, or a matter of how God teaches us. It's the way God's spirit works. So there's that tool and means by which He does it.

But we're *all* - we're all a part of a body. No one lower than anyone else and no one *higher* than anyone else. No one *better* than anyone else. And that's something we must have in our minds. Because this gets rid of the judging then. This gets rid of the jealousy then. Why should there ever be a jealousy within in the Body? And yet over the past year I've known of jealousies. I've known of envy. Why should those things ever exist in the Body? They shouldn't! If we have a right mind about our calling, if we have a right mind and attitude toward everyone else's calling, those things should never exist. Jealousy, envy, they should never be.

Anyway, going on here. The whole point is that we be able to see ourselves and the calling that God has given to us, and that it's far more important, *far more important* than where you might be in a

body and how God might use different ones at different times for different specific things in their life.

And you don't know certain things that God could be using you for and the things that are going to be used later on - in people you've come in contact with or are in contact with and how that can be used in a very powerful way of something that God's going to perform and accomplish and write about later on. You don't know! In whatever we do, we should do well, then, in yielding our self to God - in whatever we do and wherever we are in our service to God, offering up spiritual sacrifice before God.

So again here (I believe this is where I was). I want to pick it up in verse 8 here and continue on - **And a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But,** the whole point of this is, **you are a chosen generation.** What an incredible thing when God calls us, when He has chosen to call us. It's not the matter of the fact that He's chosen us to be a part of the 144,000, or chosen us yet, that He knows us individually, that we have arrived on a spiritual plane. On the contrary. We're to always be of a sober mind, always to be on guard, always to be alert as a part of our life. But the point being is here after talking about Jesus Christ and the importance that God gave as to him being the chief cornerstone He goes on to show the importance of the entirety of the Body. We are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood.** What an awesome thing! "A royal priesthood." Every one of us who is called, who has God's spirit in them, before God that's how we should look upon it for a calling that we've been given: a royal priesthood. And that doesn't change just because some are getting ready to go into the Millennium. It's a royal priesthood, and far more for service in the beginning, right behind the 144,000. That's a function and a job. But there are those who continue on that the importance of that, the importance of those being at the foundation of a new age, how much greater could that be?

...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar (special) people. Special before God. No reason to be jealous. No reason to be envious of another within the Body. If that happens then what needs to be addressed in one's mind in the way one is thinking? That's the question. And that's where there needs to be an answer. **...that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who in times past were not a people but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.** These verses say a lot.

But before even going on any further here in discussing some of these things and how this has been a very powerful tool and how God has been using it over the last seven years within the Church to bring many things to the surface - some of which people have seen, and much of which people haven't seen - is something that God wants us to see now, to focus upon now, of changes we need to make in our lives now in how we think, in the smallest of areas. Because, you see, there is nothing too small when it comes to something that's wrong. If it's at the heart and core of some of our thinking that's wrong then that can affect so many... That's why oftentimes we can minimize things in our thinking, in the sense of thinking that this is too small or not that important, and so we allow

ourselves to do certain things in life that if we really grasped the gravity of it, and how it affects many other areas of our thinking, we would want to get rid of it.

And so that's what God is helping us as we are ever being refined, that there are certain things within the depths of our thinking that stem from that. I think over the past year one thing that I've loved to see in the things that have come out in some of the posts and sermons having to do with the mind and the transformation of the mind and what God is doing in us and the choices. I think of all the sermons we've heard along those lines, the choices that we have before us constantly, continually. How important that is, this mind that God has given to you. How precious the mind is that you protect, that you guard this mind. And the blessing that God has given you of this and the choices you then make as a result and the desire then to constantly change and be transformed. The deeper, in one respect, that one can begin to grasp that this is where everything starts, this is where everything originates, it's in how you think, that this is not small.

And the things that we sometimes think are small are not small at all. They reflect how we are! It is what we are! It is who we are! And if some of that most basic thinking is in error, when we talk about jealousy or envy or pride or hypocrisy, those things are not small. And they can be very deeply rooted and be affecting *all kinds* of thinking that is coming out of us in *all kinds* of areas of our life. And so the farther you can dig, the deeper you can get to where it all begins, this is what it's all about. And that's what God is blessing us to do, to dig in deep, deeper so that we can get to the root cause, where these things begin, and work to change *those things*. And the more we're successful in doing so it affects everything else in our thinking. It's an awesome thing. It's never small or little or unimportant. On the contrary. Those are some of the *most* important things of life because it reflects who we are, reflects what we are, reflects everything about our thinking and our attitude toward God and where we are spiritually.

1 Corinthians 16. Sometimes it's not pleasant to take a walk through all this, but trials aren't pleasant. Hardships, fire isn't pleasant to the carnal human mind. But if we're able to do something on a spiritual plane and address certain things and change certain things it's all well worth the struggle, the battle. The willingness to look into a spiritual mirror and to acknowledge and admit this is what it is and this has to go - that's beautiful. That's a wonderful thing. And that's what this is all about.

So I think of some of the cleaning up that's taken place over the last seven years. And some of the things we are discussing are the very things that led to many who are not with us today. That's what led to it. That's why we ever have to be on guard, ever alert, ever sober minded. Because wrong thinking, unaddressed, can still lead us away. It can still happen. I hope we're beyond a point of that happening. I hope and pray that we're to a point where the vast majority of the Body will be able to remain. Because at some point we're going to start experiencing again what we started to experience in 2007, 2008, and 2009 when a book goes out and conditions in the world are such that God begins to work with people. I think of all that have come along and I think of, also, all who have gone. And there are a lot. But we went through a period of time of some very rapid growth and then we went

through other trials. But it's to prepare us all for where we're getting ready to go now and that we be a stronger body and a better prepared Body to better handle now what will take place that will lead on into the time of Christ's coming.

So I marvel at how God molds and fashions us. It's a beautiful thing. It's an awesome thing to be a part of. It's an awesome thing to experience. But you have to see that, too, and to know that and to... Your ability to be in awe of it depends on your ability to see that and to grasp that and to embrace that.

1 Corinthians 16:10— Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear. In other words, kind of an awkward way of the translation here of how it's stated, but it's basically having to do with, you know, "Don't make it difficult for him. Don't resist," in essence, "the work, the office. He's being sent by me to do a work. Don't make it hard. Don't make it difficult. Don't let it be done with something that..." You know, this particular word, again, is not the best one to be used here, "but that he may come with you without fear." You know, there are some things that are distasteful. That's it. Some of it's distasteful. Some things, "Don't make his job difficult. Don't make some things he has to deal with distasteful. Don't make it harder on him. Don't make his job harder than what it should be," because... But you know what, something as an aside, because things did happen with Timothy, because some did not receive him well, you know what? It made Timothy stronger. Sometimes things you go through in life are the very things that make you a stronger person. So whatever it is you go through in life, whether it be on the job, if you stand fast for God - if it be in marriage, if it be in family, if it be in neighborhoods, whatever it is - and you stand fast, those are the things that can make you much stronger. Really. Because it's always a matter that God is first in your life. No matter what else around you happens, *God must be first* in your life.

And for Timothy and how he was received... Because why would Paul even say these things? Because Paul knew what it was like to send a young guy out there. Paul knew what it was going to be like for some of those who had been in the Church for many years now. See, because this is talking about a period around, I believe, 66-65. The Church had been around for thirty years now, or so. Not all in Corinth, but there had been those in Corinth from the very beginning and the Church began to grow through time as happens in so many places. So it started out with few, but there were the older ones, and sometimes it's harder for the older ones to accept new ones who are sent along - and especially if they'd been trained by, taught by, worked with Paul (in this particular case), yeah, Paul (in this particular case) and are sent out to do a job. It's something that God is doing.

Now, sometimes because it's God's choosing directly and God's working with it to make it that way, sometimes it's a matter of binding and loosening because of time and chance. There are some things that happen within the Body and so forth that God works with within a body and He allows certain things to take place in our life because of our choices. And sometimes even within the Church and even within the ministry. So, in this particular case here some individuals, it may be a matter of binding and loosening because of convenience, because of certain things that are needed at a

particular point in time in a particular place. Others, or sometimes perhaps more than we grasp, all moved by God's spirit. But that's another matter.

What does matter the most is that we're in unity and harmony with God. Because, you see, if something is bound and loosed on earth, in the respect of how things are organized... When Mr. Armstrong made decisions at headquarters about how the Church was to function in specific areas, *they were bound on earth*. In essence, meaning that whatever was said and however it was done, if individuals did not submit and yield to that process... that it was the same as God having done it. That's what he's saying. It's the same as God having directly done it and you better be doing it because it's toward God, because God backs it up. That's what it means to be bound or to be loosed in certain things that are changed.

I think of the thing that went back and forth on makeup - loosed, bound, and then loosed, required for a time and then not required. Because the decision was not an easy one because it was leading to see something that we didn't grasp at that time spiritually, on a spiritual plane. And so because of the physical was still so much a part of our thinking in different things, because it was being reflected in how people were living spiritually toward one another. That was really the bigger issue, but we weren't able to see that fully yet. Anyway, the point being is if individuals supported it because it was said, "This is the way it is," or "This has changed and this is the way it is now," on something of that nature, not being a matter of the Sabbath or a Holy Day, a change in those things (except for Pentecost, that was a change, okay) that we'd better be yielded to it, we'd better do it that way and support it. Otherwise, we were fighting against it and we're really fighting against God. Because this is how God is working at that particular time. He's working with the Church in the sense of giving opportunity or leeway, if you will, oftentimes, for choices and decisions that have to be made as far as an organizational type of structure. So Mr. Armstrong did that. I have done that. I do that. And I know how God works and I think we do too, you see.

So, again, awesome things that we can learn in very physical things that happen in our life that try us as to whether we're in unity and harmony in backing God, in the sense of standing firm for what God is doing and how God does it.

So again, **Timothy**, it says, **If Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he works the work of the Lord, as also I do.** See? So he's making it very clear here, "I'm doing a work. Timothy is being sent to you and he has a work to do, and receive him - not just as the minister he is, but also as being sent from me - as being sent from God." That's what it's all about. That's the attitude of mind and that's what Paul is discussing here.

He says, **Let no man, therefore, despise him.** In other words, treat him with contempt, look down upon him, judge him because of his age. That's *exactly* what he's telling them. "Don't judge him because of his age or because you knew him in the past," or whatever, "and you're judging him from things that happened years ago or maybe when he was younger, or whatever it might be. Those things are immaterial." And sometimes within the Body we don't forgive each other, or one another

for their past or things they did in the past. And we judge them. I've heard things like this. "They should never have been made a minister because..." I think of a few years back when went around and around with some of these things and certain ones were judging some of these things and talking about it openly with others in the body right here - about certain ones that they disagreed with, the fact that they were being ordained. Amazing! Whew! Didn't realize what they were doing. They're speaking against God and they don't even realize it. I fear those things. I'll tell you, to speak against what God's doing, how God is doing it, is not a small thing to God, I'll tell you. And they're not with us today. They didn't last that long in that respect.

Let no man despise him, treat him with contempt, look down upon him, judge him, you know, from a physical way. Because that's how we tend to judge. ...**but conduct him forth in peace**. This really is a word that carries on in the Greek language having to do with, "Let him do his job. Be there. Help him, whatever, conduct him. When he's all said and done and he leaves, let it be in a manner of peace and none of these things taking place that so often do take place within Church areas." Especially... It's like in a business. There is no difference. Human nature is human nature. Someone comes along and someone's going to be the boss now and the old boss is gone. And he comes in, or she comes in - see - and totally changes everything around. "I want it done this way. Yeah, you may have done it that way in the past, but now we're going to do it this way." "Well, you don't understand. It won't work better. We used to do it this way. Blah, blah, blah, blah." No, you want the job, you want to do it the way... You better do it the way they want it done. If you want it to work together in unity and harmony do it the way they want it done. I don't care if everything is different. Unless there is sin involved, do it the way they ask it to be done. And that's the way it is in a lot of changes that take place - unless there is sin involved, you have one obligation, to do it the way they said do it. Even in a job! In order to hold your job, in order to be a good employee we have to do it the way the boss says to do it. Even if he does something foolish! If it's not sin and you're not involved in sin, do it that way. You may have to work twice as hard to get it done - so be it. Do the best job you can do. But so often people judge and criticize and condemn because they know a better way. And very rarely do they really know a better way, but human nature is. Because the boss is usually there for a reason, and there's a reason why he got where he is, or she got where she is.

So much more so in the Church, especially if we see God in the picture. Because there's a certain way God desires to have done at a certain time or a certain way or to have certain influence or certain examples or certain things He's going to teach through that process. And if we're yielded to that process... And I'm just speaking openly. This is the way things happen. And so in times past, you know, someone new come along - here Timothy comes along in the area - Paul knew exactly what the response is going to be like. Why? How did he know that? Because he's had to address this many times before. Paul knew what it was going to be like to send a young guy in who is to teach the congregation there, who is to tell the congregation, "This is how we're going to do it. This is how we function. This is what Paul desires to be done here." And anyone that fought against it, they fought against God and they didn't even know it. And there were people there who fought against Timothy.

And they fought against God because they didn't get it. They didn't understand how God's spirit works.

The same thing happens to this day. The same thing still happens to this day. If it be young people, younger people, I know, because I've talked to some. Talked to several. Not just one or two or three, several who've have these experiences in their life.

...but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. Anyway... As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren, but his will was not at all to come at this time. But he will come when he has a more convenient time. Well, may have been some problems. I don't know. I don't know what was going on there. Paul didn't pull any punches. Paul always spoke things pretty straight forward, let the chips fall where they may. The way this is stated, for me as a pastor, as a minister, I would say there must have been a little bit of a problem here somewhere. Because if I'm asked to go somewhere, I'm going. "When? What time? How? How do you want it done? Where?" I want to do it the right way, okay. "No, it's not convenient right now. I've got 'this' to take care of. I've got 'that' to take care of."

Oooooo. Oh, okay, go do it. Okay. Hey, I've seen those things over and over happen again as well.

You know, I'm just going to share some things with you. Just because so much of my training has been how not to do things, that I've seen happen and take place, of things I've had to experience as a minister in trying to work with certain situations. And it got to a point where working with some of the deacons and elders in a particular Church area (we were there for seven years), the first three years went by really well. Then familiarity began to creep in. Human nature began to creep in. Power struggles began to creep in. Individuals who knew I knew too much about their lives began to creep in. People who were alcoholics and had certain problems in their life and didn't want those things to be known, basically, after a time, and thought probably that I held it against them. Or sexual perverts in the sense of practices in some cases of lesbianism, homosexuality, or whatever you want to call it.

And when you know certain things about some people they don't do well with it because they feel like maybe you're holding certain things against them. Certain other things having to do with government, or whatever it might be. But anyway, I could go on and on and on. Just telling you what it's like. God calls people from all facets of life, and He calls us with the opportunity to change what we were, to become something new. It doesn't matter what it is.

I won't go that far to tell the extent of some sins in people's lives. I don't think there is a thing you could mention that I have not experienced with other people, in counselling with them, of things they have done. Nothing! So what can you think of in your mind? It's happened. And God has given people the opportunity to change, just like He will during the Millennium, and just like He will in the Great White Throne. And those who have not committed the unpardonable sin, no matter what they have done in life, they can be forgiven. Murder, killing others? Absolutely.

I think of individuals who have gone to war and murdered. Because they came to understand that. Who deal with certain problems in their life in their mind. Vietnam, villages were blown up, little children were killed, and they were behind it and they were part of it. And some of them knew they did some of the very things that were a part of the destruction that followed. And then having to live with that the rest of their life. And coming into God's Church and having to deal with that is not a small thing, how to cope with that, how to deal with that. Being able to forgive one's self sometimes is one of the hardest things a human being has to do, forgiving what you were in the past. And yet God says to do that. Go on with your life; become something new. What an awesome opportunity that God gives to human beings, to become something new.

And why on earth did I start going into some of this? Anyway. But I think of that particular area and some of the things that were taking place, as I was talking about. I was thinking about some of the ways that human beings sometimes get and how they judge, how we judge and begin to think toward one another. But you can get to know too much about one another. Familiarity does breed contempt. And some of the things that are spoken of here, just as was being mentioned here about Timothy and being young and what can happen to ministers in certain areas and things that you battle with and how, whether or not things are done in a right way. But I forgot the train of thought where I was going to go with some of this.

But as human beings we can go through all kinds of things and deal with all kinds of things in human life. And everything that can be imaginable has happened within God's Church when it comes to the ministry. And those things generally bring everything to the surface, as to whether or not someone is in unity with God or not in unity with God - in harmony with God or not in harmony with God. And if we fight against the way God establishes us and works with us, then we really fight against God. If we try to raise ourselves up and receive greater acknowledgement or greater... if it becomes a matter of pride in what we're doing and how we're serving, if that becomes an issue then God can't use that either. So there are all kinds of things that we can learn from some of this. And I'll come back to a bit of some of these examples of what I was talking about later.

But continuing on here. All of what Paul had to say here had to do because of his experiences of what he went through and what had happened in the Church. And what he was warning the Church there in Corinth, don't treat Timothy in a certain way, but treat him in a *different* way. "Work with him the right way, the way God says to do it." And as it said here, **conduct him forth in peace**, and then talking about Apollos.

So again here, let's turn over to 1 Thessalonians and notice more about some of the things Paul had to say. But if we understand some of these verses, of what it was going through in Corinthians.... I do want to go back and read a couple of these verses. I want to finish this. I didn't finish that. It says, [1 Corinthians 16:13]—**Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men**, in other words, be men of courage. And so that example was being used there as a matter of courage. That's what it's talking about, being courageous. It's like what expression we often use about being strong and of good courage. But, **be strong**. In other words, stand fast in what is true. Make sure that God is first. **Let**

all things be done with charity (agape). And so again, the point of this was being all of this is in the context of how the ministry is treated. "How Timothy is going to be treated by you, how he's going to be received by you, reflects this anyway in your life, so do it the right way," he's encouraging them.

1 Thessalonians 5. In the last sermon here we went through the first eight verses of this, but I want to continue on from there. But let's go back and review these first eight verses here of something that... This was in the sermon series about to be watchful, not last Sabbath's sermon. But we covered 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8, and I want to read those again quickly, but then we'll go on in the following verses that we didn't cover at that time. It says, **But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail, or in other words, labor pain upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.** So again, this ongoing thing in life of how we're to always be alert, always to be on guard spiritually.

You are the children of light, and the children of day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Unless we're living wrong. Unless we're practicing wrong on a continuing basis without fighting, without seeking to conquer and overcome. Doesn't mean there aren't going to be certain battles you're going to have in your life all of your life because of what our past is and because of who we are and what we are as far as a physical human being. But the ability to fight against those things, the ability to bring those things under control doesn't mean you'll never slip or never fall. And it's not an excuse either. But the reality is that it's a matter of a constant fight.

Every time you repent of wrong, every time you cry out to God for the wrong thought or wrong thinking that comes into the human mind you're agreeing with God that God is right. You're growing in character. You're in the fight. You're in the battle. And we all have baggage in human life. It's the way we are as human beings. There's not one person listening today, there's not one person listening out here today, that doesn't have baggage in their life, that doesn't have hang-ups and problems and sin. No one's perfect; not a soul. Not a single soul. But we're to become refined. That's a refining process. Sometimes we carry too much of that with us, though, without repenting.

So, **Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch**, in other words, it's, again, be sober, be sober minded, just like we've been going through. And it talks about those that sleep, sleep in the night and those who are drunk are drunk in the night because they're not living what they should be. So again, **let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love** (agape); **and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.** So we're discussed all these things in this series.

Verse 9—Going on from where we left off in that particular series: For God has not appointed us to wrath (anger), **but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.** So again, a matter of being in unity and harmony with God's spirit. **Wherfore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another even as**

also you do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you and are over you in the Lord. Now, the reality is that we don't have much of that in the sense of someone who is over someone in the Lord. Ordination does not mean that someone is over someone else. It should be seen as a matter of service. My job, in a sense, in that respect, is very much over, under Christ over the Body on earth in working to help the Body grow, in teaching the Body as God's spirit works to lead and guide and direct. And so are those at times then who are asked to contribute to help out in that part. And in the past three years there's been a lot of that contribution that God has used for that purpose in a very powerful way. God's spirit at work.

And however, or however, sometimes because of our past and because of past history, if we're not careful, and because the way human nature is it tends to esteem certain things that are not be esteemed in the sense of being elevated, in the sense of an individual. The job, perhaps, but we're all the same. We are! We're all of the Body of Christ. And that's the way we should see one another. But so often we don't.

And so I think of associate elders, they're primarily in training. They're not over anyone in the Lord at all. Neither are elders. They're not over anyone in the Lord unless they're given a specific function or job to go out and do something at a particular point in time. If it's a matter of anointing and someone is sick, then they're looking to God for someone who is in the capacity of that ordination who can anoint them before God for that purpose as God uses anointing. It's to direct (if we understand about anointing), it's a matter of directing people to God and how God works. It's about Him working through the ministry. That's what it's about. It's about government. We're looking to God. We're looking to God for help in healing though, because of the things that Jesus Christ went through for us and has given us an added opportunity of something we can go before God and ask Him for help in. Doesn't mean we're going to receive it.

Sometimes it's better that we go through certain things. God could have kept me from having two different heart attacks. He could open up my artery right now, the one that's 100% blocked. He's not doing it. Okay? But He's keeping me alive. I know where my life is. I'm not worried about it one iota. And I'm also not worried if I were to conk over tomorrow. God's Church goes on. Some of you might struggle. God's Church. Well, how does that fit into prophecy? I'll guarantee you right now if I were - just to tell you - what's been written has already been written and the work has been done. Think about that. Chew on that. If that's God's choice, God's purpose, so be it. God's in charge. Who is anyone to argue with God? "Well, you can't do it that way. It doesn't fit in prophecy." Well, who determines what prophecy is? Who gave it in the first place? Who is the one to tell us what it means? Because that is something I have learned in a mighty way over the last many years, that when God gives prophecy He is not constrained to one little specific way that it has to be fulfilled. And yet we tend to think that way because we think there's only one way to do something. Well, there's many ways.

Just like I've mentioned in the construction of a huge building, a huge high rise. You may have the basic outline of the whole thing, but how everything inside of it is done - and that can be done much

later on if you want to, and a lot of times is because of different companies come along and they want certain things installed in certain ways. But the outside of it? And this is far more complicated when you come to God's way of life and what He does prophetically.

Come to see in awesome ways that there are so many ways that God can fulfill prophetic things and His word absolutely true. It's just like a simple change - the meaning of a day. God can have it mean in a specific purpose a thousand years (which He has), a hundred years (which He has), a single day (which He has), a specific one year (as He has), or fifty days (which He has). But God's the one that tells us. Awesome!

So, we always have much to learn, don't we, in how God does things? It's a matter of God's choice and God's way and how God does it.

You know what, we're at a point here where I want to go ahead and cut off here. I'll come back and pick this up next week. But again, we'll pick it up here going on into what it has to say here in 1 Thessalonians, because there's really a lot more to go into and how God works with us and how God's spirit worked with us and how He's working within the ministry to accomplish these things, to teach us a lot of lessons that we need to learn, of things we can still change.

So next week we'll pick up *Part 3*.