

Well, the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day are now over and we're all getting back into our normal routines of life. And one individual mentioned before, like to have stayed at the Feast longer. Doesn't work that way. We all know that. We come back in the world. We get back into our job routines, school routines, whatever it is, and welcome back to the world. We were able to have an opportunity to picture some of those things that are going to be in the Millennium when there is a peace and a unity and a oneness on the earth - one religion, one way of life, one government that God gives to all mankind that we so look forward to. And we recognize in the world, the way it is today, we have battles and trials and as soon as you get back you're faced with a lot of those things again. And the cheeriness of the world around you - it isn't too cheery. It's really messed up out there and so needs cleaned up. And you think, "How much longer could some of this stuff go on just as it were?" You realize more and more the need for God's intervention in the world in everything, because things are topsy-turvy. And probably have some sermons coming up about some of that in time here, just how volatile things really are.

And so we're back and we're back into a flow of life, and hopefully inspired, moved, and motivated by the sermons we heard at the Feast so we can move forward and be encouraged to move forward. Which brings us back to the title of the sermon today. We're going to get back into this sermon series that we started before the fall Holy Day season began, and this is a follow-up of that now. We had Part 3 before the Feast and now we're going to have *Part 4 of Be Encouraged*. That last Sabbath that we went through *Part 3* before the Feast we engaged in a very long preview of *Part 1* and some of the things in *Part 2*. And as I thought about some of that, just going back and reviewing some of it, continually just adding to what was given, to me it's exciting, to recognize a focus that God is giving us in this particular section of the book because there is a tremendous focus that God wants us to have, an understanding that He wants us to have, of what it is we've gone through as a Church and where we are right now. That's inspiring. It's exciting, and it's encouraging. And we should be encouraged, even as we talked a little bit at the Feast. But we are going to continue on now with this sermon series.

So again, God has been showing us before we entered this fall Holy Day season, and now that it's over, that we are to be encouraged, each of us, by having gone through all that we have and being where we are and that we're still here! That's a big thing! It really is! That we're still here. If you're still here that is *awesome!* It really is! *Mighty!* Because the vast majority who have had opportunity, that you've had opportunity to fellowship with in different areas, they're not around any longer. You have to *fight* for this way of life.

And the fact that you have done so, that you're here, means that you have been fighting. There are things that you have entered into. And sometimes we don't realize, don't grasp the intensity

that's involved in doing that and the fact that just sticking to a matter, sticking to God and what God has given to us and the opportunities there and pushing forward. I remember an evangelist.... Well, he wasn't an evangelist at the time, but a pastor that we had in Houston area when we were there back in the late '70's, who was brought into headquarters later on to serve as the head of the accounting department. I can't think of what it was called, the treasurer of the Church. Duh! (I hope my brain gets more engaged as we go along here.) The treasurer of the work. But Mr. Armstrong brought him in, a man he felt he could trust. But he used the example of putting one foot in front of the other and just plodding forward like you're going through mud. You just keep plodding forward. You pick up one foot and you put it in front of you and you just *keep moving forward*, plodding forward. I love that example and it's stuck with me over the years because that's what it feels like sometimes. It feels like sometimes you're kind of walking in mud, when your boots are sticking in the mud and you have to pull up one foot in order to get it in front of you, and then the next one. And you just keep doing that one after the other. And it is a battle all the way to the end. It's not easy. It wasn't meant to be easy. This is how we grow. This is how we're able to mature. And that's exciting when you recognize the process of what we're going through and what it takes to become transformed.

And in so many ways it goes back to how much do we really grasp? How much do we really want this? How much do you *want* what God's placed before you? And the more you treasure it, the more you want it, that reflects a great deal to God of a spirit and a mind and an attitude and a thinking that He desires to work with, especially since your calling, obviously, and a continuation of that and a transformation that's taking place. That's a beautiful thing. Truly is.

So in the first three sermons of this series we've been reminded of what God told the Israelites just before they were to enter the physical promised land. And this is found in the book of Deuteronomy, a word which means "second law." That's what the word literally means. It's a second reminder, a second giving of the law. God reminded them, as they were leaving, what He'd given them right after they came in, what He gave to them on Mount Sinai and all the other laws that were given and Israel was charged with.

So here you have this period of time. They came in the promised land. They were brought to Mount Sinai, God gave them the law, and then all this period of time that they went through the wilderness and stayed in various areas, that God worked with them before He brought them to the area of Jericho. And as God's getting ready now to go ahead and bring them on into the promised land He's reminding them of these things and reminding them of what He gave to them, reminding them of what it means if you obey, and what it means if you disobey, the blessings and cursings of life, as we heard even during the Feast. That curses of life are a result of sin. They're just there. And they build upon each other and just get worse and worse and worse.

And yet if we begin as God's calls us to bring things into check, reverse that course, go through a process of repentance, our mind begins to be changed, we can begin to be blessed. God begins blessing us and working with us and helping us to see things that we couldn't see before and our

life gets richer and better and we're able to have a vision of what this fight is all about and a desire for all of mankind, not just ourselves or our immediate family, but for everyone in the Church, as an example. And that begins to spread and we finally begin to see God's people in a different light, as we've been hearing for so many months now - of a way we must see each other! We have come to a point in time where God wants us to "see" each other in a light as how He looks upon us. *We are HIS* children. We belong to Him! And if we don't treat each other as His children then it's not going to go real well for us. We're going to have some extra suffering of things in life we have to go through because that's a part of the curses. That's a part of the things that God can't bless us in that and sometimes even has to pull back the reins in our life and help us to learn some things that we have got to learn! Shake us up, whatever it takes! And so *bring it on*, whatever it is that we need to do to change, if we need to change. And if we're embracing that change and recognizing that's a way to see each other and look upon each other - to not just embrace each other once in a while as we do when we see each other after a week, or as we do at the Feast and people are so excited because it's been so long since they've seen one another, this embrace that's there, *heartfelt* to the core of one's being, of an excitement and a joy to see each other. That's the way it should always be!

But sometimes within our own groups, wherever we are, sometimes familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes familiarity can do bad things, depending on our thinking, and we can begin to judge each other in a wrong way. We can begin to treat each other in a wrong way. I have some things I have to deal with now in a particular region because even during the Feast of Tabernacles people weren't able to love each other.

Now, thankfully this is becoming less and less. But it's still there! And where it's there it's going to change so quickly or people are gone. That's the choice - change immediately, get a hold of your spirit, get a hold of your wrong attitude, get a hold of your wrong thinking. We can't treat each other wrong. We have to have a mind that embraces each other. God's children, to embrace one another, to love one another. Not to talk down. Not to look down. Not to treat each other in any harsh way whatsoever but to be excited that we're in this together, to have feelings of compassion and mercy upon one another, to recognize we're all going through different things and we've gone through a lot to get to this point. We've all gone through a lot to get to this point! And we should embrace that and embrace that in one another, to realize nobody's journey has been easy. Everybody's battle has been difficult. But the fact that you keep battling, the fact that we keep coming together and that we want to conquer these things and that we want to be a family that's in unity and oneness?

Well, what an awesome blessing God is affording us and giving us such a thing. We should be encouraged by that. We should be encouraged by what we have, that we have one another and that we're still moving forward...we're still moving forward because so many have gone by the wayside. So many have gone by the wayside. I'm weary of that. That just wears me out. Truly

does. It just...it's a hard thing. It's a difficult thing to see that happen in people's lives, and for people just to give up or to turn bitter, to turn angry.

Because so often the way human beings deal with things, to deal with guilt, to deal with those things of the human mind that just aren't right - yet they have to justify it in some way what they're doing and the choices they make. And so often then it's finding something that they feel that they're justified in and they entrench themselves. And then they turn bitter about it and angry about it and the spirit just changes more and more and eats them up inside like a cancer. It does! That's the way it works!

And I am so thankful that we've come as far as we have, that we are where we are today. Because I see a Church that is stronger than I've ever seen it, in that respect, spiritually, and closer together, and in greater unity than ever before. That doesn't mean we're perfect. It doesn't mean we don't have battles. It doesn't mean we don't have trials. Because we do. But we're at a plateau that's getting better and better. And the more refined - we yield ourselves to the process of refining in our own lives, that we want to change - we should be encouraged by that if you look at the changes that you're addressing in your life.

What is your number 1 and number 2, and number 3? Do you feel like you're getting a better hold on those things? I feel encouraged by that when I see some of those things and realize.... You know, it's exciting when you become so focused on certain things that you can begin to deal with it better, God gives you strength and help to deal. That doesn't mean you're still not going to have some difficult moments because you've got human nature. We all do.

So, again, how far has God brought you? Do you "see" how far you've come? Do you "see" where you are? Do you "see" what your battles are? If you see what your battles are you are exceedingly blessed. How blessed can you be? Do you grasp what it is if we can see where our major battles in life are? People in the world don't see their battles. They don't care. They don't *want* to see it! They don't want to look inward. They don't want to change! We do! We *do*! We want to change. We don't want to be the same.

Thinking yesterday of how much I *loathe* human nature. I *loathe* the selfishness of human nature! And that's what we have to do. We have to *loathe*, if you will, what selfishness is like, what it does, because it's an evil! That's why God made us this way, so that we could come to loathe selfishness. And that begins by being able to see in a spiritual mirror ourselves. We're *filled* with it, our minds, the way we are as human beings!

I am so thankful that someday, not too far away, this all gets changed. I don't have to have this physical body anymore. I don't have to have this physical thinking, or a mind that goes with it. Because as long as you have a physical body, the mind that's there, there is always going to be that selfishness. In time, God's going to give us a different mind, a mind that's being worked with, that's been transformed. He'll give us the body and the life where we don't have that physical part

anymore that pulls at us, pulls us and causes us to fight and to resist God. I hope we see that and I hope we're seeing that more and more. What a blessing to be able to do that, to be able to see such things. *Be encouraged by that!* That is not a negative thing. That is a positive thing!

Individuals who give up, individuals who let down, individuals who become lethargic, individuals who don't try to change, individuals who continue to have conflict with others and aren't trying to change, that has to be so horribly frustrating in life! And it's hard to be encouraged in God's way if you can't see growth, if you're not able to "see" what you are and what has to be changed.

So it was giving of the second law. **Deuteronomy 31:6—Be strong and of good courage**, those things that come from God. You can't make them up. Now, this is being done somewhat, obviously, on a physical plane, but for us it's a spiritual one and the message is for us, in that respect, for God's people on a spiritual plane. Going into a promised land - we're almost there. After 6,000 years we're almost there! Don't just be encouraged; be excited by that! Be strong and of good courage for everything that God has done for you, blessed you to see, blessed you to conquer and overcome. Just the fact you can see certain things and that you're able to repent is a blessing. It's an awesome blessing.

...and do not fear, nor be afraid of them, whatever that "them" is. And for us, whatever it is around us in life, whether it be a demonic world, whether it be society, whether it be things in the world, things that are coming - it doesn't matter - things of selfishness. You're fighting the fight, you're wanting to change, and God gives the power to do that. He'll help you to become stronger.

...for the Eternal your God, He it is who goes with you. And for us, what does that mean? He is actually *in* us! How incredible is that, that God Almighty, the Great God of the universe is actually dwelling in the Church! He's dwelling in our lives. There is that essence and that power of God the Father and Jesus Christ that's actually in us, that we have that fellowship with God. And so we go before God in prayer and we share things with God on a regular basis and recognize that we have it in and through Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of sin, and we're always reminded of sin and reminded of what he's done for us so we can have that access and that way to the Holiest of Holies. Nothing to fear, just continue to move forward.

And so, **He it is that goes with you; He will not fail you.** Now, we can fail God. He will *never* fail us! ...nor forsake you. If we continue to repent, if we continue to fight, if we continue to yield to the process of what God is doing in our life God's there! God's always there! He's called us to succeed. He's called us to live on into a new age! Some on a spiritual plateau, some on a physical plateau with God's spirit dwelling in them, the foundation, the beginning of the Church in the Millennium that continues on.

And so as we've read this particular verse now in all these sermons, this verse has been followed by mentioning the importance of the title of the chapter we're focusing on in this series, being

Chapter 6, *If You Will Listen, God Will Listen*. And that's really what it boils down to even for the Church. It's always been that way. And God is now beginning to go through a process of preparing the world, has been for some time now, and hopefully and prayerfully sharpening - if people respond - sharpening the potential for people to be able to listen when the time comes. And it's still going to depend on people. What are they going to do when those times come upon them? And if, if they will begin to listen when those things begin to befall them, then God will listen to them. His desire is to bring many into a new age, many who have been humbled, many who will stop, stop doing what they're doing, stop being so destructive in life, to come to a point where they say, "What's going to save us? How are we going to be saved?"

I'll tell you what. I can't help but think about it, but seen some different articles and some have showed me at the Feast and some different things coming out, it is *amazing* what's going on out here, how this world more and more is starting to look at extraterrestrial life, the potential, the belief that there are beings out there! And you think about what's going to take place and you know, even in the western world, there are going to be a lot of them who believe the same thing! Because it's so hard to believe that this could be the return of Jesus Christ! And yet they're going to be brought to a point of humility where there are going to be people who begin to say, to acknowledge such things, begin to address some of the things in their life they need to address.

So again, *If You Will Listen, God Will Listen*. And so, since we've been away from this series for a few weeks, it would be good to do a little quick review... I'm going to take back that word "quick," because I know how this goes sometimes. We've done some reviews already and how well did that go? Well, it just shows - it shows me in a very big way, because I know how God works - and it's inspiring to me because it shows me that God really wants us to "see" this. He wants us to get this! He wants us to digest this! He wants us to grasp and understand where we are and what He is doing in our lives and why He has done it this way. That's something that has been so inspiring to me over the last three, four years now, and especially the last two and a half, probably, is to come to a point in time to see... well, just to have God show us why He's doing many of the things He does. Why He's made some of the decisions and letting us see some of the details. To me, that's exciting! He's sharing that. And how many times have you ever wanted to share something with others, the things you're doing and things that are exciting to you in life. And really a lot of things in family are that way. Husbands and wives, we share things of what we're doing, plans we have together. And the excitement of a lot of that, and what draws us closer together so often is the thing of sharing it. It's the sharing - sharing of ideas, sharing of plans, sharing of a focus, and entering into that together. And that's *exactly* what God has been doing with us in an intensified way right now because of where we are and what we're getting ready for. We live in the most awesome times! And we should be so encouraged, so excited by all that.

So, again, we're going to make an attempt here to have a quick review of some of the things we've gone through and where we left off - try to catch up to where we left off in *Part 3*.

So from the section from the heading, “The Factor in Determining Christ's Return: The Church,” it's important that we grasp the context of what that section is all about, again. It's about the change that was made concerning whether Christ would return on Pentecost of 2012 or Pentecost of 2019. And as stated before (I'm just going to read certain parts here as we go along, certain sections of that)... As was stated before the exceedingly important point to note is contained in that first paragraph.

There is **one factor** in the midst of this that would determine which date God would send His Son to rule in His Kingdom. That factor was the Church—His Church.

Now, if you *really* grasp that, if you're really able to *sink your teeth into that statement alone* there is *so much* that you will come to embrace and understand about God that is so incredible, and should be *so awesomely encouraging* to every one of us. No matter what size we are, and especially at the end of the age, it's about us! And the reality is God has had such great love. When He calls someone, He's able to share that love. He's not able to share it with the world. He's not able to share it with the vast majority. The past 6,000 years will be able to be shared in the Great White Throne. He wasn't able to share His love with mankind because mankind wouldn't listen, mankind couldn't receive it, and so He didn't give it. It's not their time. But those whom God called, who were drawn by His holy spirit, He could begin to have a relationship with.

I think of Abraham. I think of Melchizedek. I think of different stories we can go through and read in time and this relationship of how God worked in different ways at different times, as it talks about in Hebrews, as we mentioned during the Feast in Chapter 1 there in Hebrews. And God has worked with different ones and there is this desire to share and to teach. As He draws certain ones, especially in the first 4,000 years, most of those that He worked with at that particular time are those who have been worked with to be able to be placed into areas of His Kingdom, His Government in very awesome important places of structure. And so He spent this time with them, worked with them, molded and fashioned on an individual basis. With us He works with a body through the Church, through Jesus Christ, the Body of Christ, and in a different manner, and able to work with more. But there in the first 4,000 years, what an incredible thing, those whom He worked with - King David. King David with all of his battles, with all of his weaknesses, yet God molded and fashioned him and brought him along, worked with him, gave him of His spirit, gave all of those - all of them had access. All of them, just as you and I do, had the impregnation of the holy spirit because they *believed* in the Messiah, they believed God's word about one who would be sent. They didn't understand it all. They *believed* that God was going to save them and deliver them through a Messiah.

And so different ones were given different levels of understanding, but they believed that. And because of that, even before it happened, they were able to receive what you and I received *after* Christ's coming. And there are scriptures that speak of those things in a very powerful way. They lived by faith. And they were granted those things in life because of that confidence, because of that belief. Sometimes in the Church it's been hard for individuals to understand, but

God gave them a begettal. He gave them His holy spirit. They had opportunity to change and grow. And there were very few of them in the first 4,000 years. Beautiful! Beautiful.

And He *loved* them! Loved them mightily! David is spoken of as "a man after My Own heart." What an incredible thing, the Great God of the universe saying of King David, "Look at him," from a young man had that spirit and attitude - as a teenager! It doesn't have to wait until your thirty and forty and fifty! I think of the disciples when Jesus Christ went out to work with them. He didn't go out and call sixty year olds, eighty year olds, forty year... Because they had a job to do as soon as Jesus Christ was going to die and be resurrected! And he called individuals that could continue on for a good space of time who had that power and that basis and that focus in their minds because they experienced something with the Passover, with Jesus Christ. How incredible is that?! And he worked with young people, young men, young people, late twenties, early thirties. Look how old Jesus Christ was - very young, and so were the disciples.

God is not limited by what He can give and mold and fashion in people because of age. I think of... I think of even going back... That's why when I see what God is doing with some of the young people today I get so encouraged. I truly do! Because if you have eyes to see it's right in front of us. That's why they're here. And opportunities to be a part of a foundation that continues on in the future. And I see things that God is doing and giving opportunities. Not only that, but I see it in young, young people. If they will just hold on to what God has afforded them and God is offering them - pre-teenage and teenage - what an awesome thing in life.

I think of people like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Daniel, who were in their teens, and when in their early teens they had an attitude and spirit that was unique and God was drawing them and working with them even then. And so in their teen years, to be able to stand up like they did, to stand up for the Great God of the universe! Sometimes even us, we have battles in that, standing tall and firm for God's way of life! And we are to do that! What else can we do? I don't care what the world thinks! I don't care where they put me. It's not over with yet! And I understand that. But this is God's way of life and we stand up for God. God is first and foremost in our life. And how much are we willing to give? How far are we willing to go?

I saw an individual being interviewed, who, I understand some of his feelings, though like so many leaders in the world, over in the Middle East, being interviewed by someone here in the United States on a TV program. And you feel for people in the world. They're so fouled up. The world is so fouled up. Governments are so fouled up. And his perspective in part I grasp, though it's misguided, as it is with world leaders anyway because God's not in the picture, and he made comments about.... Because there are people who want him removed and want to overthrow him and have worked very hard to do that, and yet he was very forthright about something about governing, and his desire was for his country and for his people. And I believe he believes that though it's not.... I don't want to get into all that because it's a messed up mess. Anyway, he made a comment about a belief and a willingness that he was going to do that above everything else, even if it meant his death, he's removed and put to death. He says, "If a person isn't willing to do

that in his position, they shouldn't be there." And I thought, well, you know, there's a lot said right there because in a lot of ways it's true in life. If you truly believe something with all of your being, with all of your might, then....

And this way of life is very much like that. How far? When we were baptized did we truly give our lives to God? Is that in our minds? That whatever is required, so be it? If it's to the glory of God Almighty, if it's to His honor, if it's to His purpose, so be it! And that's the kind of mind we have to develop. That's the kind of mind we should have.

So Shadrach, and Meshach, and Abednego, they weren't going to kneel down to some *dumb idol* that everybody else was going to pay homage to and worship. And they said they weren't going to do it! "We know, oh king, you have the power to put us in that oven. You have the power to take our life. And whether God hear us, or whether He doesn't," in other words, "deliver us, it's His choice. We're not going to bow down to that idol!" And how do you think it made a leader like that feel? You know, pride, and vanity, all the other things there; he was so enraged he wanted to see them cooked! "Stoke the fire ten times..." was it seven or ten times? I don't remember then. Seven? Thank you. I don't know how you could measure that, but it's supposed to be seven times more. They didn't have thermostats. I don't know how you put one in that oven. But anyway, seven times more. So whatever it was inside there, whatever.... And you think, how incredible! And so they were willing to walk to their death, as teenagers, because of what they believed! They were so convicted of the Great God! And then there were four in the midst of the fire. Changed the attitude of the king. Not totally, but on a physical plane, probably scared the tar out of him. You know, shook him up a little bit. And so, "There is a Great God, indeed, that delivered you. Not the smell of smoke on your body, on your clothing, nothing singed." Incredible!

And yet when we're baptized we tell God Almighty, "I am Yours. I no longer belong to myself." And yet everyone who leaves, everyone who goes by the wayside, there are things they're not willing to give up, not alone one's life for what you believe in. And I'm not saying you have to do that, that God's going to require that. But if He does, so be it. You understand what I'm saying.

A lot of people have gone through a lot to be a part of the 144,000. A lot of people have died because of their beliefs, to become a part of the 144,000. And they have embraced it with all of their being "because they looked for a city whose builder and maker was God!" God Almighty! All Powerful, Almighty God. And if your life is in God's hands - alive or dead you're in good hands. What other place would you want to be? Well, that's by choice from the beginning of baptism. From the moment of baptism! So we have to make choices in our life and what that means.

And so we have individuals that go by the wayside and they're not willing to give up things. They're not willing to give up certain things about their own selfishness, the way they think things should be done, how they think other things... whatever it is they think about others that they think others should be doing in life and how others should act. And in reality they need to look at a big, big mirror and say, "How should I act? What am I doing wrong? What do I need to change?"

It's so easy to look at others. And so a lack of willingness to look at self and fight the battle, let alone go very much farther in life.

So I think of all the people who make choices and go by the wayside and I think of what they gave up. You read about a bowl of porridge, and you think, "Are people that way? Can people be that way? Can people with God's spirit be that way?" Yes, they can. I've seen it all! I've seen everything imaginable happen in the environs of God's Church.

So you're here. You're fighting. And your fight is far from over. There's a lot more to be done. The greatest part of what we've been called to at this end-time is in front of us. It's ahead of us yet. So if you think you've been down a long road - yes, you have - and we have a little farther to go. But some of the greatest of things that many of you are going to have to face are still in the future - a reliance on God, a trust in God.

So again here, awesome what it says here about God's Church, "There is one factor...." And this isn't going to be quick; it doesn't look like. So if we keep going through this sermon after sermon and God just keeps giving more and more because I keep focusing on different things, so be it. Whatever God is giving we're going to go through it.

There is **one factor** in the midst of all this that would determine which date God would send His Son to rule in His Kingdom. That factor was the Church—His Church.

And so we've been thinking about different people through time whom God has loved. How much? How much do you think God loved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? How much do you think God loved Daniel, who at a very young age stood up to the leaders who had captured them, and told them, basically, in essence, didn't care how far it went, "There are certain things we will eat and there are certain things we're not going to eat." Even on a physical plane! "We're just not going to do it because God is first." Because they're going to obey God and what they'd been taught and what they'd been given. What does that do to, what does it do to a parent when a child responds in such a powerful, positive way to things you're teaching and guiding and directing? See? And aren't going through that process of resisting as often happens because of human nature, but when they yield to the process. It's an awesome experience, isn't it? How much more with the Great God of the universe when we stand firm that God is first? That we love God above ourselves, above self?

And so individuals who still won't change, who still won't fight against self, who still find fault in others, who still get in arguments with others, who can raise their voice at others, who can be judgmental to others, who can hurt others - what is it you're not willing to give up? What is it? You're on your way out! You're on your way out. I have no other choices. We are going to become a very cleansed body. We're going to become a stronger, stronger body. We truly are. And if we have ears to hear and eyes to see, that's what we want. We each want to become stronger. We all want to become stronger. Isn't that what it said? "Be strong." "Become strong." That's really what He's

saying, "Become stronger." And for God at this end-time, that's what He's telling us, "Become stronger than what you are."

So the things we have to do in order to accomplish that - it's a matter of listening and what we hear and what we incorporate and what we cry out to God for. "Father, I can't do it! *Please* help me to do it. *Please* help me to change. *Please* help me to keep focused on certain things that I *hate* and want to change in my life! I don't want to be this way! I don't want to do those things! I don't want to mistreat anyone. I want to love them more and more. I want to have Your love within me. I don't want to be selfish. I don't want to hold on to selfishness. I don't want to talk about God's people." That blows my mind! People are willing to blab about, talk about, demean God's people in front of other of God's people, to tear them down. I don't get it. I do, but it's so wrong. And yet people are still willing to do that. It's got to change.

And so God loves His Church with a kind of love that we cannot fully grasp. And so it's a matter of whether or not we can "see" that and whether or not we can seek to grow in that and understand God loves His Church so much so that conditions in the world - the world - can be altered and changed because of that love and because of that purpose. That's what He wants us to see, how important His Family is. How important is His Family to *us*? So do we "see" how important His Family really is to Him? Are we beginning to "see" that more and more, how important each one of us is to God? Because we are! That's why on the first day of the Feast He wanted me to pass long, in every respect, in whatever words (which I can't use very well), He loves you. I felt so blessed to even be able to pass that along! Now, I can preach about it and I can talk about it and be inspired and God gives me that, but to have it directed directly in a very unique way as I knew that it was given to me to give, that's another matter. What an awesome blessing! And what an awesome thing to receive if we can receive it, to understand the love God has for each and every one of us. And He wants us to have a measure and a growing measure of that kind of love toward each other in the Body. Not to find fault with each other. Look in the mirror and realize, "I want others to be patient with me, to be tolerant of my weaknesses," to whatever it is that we want, that we desire from others, that we should want to have that toward them, to be forgiving, not to hold things against anyone. Just, the past is gone - let it go! We make mistakes sometimes; we carry those penalties with us for a time. That's life. Those things happen. But each one of us, we let it go because God will deal with that. God will take care of those things in life and work with us and have mercy upon us, a kind of mercy that we should learn to have on each other. I can't cry out enough about that.

So again, how much do we grasp this, that because of the Church, because of something that God desires to do within His Church that hasn't been done, that we get to experience something that has not taken place in times past to help give us something, that especially for those of you who are going to continue on.... Because, see, there are already some who are already sealed - that's set. And we have opportunity to continue to grow and change and become stronger and stronger. But for others who live into a new age, to be able to come to a point where you're far, far

stronger, far more equipped to receive things that you're going to have potential to receive in the future? Well, incredible! And that because of that the time, conditions can be changed? Awesome!

Anyway, that quote was followed by another quote on page 245 (now that you have the book) where it says:

The exact state of the Church could not be foreknown due to all the suffering it would experience after the Apostasy and all the spiritual tribulation that would follow. The necessary strength the Church would need to have and where people would be spiritually by mid-2008 would determine how things could proceed forward in the fulfillment of end-time prophetic events. The true condition of the Church would be the final deciding factor for when God would send His Son to reign on earth. This would **reveal** whether things were to proceed to a conclusion by Pentecost of 2012 or whether seven more years could be granted to mankind and to the Church that had been scattered.

How many of you were here mid-2008? There were those who weren't. 2008. What an awesome opportunity and blessing to have lived through that. I think of having lived through the Apostasy; things that I have learned, things that God has granted that I wouldn't have within me if I hadn't gone through that. Hard? Difficult? Yes. So we go through difficult things but that's what makes us. We go through hard things. We go through some difficult things, but *that's what makes us who we are* with the kind of character, to have the kind of opportunities that we can have in the future - now and in the future that God is granting to us because of what's made, what's created, what's transformed within our thinking as a result of going through some of those very difficult things in life.

And then from a few sentences from some of the paragraphs that followed this:

After the Apostasy in the Church, God began to prepare and work with the remnant from the scattering that followed that destructive event. This remnant Church would continue up to the coming of Jesus Christ, and God predetermined that His Son could return on either Pentecost of 2012 or Pentecost of 2019.

...Although it was known that the Church would survive and continue all the way up to the coming of Christ...

I hope we understand that in different ways as well. It could be exceedingly small. It could be just made up of those who are sealed and still continue to the coming of Jesus Christ. But God's purpose is that there be more. God's purpose is that there be others who have opportunity to continue on in physical life in the Church. And so there are things there that cannot be determined before as to what would happen as a result of the Apostasy and things that would follow and things that the Church would go through and the upheavals and the battles that we have experienced. Just like we have gone through some of the history during the Feast - over and

over and over again in the Church - not too long ago in Cincinnati. How long? Ripples. Battles. Shake-ups. Always there in front of us. So again:

Although it was known that the Church would survive and continue all the way up until the coming of Christ it could not be known what spiritual level of strength it would be at by mid-2008. This was the point in time that was necessary to make a final judgment as to when Christ should return.

And God's sharing that with us. He didn't have to share this with us. He didn't have to give this to us at this time. We could continue to move forward in faith in the things that we do know and the truths that we do understand. He didn't have to reveal to us *why* some of these things took place. I find it exciting the more He shares with us of why He's made certain judgments, and so forth, and how the world is judged differently now. To me, that's exciting. And it's all for a purpose, too, so there are so many things we learn from that.

Then on page 246, a full paragraph. It says:

God had judged and established a first date of 2012 for Christ's coming, and He would make certain that the Church would survive spiritually to that point in time.

Not just those who are sealed and a part of the 144,000 but others who will continue on; His desire for them to continue on.

For the Church to be able to experience what it would have to endure beyond that time, its spiritual state could not be judged until mid-2008.

There are things we go through. There are things that God molds and fashions in people. Just as He brought Abraham through a measure of time in life, and would have continued to work with Him, but there was a point in time that was a deciding factor where God made a judgment. God makes judgments about our growth and where we are. And He said, "Now I know you, Abraham. Now I know you." What an awesome thing when we come to that point of judgment in time. And so God was working with him to mold and fashion him in a specific area. But we always have choices to make along the way of what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. Going on:

That date would be the optimum time whereby such a judgment could be made as to whether the Church could accomplish what would be required of it in order to fulfill a much greater work that would lead up to Pentecost of 2019.

Because, you see, in many respects compared to the two they're not really comparable as to a work that would be done because what was written in the book was it and judgment was already made. And as far as a continuing work? It's not the same. This is totally different, "If You Will Listen, God Will Listen." There were certain judgment was going to happen and certain things of destruction that God had already determined people were worthy of, nations were worthy of.

What does that mean to you? What does that mean to you? What does that mean to you that so much of that has changed? I don't know if it's possible - I believe that God is working with it - but I think of Nineveh. And I think, what an awesome thing if a whole nation, and maybe others would follow suit. Now, there's going to be a lot of destruction before they could come to make that decision. They're going to experience a lot of destruction because of what takes place. But if they can come to a point before more destruction and repent? What an incredible thing! How much do we desire that? Mercy, that people be able to respond to?

Then a few more paragraphs farther down on that page:

Since the Apostasy, God's Church had gone through great upheaval and unrest. These were such turbulent times that unless one had experienced it, one cannot begin to fully appreciate it or understand the depth of what individuals in the Church had gone through and were continuing to go through. That which the Church was experiencing was on a spiritual plane of great **spiritual tribulation**.

And it didn't stop. Because the spiritual tribulation is something that continued on after the Apostasy all the way, and still is going on! There's still tribulation, spiritual tribulation that goes on. It's just different now than what it was back then, the greatest of the destruction that continue on for some time there and the Church that was affected by it. But we've still been going through it, it's just that God has been making us stronger and stronger as a body for those who continue to fight and move forward and are willing to sacrifice whatever it takes - especially in self.

It is something that can only be grasped fully by actual experience. God has declared that no one in His Church has ever experienced anything of such magnitude before and that no one will ever experience anything like it again.

Do we grasp what that means? That there has *never been a time* - for those of you who have gone through this period of time, *especially* from the Apostasy up to 2008 and came to that moment in time, there has never been a time like it in the Church. Never! So do we grasp the potential - not only the potential but of the power of those things that could be molded and fashioned into us? Because so often the greater the trials and the hardships of life and the things we go through the more that God can mold and fashion within us, the more that God can give you, and has...and has, and is, continues to do. But we need to be able to see it, to see where we are, to see what we become.

The fact that we're still here, it's a miracle. Only made possible by the power of God Almighty. To bring a small body... It'd be easier, in many respects, as far as the human mind is concerned, if it were much larger (in human thinking). But on a spiritual plane, to be as small as we are, it's harder. It's harder! It requires a greater reliance, faith, and belief of the things that God has given to us on a spiritual plane. Because it gets to the point it doesn't matter. If you believe and

you know the truth and you know what the truths are and you hold on to those, it's not a matter of size. It's not a matter of how many. It's a matter the fact that you have it, that you've been blessed to receive it. And there's a faith in that that is strong that you're able to build upon, especially if you've gone through the Apostasy and experienced something before that's totally different.

That which the Church was experiencing was on a spiritual plane of great **spiritual tribulation**. It is something that can only be grasped fully by actual experience. God has declared that no one in His Church has ever experienced anything of such magnitude before and that no one will ever experience anything like it again.

Incredible! Then the last paragraph on page 247:

When the Church was scattered after the Apostasy, during the first prophetic period of 1260 days, it was protected from Satan just as God said it would be.

If it hadn't been not a one of us would be here.

After this period ended and into the years that followed, many of the smaller scattered groups began to fall apart and go by the wayside.

God had to build, make us stronger during that period of time. That's what He did. And finally we're caught up to the last three paragraphs of that sermon in *Part 3*, so page 248, reading that, the last three paragraphs here:

However, for God's small remnant Church, the spiritual battles and attacks were growing more powerful. During most of the time that followed the start of the remnant Church on Pentecost of 1998 (exactly 1260 days after the Apostasy), the Church had been whittled down to less than 300 baptized adults who had experienced the Apostasy.

And that number means a lot.

Over the years, many more came along and entered into that fellowship, but many also left.

That's why God has given us some things. That's why He gave us, again, on the Last Great Day the example of Gideon and what He whittled the force down to. Sent, what was it, 22,000 along, another 10,000 along? Whatever the... 30 some thousand and left 300. That's why Gideon had to have a little more than just the fleece. "What are you going to give now, God? What are we going to do? 300 people? A hundred thousand people plus out there in the field, camels that you can't count...." Anyway.

Over the years, many more came along and entered into that fellowship, but many also left. The battles were far too much for most people.

You still here? Awesome! *Awesome!* I'm encouraged by that! I'm excited by that! And I see growth. I see things in people's lives that I didn't witness during Philadelphia and I didn't witness during Laodicea. Okay? Living in spirit and in truth on a level that is incredible. Truly. Going on:

If all who had come along had stayed in that remnant fellowship, God's remnant Church would have been many times larger than what it was, but that was not to happen. It was just too much for too many.

And when it all comes down to it, it was just too many. God knows and God has a plan.

Prophetically, God has revealed that He offered over 3,000 people the potential to become part of this remnant Church. There is a great lesson in this because although a much larger group would be offered this opportunity, it didn't mean that all would choose to accept it, and they didn't.

Lessons to be learned from. God let us learn some of those things and it's helped us to learn other things. It's helped me to learn other things that I'm able to teach as well, because it's by the experience, by going through those things that God says, "This is what I've done. This is what I'm doing." When the Apostasy happened it took time for God to show and to say, "This is what has happened. This is what I've done. This is what I'm doing. The Church *has* been spewed out. The stones of the temple *have* all been cast down." And on and on it goes, okay? Going on:

This history has been needful in order to help a person come to understand why the spiritual state of the Church could not be fully known by mid-2008. The Church would have to be of a necessary spiritual strength and faith that God alone could "measure" by that time. That would determine whether the Church could be moved forward to the degree necessary in order to accomplish a far greater purpose in extending great mercy and life, both within the world and the Church that had been scattered.

God's will all along and we learn from the process and we're able to grow through the process. And we're tried in ways that people have never been... People have never had to live through this. There'd never been a time like it. Incredible! So now we're going to continue on from where we left off in Part 3.

God knew the kind of devastation that would come upon His Church once He allowed the Apostasy to occur. God knew the kind of spiritual warfare and destruction that would follow and that there would be very large casualties along the way. However, even in that which concerned a very large Church that had become scattered, God's greater plan would make it possible for most of these to be saved within another period of time—in the final 100 years beyond the Millennium.

Page 249:

God's purpose and will has always been that He be able to lead a strong remnant group within the Church through the greatest spiritual tribulation it has ever known since the Church began in 31 A.D.

Do we see that? People have gone through horrible physical things and trials and hardships in life in a different kind of world than we live in today, in a world where they saw those things around them in battles and wars and conquering's and things that took place. And then it came after the Church, and though people were more accustomed to or seeing some of those atrocities in life they experienced it. Different. Unique to them. Different. Ours has been one of spirit, one of a spiritual warfare, one that is unique to a different time at a different time in the world. Totally different. Going on:

However, God's will first and foremost was not only to lead a remnant group well beyond mid-2008 to Pentecost 2012, but it was to create within them a much stronger faith and higher level of spiritual strength that would then enable them to do a far greater work within the eleven years that would follow 2008, all the way up to Pentecost of 2019.

Now the scary part of that is that we have become much stronger and we could go much farther if God so chose. But with everything God's given, that's not the case and that's not the plan. But yet the Church is more determined that no matter what happens - and I believe this - that we would continue on regardless, because it's about God's way of life and it's about the truth that we know that God has given to us. And so we know that God is a God of great mercy and we desire with all of our being, indeed, that this be it, that this is where we are. And we have fought great battles and we'll fight more if we have to. But the reality is God's will be done. "Not my will, but Your will," as Jesus Christ said. So we have that within us, though it's even hard to say, because it's not what we want to be. And neither did Jesus Christ. But, again, we've gone through one and now we're at an incredible place in time.

I'm going to go through probably in some sermon here before too long to talk about some things in this world, things that are going on that are so incredible, that aren't even in the news in the United States. I still think about China and Russia and all the things going on there. The things that can happen so quickly, brethren, overnight, are so astounding. It's so easy to see what can happen here so quickly, so fast. And that will be in a future sermon. I know it's coming. That it's hard to grasp how volatile things are. And God is letting the world see what governments are like, that things are so out of control. The world is so upside down: governments that just continue on sometimes without even government. There are some places in the world where things have just continued on where there is no functioning government. Europe has experienced that, you know. Incredible that something can continue on. It's like some corporations. You wonder how, with some of the things that happen within them sometimes, you wonder how could it continue to exist even. But it's like something that just keeps rolling. It's like a big snowball. It just keeps rolling and nothing can stop it no matter how bad everyone is within it, no matter how corrupt it is. It just keeps rolling until it hits the bottom. And that's where we are in the world.

Above all things, it has always been God's desire that the **optimum** number of lives be saved in the end-time, both in the Church that had become scattered and in the world.

You know what? God has not forgotten all the sacrifice and all the things that people have done in times past in the Worldwide Church of God! Because they became weak over time, because of something that God knew that human beings would succumb to if He let it continue on, that after a period of time and a leadership change took place and there was no apostle in God's Church anymore and God wasn't working through anyone in that way anymore, and in time knowing what human nature would do, just as He knew what would happen in the angelic realm, He allowed something to occur within the Church. But there are a lot of people out there who have sacrificed a lot of their lifetime living God's way of life in spirit and in truth and became weak over time, less power in their life over time. And who are we but those whom God plucked out of the fire and had mercy upon. We were right there doing the same things, having had the same span of life, whatever that was since our calling (mine since 1969) of things done in service in God's Church in spirit and in truth, but began to become weak after Mr. Armstrong died. Because there wasn't an apostle around anymore and that has a very powerful effect upon the Church because that means that God does not function in the Church in the same way anymore.

It's like a measure of the power of God's spirit that's cut off and not flowing into the Body. Because there's a way that God works. And He's let us experience that so we can understand that in a much deeper way. And we have learned some of that process as well with God's mercy. And so there are a lot of people out there that God loves and hasn't forgotten what they sacrificed and what they did. Every one of us fell asleep. What makes them different from us, those of us who went through the Apostasy and were awakened? Time. Time. Only time. And sure, by becoming weaker and away farther people drift farther and farther away from what they were. They can't help it because God's spirit isn't working there. When you're asleep you're asleep and you don't know it.

And so they're just waiting for a time, whenever that time is. So some of us got shaken and wakened immediately after the Apostasy, some at different stages along the way. Some later on in 2000, 2004, 2005, 2006, whenever that time was for different ones whom God began to awaken. So what makes us different from all those who have been scattered out there who just became weak? There are differences in the sense of what people have tried to hold on to on a physical plane and some huge differences in some who went back into a Protestant world and did some of the things they have done, some by deception, many by choice. And God will deal with that in a different way.

So again: *God. Loves. His. Church.* He loves His people. And there are people out there who are scattered whom He loves. And I so look forward to the day that they have their eyes opened up, that they're awakened out of a spiritual sleep - just as when I was and just as when each of you were. Because what was it like? How long did it take to get caught up? How long did it take to shoot out ahead and everything.... "Yeah! We were all Laodicean!" That's a biggie! That's a big one

to come to, to say, "Yes, we were all Laodicean and, yes, God separated us from Himself. He spewed the Church out of His mouth!" That's big! But it's a Church He loves, people He loves, and they're not forgotten. And their growth and their sacrifice and the point of their transformation, whatever it came to that point in time, still there, just asleep, not connected to the flow of God's spirit. There is much we have to learn about how God transforms the human mind and how He works with us as human beings.

And so again, can we grasp God's love for His Church? So again, reading this paragraph:

Above all things, it has always been God's desire that the **optimum** number of lives be saved in the end-time, both in the Church that had become scattered and in the world. But such matters always come down to individual human choice, and because of that there is **no guarantee** what choice people will make. When God created the angelic realm there was no guarantee how many would choose to continue to follow Him and how many would not. Yet God knew that by creating them to have free choice and free will that the result would be that there **could be many** who ultimately would not choose Him and His ways. In time, one-third of the angels did reject God and His way of life.

That's why I think of this concept that so often existed in times past within the Church, that in time most every bit of humanity would be saved. No. No. No. No! It's free choice. And there are going to be so many. How many? There have been many already who have become set, before ever being called, in human life. Human life, in many respects, if we understand it, is on a far lower plane than the angelic realm and there is free choice of what people do with their lives, what they do with the precious mind that God has given. And He gives choice. And we do with our lives what we chose to do.

And so there are those, again, even those who are given opportunity for God's way of life that will not choose it, that will turn against it anyway. Going on:

All people have been created with the same ability of free choice and free will.

That's what God gives to everyone. And it's not God's fault that people make wrong choices. It's not God's fault in any fashion or form.

The **vast majority** of all those whom God awakened out of a spiritual sleep within the Church that was scattered were not able to endure the spiritual tribulation that the Church has experienced ever since the Apostasy. They were simply unable to stay in the fight. Some succumbed to the human weakness of pride, desire for power and/or recognition, selfishness, sexual lust, spiritual lethargy, jealousy, and/or general weariness of battle. [Just tired of fighting.] Everyone who experienced the Apostasy was in a state of being spiritually asleep before God awakened them, and those within the remnant who gave up the battle went right back to sleep again.

Yet there has always been a core of people who have remained more spiritually alert and on guard through this period. As a result, God has been able to work with them on a spiritual plane that has made them stronger in faith and in spiritual battle.

There is so much said there! That's when God can work with us. If we just stay in the fight! If we just continue to fight God will continue to work with us. And if we do that there is more He can give to us. He can make us stronger: "Be strong and of good courage!" To be encouraged. We're at a time where God has been making us stronger and now this ability to "see" what God is doing and to be encouraged by it is something we need. We need to have that *courage, encouragement* in our lives, to understand the relationship that God desires to have with us and to embrace it. That our hearts should cry out more to God in response, "Father, thank you for Your love! Thank you for Your mercy! Thank you for Your patience! Help me to live that towards your family. Help me to think that way more toward the world and those that are going to have opportunity to respond, to live into a new age." Our desire should be to all of them. Going on:

Exactly where the Church would be overall spiritually by mid-2008 remained an unknown factor throughout the years preceding this. The growth, spiritual state, and faith of the Church was not to be measured until this specific time in order to determine what might be able to yet be created within them by moving beyond 2012.

Greater opportunity to grow. *I know* my growth since 2012, of one whom I believe has been sealed a long time ago. And yet to look back over that period of time, because of the experiences I've had, I have seen things, I've been able to experience things that I would not have been able to experience otherwise. I wouldn't be where I am today, at the *level* of where I am today, with the *strength* that I have today, with a *boldness* that I have today, with a *determination* that I know God has given me to this day! I am a totally... I am a lot different than what I was before 2012 because of what I've been blessed to experience. And it wasn't a "cake-walk," for those of you who know what a "cake-walk" is. Some of these expressions I use sometimes overseas and when they translate into another language it's like, "What on earth is this expression?!" There was one I used to have after I first got married and I'd say, "Bet you dollars to donuts." I have no idea where that came from. It's something that was used in the mid-west. It wasn't until here recently I've heard it twice on TV in a couple of shows and think, "Where did those people come from?" Anyway.

Do you see that in yourself? Because of what you have gone through do you see that you're a different person? Because if you're not, something is wrong! And if you do, embrace it! Be encouraged by it! That's what God is showing you right now! Do we *grasp* what we have experienced? Do we *understand* that by the experience we're different than what we were back then? I mean, we better be! Right? We better be! And we're *here* because of that. That's why you're here, you continued battling on. Has that done something in you? Are you...? Do you see that you're different than you were in 2009 or 2010 or 2011, and especially when you heard that sermon on the Last Great Day? 2012. May. Pentecost. Then a few months later - whew! Incredible,

the things we've gone through, the things we've experienced. And I wouldn't change them for anything. I wouldn't! I wouldn't exchange them for anything.

I am who I am because of that. And you are who you are because of that. And you are here today. You are here today. Otherwise you wouldn't have the strength! Where did that strength come from? Do we understand that you can't make certain things up in your... You can't do this on your own? Do we understand this isn't by *our* might; this isn't by *our* strength that we're here? Not because of our abilities, but because we've yielded to a process that God has given to us and a desire to continue to fight. Do we see that? Are we encouraged by that? Brethren, I hope you are, because it's so awesome. It truly is.

When I look over people.... I think of visiting Lubbock, Texas, when we were out there. The one woman I've known since first started going to Salina, Kansas, probably in... had to be in 19... late 1970, possibly. Known her that long. I'm so thankful there's one person at least that's still with us to this day that I was blessed to know back then. Awesome! Inspiring! And then to see all the others and the things they've gone through - because I know their lives. Sometimes they probably wish I didn't know so much, different people in the Church. That's just the way it is. But God knows it all. He truly does. And I think of visiting them out there and having the lunch together we had and the conversation we had and I think.... and they're older and my heart goes out to them. Different ages. Eighties, early nineties, right? And fighting, moving forward. Incredible! Beautiful! Awesome! I'm so *thankful* to have been able to share life and experiences with them in God's Church. There is no other place that could be better in life. And if we see that in one another in the Church and the experiences....

What about the Feast of Tabernacles! Think of all the people you get to share life with in God's family! How *rich* is that? How *incredible* is that that we get to meet people? As soon as you meet somebody you've never known it's like you've known them for so long. There is this connection that you can't explain to others in the world. You couldn't. And yet there is a connection that you have with people. As soon as someone is drawn into the Church it doesn't take very long. There's this connection that's special. It's God's spirit. It's a beautiful thing to experience and to embrace.

So do you grasp that you're not here because of your own ability? Either that or you're the most stubborn person on this earth that I've ever met and you're just not going to go anyplace else, do anything.... But that's not the case because you couldn't do it! You're doing it because of what you believe, and you continue to plod forward. You continue to put one foot in front of the other. And does it ever feel like you're going through a field of mud? Have you ever done that? Go through mud? And you try to pull one foot out and put it in front of the other? Some of you have been in the "Mudders," whatever that's called. Is that the "Mudder?" The races? You know *exactly* what I'm talking about. Sometimes in some of those races you get in just to put one foot in front of the other and just to keep racing, just to keep running. I mean, some of those analogies that God gives us in scripture are powerful because that's what it reveals, something on a spiritual plane you've got to do. You've just got to keep going to the finish line even when you can't see it! You

just keep going! Because you know what, you know it's up there. Somewhere there's a finish line. And that's what we look for, "a city whose builder and maker is God," and it's worth the race in ways that you can't even begin to share with others. You can share it with one another in God's Church, and that's it.

So when I look out over God's people at a Feast of Tabernacles or here in Cincinnati or wherever it might be, I am encouraged. I'm inspired because I know how people are still there. Gone through some difficult things. I could stop and look at specific faces and I know the battles you have gone through, and some you don't think I know, but I know, and some you're still going through in life. Because there are things on a spiritual plane that are just spiritual. And it's a beautiful race and we do it together. Never looking down on each other. Never wanting to see any kind of harm come to one another. But on the contrary, we're ready to go to battle for each other - and whatever that means. And I am more that way today than I've ever been in my life. What are we willing to sacrifice and give for each other?

That's why we've come to a point in time in God's Church that to raise one's voice and scream at someone else in anger or out of jealousy, things that happen sometimes, they can't be at this stage in the Church. We're beyond that and God's going to see to it that we're well beyond that as we continue to go forward, that we are a closer knit family and that we have grown in our love toward each other, our desire toward each other. And so we have to ask those kinds of questions, "Is that there? How much is it there?" and, "How much are we willing to do? How much are we willing to sacrifice for each other?"

Do you pray like that? Do you pray, "Father, help me to *love Your children*. Help me to love *Your* family, each and every one, because I know in so doing I'm able to love You more." It's a spiritual thing. It's what it is. Ask God for help to be able to do that, to love one another more, to be able to be more merciful, to be more patient. How patient are we? I think of how God works with me, how He works with every one of us. We should be able to see those things. And if we see them then we'll do it toward others. It's a beautiful thing when lived. That's why we're a different Church.

And next Feast we're going to even be a stronger Church than what we... I've heard comments from different ones, some of the ministry, evangelists and so forth talking about what they see in the Church that they've not seen before, a closeness. And there is that which is spiritual, brethren, you can't hide. And that doesn't mean we don't have battles and we don't have problems. As long as we're in this human body we're going to have them, but where we are toward each other and how we think toward one another, how we treat one another, that goes a long, long way.

I think back. I think back, sad to say, at different ones who go by the wayside and some who've had jealousies and envyings and have been policing and harsh to God's people and judgmental and that not in the body anymore, what does it do for the Body? Helps the Body to be a lot closer. It

helps the Body to go on and grow. It helps the Body to love each other more. It helps the Body to get obstacles out of the way that hurt the potential for greater growth and unity and oneness. And so though it happens it's the way it needs to be.

I get a little sidetracked on some of these stories but they're needful to grasp the overall flow of what God's showing us in the Church and what we need to see in one another and what He's doing in our lives, to understand why we're here and how we're able to keep fighting and keep moving forward. And we're doing it all together. And if you grasp the importance of that, the sharing we're able to have with one another, that should be even a stronger bond. And get self out of the way! That's what we've got to do; we've got to get self out of the way. Going on:

The Determining Test for The Church

Throughout time, there are things that God has done in the lives of those whom He has called that put them to the test in order to reveal what is actually deep down inside their being [always comes to this]—in the innermost part of their mind. These tests serve as a kind of trigger to force a person to address and act upon a decisive issue in their life at that specific moment in time.

That's awesome! If you grasp that and understand that, that is an incredible thing, because that's what happens in life! There are things that are going to happen that are going to try us. What choice and decision are we going to make when that comes upon us? And sometimes they're brought upon us. Sometimes they're brought upon the Church. And then it's up to us as to how we respond and what choice we make right then and there. That's why I hope we got the message about those two elders that I brought into a meeting and told them, "You have no more time. This is it. This is what I'm doing. This is what I'm going to do now and the Church is going to be looking to you to see what *you* do." It'd have been.... The effect, if they had made the right choice and decision, would have been so helpful to others. But they didn't do that. And so they were tried right then and there. It came to them. And they made choices right then and there, because you know what? They didn't know where they were fully until that moment in time. They had not made a conscientious choice in their mind yet. There were things they were going through, there were things they were seeing happen in the Church, but they really hadn't come to a point in time, and what it revealed was what was in them and where they were as far as a choice they would make for their life. And those are incredible moments in time. They really are. And so we've had a lot of those at different times and we're tried in them. And if we yield to them the right way we grow, we become stronger. "Be strong." "Become strong." "Become stronger." It's because of all these things we go through. "Be encouraged." "Be of great courage." Where does it come from? What does that do for you? What does that mean to be of strong courage or great courage? What does that mean? Think about it. It has to do with an attitude of mind and where you're going and how you're going to go about it.

These tests serve as a kind of trigger to force a person to address and act upon a decisive issue in their life at that specific moment in time. Such a test will reveal openly where a person truly stands spiritually in their relationship toward God and His Church.

And they are the only ones who can make that at that moment in time.

The actual degree of strength or weakness an individual exhibits when they are confronted with such a thing will be made manifest by their response, and it is measurable by God.

There are trials and tests that can clearly reveal the strength or weakness within the spirit of a person and of where a person truly is spiritually. These things can reveal the strength of conviction, faith, and level of commitment a person has toward God. However, these may reveal such great weakness that it becomes obvious that they will not be able to continue to endure further testing or trials. There is no “sitting on the fence” in a relationship with God.

We are either growing and fighting and continuing to grow and continuing to yield to God, or we're not.

There is no ability to continue in a relationship with God if a person is only lukewarm in spirit, and definitely not if a person is not in agreement.

And that's what God's been doing in the Church, to refine those things. And we're going through a long period of time here of refining, individually in our own lives that we have the choice to respond to, and in some cases where that's not, then in the Body, because the Body is being strengthened to become stronger and of greater courage.

And so again here, this example here. I'm going to read this and then we'll stop here:

A good example of such testing is where God allowed Abraham to believe he should offer up his son, Isaac, in sacrifice. Yet it should be understood that human sacrifice is against God's will and ways, but Abraham did not know that at this point in his life. Nevertheless, God let Abraham believe this was a requirement.

That's incredible! To see progressive revelation through time of things that God revealed. He didn't know! He didn't know yet. We can look back at that and say, "Well, why not?" Well, because it hadn't been revealed yet! He was being judged by what God had given him to that that moment in time. It goes on here:

Abraham was so strong in his convictions toward God and believed that God was filled with such mercy and righteousness that He would resurrect Isaac if needed in order to keep His promise concerning Isaac's future.

He believed it. That's what he believed. That's what God revealed. It revealed the depth of that belief and conviction he had toward what God had shown him to this point in time. And he was

willing to live by it, whatever was required. So there are things that God doesn't always reveal to us, does He? That's the way it's been through time because it tries us and tests us.

This story tells how God stopped Abraham from killing his own son and provided him with an animal standing nearby so that it could be offered instead. Abraham was put to the test in order to clearly reveal (manifest) what was truly in the deepest part of his being concerning his faith, conviction, and dedication to God.

It wasn't just enough to prepare and plan it. It was when in his mind he was ready to do it and he was going to follow through with it. And when God saw that in him He stopped him. And that's when He said, "Now *I know you*." That's powerful! That's the moment in which it was manifested, something incredible. And we've all gone through incredible things to mold and fashion us.

This event was established to help teach the world of the kind of love God has for mankind because He was willing to sacrifice His Son to save mankind.

So we'll stop there. Beautiful, awesome, inspiring what God gives to us, what He continues to give to us, what He shares with us.