

This sermon for today is *Part 5* of the series entitled, *Be Encouraged*. In this series God has been showing us that we should be encouraged after all the battles that we have gone through, and that each of us are still here and have the opportunity that we have in order to continue into the final stages of all that is yet to occur before Jesus Christ returns. And we should be encouraged by that because a lot of people have gone by the wayside. And that's the way it's been for a long, long time. We've gone through a lot of things in God's Church.

I think of the lecture series I'm preparing for the ministerial meeting coming up in a couple of weeks. And we have Garth coming over from New Zealand and Wayne from Australia, and Chris. And then, of course, Willem, Audra, and Jeremy all coming in, as well as all the senior elders here in the U.S. and my wife and I. It's the first one we've had since 2011 where everyone was able to come in together like that. And so as I've been preparing some of that been very sobered by going back and looking at some of the statistics of things that have happened throughout a long period of time here and seeing the different ministers who have gone by the wayside, considering the numbers of people in the Church who continue to go by the wayside, and I think back at the time of Mr. Armstrong and seeing some of those ripples take place, as we're getting ready to talk about even here in what is covered in this section of the book, and it is a very sobering thing. But since the Apostasy far more obviously, and the things that we've gone through are on an incredible scale of a magnitude of a story flow that will be in history and in time that is quite astounding.

And so many, so many have gone by the wayside. Several since the Feast as well, several more in different areas. By several I mean probably six or seven. That's far too many people. Either disfellowshipped or suspended from services for a period of time. Those are difficult things to go through. But we're at a time now that we are either in the temple or we're not. And if people are dragging their feet and doing things they shouldn't be doing God is taking care of that. He's bringing everything to the surface. And you don't want to be in those shoes. It's one thing if things go through a process, we're able to go through things within the Church and they come out and we're able to deal with them as time goes along, but when God gets more directly involved, please understand He will bring to light the things that need to be brought to light. And that's the period of time we're in. And that's the kind of soberness we need to have, to be sobered, to be watchful, to be alert and to recognize what human nature can do.

A lot of people that I never would have dreamed of that have gone by the wayside over the last 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 years is quite amazing; individuals that I just wouldn't have thought it of. And that should be sobering. Because you have to be on guard all the time. You have to be watchful all the time. Those scriptures that talk about being watchful, when Christ said to be alert, to be

watchful, to be on guard spiritually, are more pertinent now than at any other time in our lives, as small as we are proportionally and the things that are taking place.

That's always been an admonition to God's people, but especially now as we're drawing closer and closer to the very end, and because of the pulls of this world, because of technology and those things there are pulls upon people's lives, there are pressures in people's lives in a manner, in a way that never existed in God's Church in the past 2,000 years! In the last 20 and 30 years that has changed dramatically! And it's had an incredible impact on God's people because it's powerful, what we're dealing with out there in this world. And there is a lot of pressure and a lot of stress in society in the world. And you see this more and more. Incredible what's taking place out there before our very eyes.

So again, the fact that you're here, the message from God is be encouraged and keep fighting. Keep fighting! Because you have to fight this all the way to the end and you can't do it halfway. We still have a few... still have a few that are kind of doing it halfway. Brethren, we have *got* to be *in God's Church*, in the Body of Christ, living our lives *in* the Father and the Son on a spiritual plane and them in us. And if we continue in sin, if we're not *genuine* to the *core* of our being God will bring those things to the surface. This is a time we must be genuine, we must be true, we must be worshipping God in spirit and in truth. And those weaknesses that we have in our life and the baggage we've been dragging along, it has to stop. We have to get a hold of those things, get a grip on those things in our life and fight like we've never fought! We're in the final stretch.

Just like in any kind of race - and I know that those of you who've been in races, you understand even more so, in some respects, than some do because that's a unique experience. When you're in any kind of race, long or short, I don't care, but the longer some of them are the more this is driven home, because at that end, the end part there - and there is more in you than what you realize sometime you can put out a little bit more, you can drive yourself. You have to pace yourself at certain times before that - but at the end you're really putting more into it, in a lot of cases, than along the way, because it's hard, it's hard. Your mind fights against you, the things you go against, the things you're dealing with. And so is our life on a spiritual plane.

And the spirit world out there? Whew! It is stirred up. I hope we're recognizing that. I hope you see those things. There's a pressure. There is that which is around us sometimes, unusual, different, not normal, and things get stirred up, and you have to be on guard. You have to be watchful and realize there they go again. There is a battle going on around us, there's something taking place and you have to fight that fight and recognize what's taking place and deal with it accordingly. Ignore them. Go on with your life. Recognize the life and the power and the strength you have in God Almighty. He's the one that brings us through those things and protects and takes care of His people.

Again, so important to be encouraged. But in being encouraged to understand, too, that you're being truthful and faithful and you're striving to stay in the battle and you're truly, truly, truly

fighting for this way of life; you want it! You have got to want it with all of your being. And so some who have been suspended, I hope they're able to come back, and I feel that some will. Others, I don't know! Are there more? I believe there are. We're not fully cleansed yet. Some are not doing what they need to be doing. Some are not battling like they should be. And I know that's true. I hate to see that. I hate to see individuals, for whatever reasons.... This is not a free ride. This is not something that's owed to us. It's something we must desire with all of our being, be convicted of it and cry out to God to deliver us, to strengthen us, to help to continue to go forward and not to take anything for granted, not to become lukewarm.

So if your spirit and your attitude is you want this way of life and you know that you're fighting for it and you desire to fight for it, be encouraged! If you're not, I don't know what you can be encouraged by! If you're dragging your feet, if you're out there halfway in the temple or... I don't know. I don't understand some of that sometimes. I do and I don't. It's just not grasping what is in front of us and what we have opportunity for if we're not throwing ourselves into this way of life with all of our being. And God comes first! God's way of life comes first. God's Church comes first in our life. Everything else is secondary in life, it truly is. Where are our priorities? Are we crying out to God? Is this our family? Is this our family that we embrace and understand this is God's Family? So how we treat God's family is going to be reflected in what we really believe. That we won't be harsh. That we won't be finding fault and digging at other people and doing things to hurt other people. We're past that time. That kind of time, God is not allowing in the body. It either goes by the wayside and we get a hold of our lives and embrace one another, in that respect, on a spiritual plane, love one another, or we don't.

And we're just there - I keep repeating it - just like those two elders I sat down in that meeting in Toledo, Ohio, and told them after the Apostasy, "The Church is going to look to you now as to what choices you make. And I expect you to follow this way of life and follow the things we've continued to be taught by Mr. Armstrong, and to support me, in that respect, as the pastor in this area. And Mr. Tkach is going to tell you the opposite, in the sense he wants you to follow him. And you have to make a choice: Which way are you going to follow?" And they got offended because I was just too hard on them. Because I told them, "Now is the time." They didn't have the luxury of deciding some other time because the battle was right there in the forefront. And sure enough, the Church was looking to them. And sure enough the vast majority of the Church went by the wayside. Incredible! Could they had an effect upon it? Yeah, they could have, by the things they said, by the things they passed on to others to help them, to encourage them to hold on a little bit longer, to rethink some of these things, to go to God and ask for help and guidance and not get swallowed up in this but to be on guard and remember the things that brought us into this way of life in the first place. They could have had a positive effect. Whether it would have lasted or not would have depended upon the people that made the choices and the decisions.

Oh, the battles we've been through! But *we're still here*. How blessed are we? How blessed are you to *still* be here? That's an encouraging thing.

So I'm going to repeat a few things that I've mentioned in all four sermons before this that need to be repeated, that need to be stated before we jump ahead to where we left off in the last sermon.

So again, we were reminded about what God told the Israelites just before they were to enter the physical promised land. It's in the book of Deuteronomy in the second giving of the law.

Deuteronomy 31:6. You don't need to turn there, we've been there every sermon, but I just want to repeat it again. **Be strong!** That strength, that life, that power comes from God Almighty. That is a kind of strength that we can't work up on our own. Now, we can make choices and decisions, "I want to fight for this!" but God promises you that this is what He'll give to you and continue to bring you through if you fight for it, if you want it, if you cry out to God Almighty for it and say, "*You are my strength. You are my high tower. You are my fortress. You are my life and my power, my Petra,*" and rely on God Almighty, He'll bring you through it. He'll give you the strength you need. Because it's not a strength you can work up. It has to come from God.

And so again, He said, **Be strong and of good courage!** To be encouraged! If we're truthful before God, if we're right before God, walking before Him in spirit and in truth and repenting of the things we need to repent of - and that means to really be trying, striving to change and grow and working on those points that I've mentioned, one, two, and three, and all the rest behind it. But there are big ones in the front that have to be dealt with the most. And if we're dealing with those more directly, more fully the rest will begin to fall into place as well. Because your focus is so keen on dealing with the bigger things God will help you to deal with the smaller things as well as they come along in the refining that takes place there.

And so again, be encouraged, an encouragement that comes from God by being true and faithful. But if someone isn't true and faithful and if they're dragging their feet and they're living in a lethargic state and not stirred up out here, not doing things they should be doing, not even taking care of their own lives on a physical plane like they should be, not stirred up enough to get the big picture, to *get behind this thing!* You know?! That's what God tells us. We have that opportunity to be behind this! That means work! Working! You know, I just don't understand that, when people aren't working when they have the ability to. Now, if there are certain things you can't do, health or whatever, that's another matter, but man oh man, if we have the ability to do something we better be doing it on a physical plane. If we're not doing things on a physical plane how on *earth* can we do things on a spiritual plane?

I'm crying out because I see those things happening and I realize if there is not a quick change there are some going by the wayside - more. Every Feast of Tabernacles - and here we are just barely past it, had to deal with several situations already. Incredible! And there are more to deal with if people don't listen, if they don't get the picture of where we are, of what we're going through, and to take it serious.

We live in awesomely serious times! To understand what God has placed before us? I mean, how much do we *really believe* that we see a world headed towards WWII? I don't care if it doesn't happen until the beginning of 2019 - which I hope and pray is the case, and see why there would be wisdom in not doing it until then. But I don't care if it goes on to 2020 or 2021. It's coming! It's in front of us! If there's more to be learned, if there's more to do, that's up to God Almighty. We serve God Almighty. We are His children. We follow God Almighty in whatever direction, whatever He gives us, whatever He molds and fashions within our lives. That's an awesome thing to understand.

Anyway, **Be strong and of good courage, and do not fear.** So again, it's dependent upon us, our attitude, our thinking, whether we're striving to worship God in spirit and in truth, or this walking around out in the courtyard like we're in the Church, and we're not really doing what we should be doing, we don't really hunger and thirst like we should be, we're not putting into it like... There's work in this! There is work you have to put into....

Prayer doesn't just happen! It doesn't just magically take place in your life! You've got to decide you're going to do it. You've got to be moved and motivated that you *want* to do it, to draw closer to God. You need His strength. You need His life.

Anyway, **Be strong and of good courage, and do not fear, nor be afraid of them,** whatever the "them" is around us in this world. ...**for the Eternal your God, He it is who goes with you.** That's His promise. It's that big "if" though. If we do our part, brethren. If we desire it. If we want it. If we're listening. **He will not fail you nor forsake you.** The only thing that can go wrong is if we fail God, if we forsake, if we fight against, if we resist, if we want to do our own thing, get pulled off in some other physical things out here, whatever it might be that's different from what God says we should be living. Or we're just too lazy. Can't be lazy and in God's Church. We've got to be moved and motivated. Things don't just happen. You've got to work for it.

You've got to *work* to make your marriage work and successful. You've got to *work* to make your family life successful. You've got to *work* to raise up your children so that they love God and love the Church and love the ministry in God's Church, and love this way of life. You've got to work at those kinds of things, they don't just happen! You have to *teach* them! You know?! You have to *teach* them about things about God, read Bible Stories to them, or whatever it is, at a young age. Get them excited and inspired about God's way of life and the things God is teaching and giving to us as a people.

I'm blown over sometimes when I realize some aren't doing that as parents, teaching their children certain things. Children don't know diddly squat. They come to services and they think they're going to receive it by osmosis or something. No, they don't. What do you do during the rest of the week? It doesn't happen that way. It takes work.

And so, do we work for God's way of life? Do we *strive* for God's way of life? That's what we have to answer. I'm crying out, brethren, because of where we are and what I see some not doing. And if we go down to a hundred, if we go down to fifty, so be it. I don't believe that's going to happen, but I'm just saying, so be it. I'd rather be at that than to have the baggage that's pulling the rest of the Church behind, or hurting the Church. Because there are things that hurt the Church. There are examples that hurt God's Church. And to bring new people along at some point in time here? I look forward to the time when people in the past, in Worldwide, and their eyes are open. Because all God has to do is give His spirit and open their mind to awaken them from a spiritual sleep. Only God can do that. He did it to me; and all of you who went through the Apostasy, He did it for you. Some at different stages. But God had to do it otherwise we'd all still be asleep like everyone else out there. We're no better. God Almighty had a purpose. God Almighty had a plan. And we're blessed to be a part of that plan. All the rest of you have been blessed to come along since that time, to be a part, to share with a remnant at the end of an age and what God is doing at the end of an age. How blessed are you?

So we've got to want it. I can't give it. I can cry out. I can do whatever, but you, you've got to grab a hold of it and you've got to desire it with all of your being and you have to *work* for it. You have to put work into it, effort into it. God's way of life doesn't just happen in your life because you come to Sabbath services and you hear a sermon once a week. Doesn't work that way. That's the way the world is. They don't even do that anymore, you know, when they go off to their services on a Saturday or Sunday - most obviously on a Sunday - and listen. And if you go past 15 minutes you're going to start losing people so you've got to make it more interesting. You've got to have all these kinds of bands and everything else. You've got to have all these different kinds of activities that people can be involved in, and build a gymnasium, or whatever it is, in a part of your building there, a swimming pool. "Let's have a swimming pool, too. Let's get whatever it takes. Let's get the youth involved. Let's get the parents more involved in different activities during the week. Let's get everybody..." That's what they do. They get people involved. They give them jobs almost immediately, things to be involved in, things to do, and then they're a part of the, whatever, mega-church, you know.

That's why I get a little tickled when I think about if you want to get people as a part, you want to teach about the Sabbath, you want to teach about the Holy Days, you want to teach about an Apostasy. And that's going to attract a lot of people who are in the splinter groups, and so forth, isn't it? Incredible! God Almighty does it, and God Almighty is the one that's going to awaken people. And we need to be where we need to be when that begins to happen. Because they need help. They need encouragement. But some of them are going to be able to make *fast* changes. It's going to blow your mind... blow your mind. Because it'll be genuine and true and through the power of God's spirit because He's awakened them and they're able to come to deal with and learn things that they will be so far ahead of when it was that they went to sleep that it's going to boggle their mind and be a powerful witness to them of the power of Almighty God and His love and His mercy.

So again, **Be strong and of good courage, and do not fear nor be afraid of them. For the Eternal your God, He it is who goes with you. He will not fail you, nor forsaken you.** So again, it's been mentioned as we went along here, mentioning this every time here in every sermon as we've been covering the title, talking about as well, the title of the 6th Chapter here, "If You Will Listen, God Will Listen." And that's a very powerful message not just to the world. It's for us now. It's going to be for the world later on because they don't even have it yet. It's not even going out there yet. We're not even going to send it out there yet. We're not going to advertise. We're not going to do diddly right now. We're putting a full stop on everything until God reveals, "Now is the time!" And we're not there. We're not even close yet, which is encouraging too. That means things are going to be held off for a time, thank God. We're still going to have internet. We're still going to have electricity. We're still going to have all the things that we're accustomed to for some time yet. That's why I've told, said over and over again, I have great confidence we're going to have another Feast. And I believe a Feast after that as well. That ought to be encouraging, inspiring!

I'll tell you something else. As I look at this world right now, if I were to look at it with all that I know, even the things I see in the news, my mind is *there is no way on earth we can have WWII* before 2019! Absolutely no way! I believe that. But I also know that I serve an almighty and powerful God, and His time, if it's His time and He molds and fashions things in a certain way, they will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye as far as events in this world are concerned. It'll happen so quickly, things will turn so quickly on a dime. One day. One day is all that it takes.

If I were to look at the world right now the way it is and seeing the time that certain things have to take place, of what we would think physically as far as the human mind is concerned, although knowing that things are happening in China and Russia, and with the U.S., WWII doesn't look like it's on our doorstep. And things cannot happen if we were to look at it on a physical plane. But we're not dealing on a physical plane. The Great and Almighty God has a plan and a purpose. And whatever that is, for whenever it is He will bring things to a point in time and allow certain things to take place when it's time and not before. But when it is time, it'll happen quickly, it'll happen powerfully. When those Trumpets begin to be fulfilled it will not be a small thing, and this whole world is going to change overnight. It only takes, as I was saying, one day and this whole world can be changed. One day. *One* day. And I hope that day is quite a ways off, candidly. And everyone had better feel the same, because what you're going to go through after that is going to be very difficult, very, very difficult.

If we will listen, God will listen. So that's to us right now. It'll be to the world later on. So that's why we're not doing anything as far as the book is concerned right now. We're not going to do anything as far as the book is concerned until certain events take place, and only then. I don't care if that's a year from now or two years from now. And then we'll throw the kitchen sink— is that the right word?—at it. The right expression? Anyway, God's given us a good reserve, more than we had before. And when the time comes we're going to be able to do a lot and help so

many in this world. And there has to be a short window there. It can't even be that long for whatever the purpose is because there has to be a period of time where the internet is going to still be up. And so those things have to exist for a period of time.

So how much time God gives the world? How much times God gives this nation? I don't know. It's going to be shorter for this nation than most of the others, obviously, because this is the one that is dealt with first as far as prophecy is concerned. But things can still be taking place in other parts of the world even if we don't have the capacity for it here in this country. Because that's the scenario that's obvious and can easily take place and still give several more months for others in the world to have opportunity to hear and to listen to God and to begin making some changes or responding to what they see happening in the world.

So we live in incredible times and we should be just that sobered as well, and again, *want this way of life*, want God and His way of life with all of our being, with all of our being; that God is first, that His way of life is first to us and that we treasure it. And the more you treasure it, the more you will fight for it, the more you will work for it. But it's an individual conviction.

So again, it also bears stating again, what's been repeated over and over concerning what is referenced, again, in the 6th Chapter that's under the heading here then, **The Factor in Determining Christ's Return: The Church.**

So we're picking up, again, the flow that we started to get into. So I want to read this. So important. It's a statement about the change that was made concerning whether Christ would return on Pentecost 2012 or Pentecost 2019. And it's truly important, so important what is stated in that first paragraph.

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. The factor was the Church—His Church.

Now, I am encouraged by that. I am inspired by that. Because it brings home the reality and the truth of something we should know deeply inside of our being anyway - that it's about the Church. It's about the people whom God calls. Whoever it is in life, that's where God's focus is. It isn't on the rest of the world yet, most of it. That will not be the focus until the Great White Throne. Even now! Most of what's out there will not be until the Great White Throne. Others will have opportunity for that during the Millennium. And so God's focus and God's love, God's power is at work - not in the world, but in the Church. And so that's first and foremost to God. That ought to be encouraging to people, inspiring to people if we understand that. The love, the mercy, the *desire* that God has.

You know, when David said what he did, "When I look into the heavens and consider," in essence, the stars and everything that God had created, "what is man that You're mindful of him?" That wasn't just about... We can talk about the entire plan of God, but if you want to look at it at any

segments of time, at that moment in time it was about David. It was what God was doing in David by the power of His holy spirit. Because God was giving him great power of His holy spirit, things to write in the book of Psalms, things that he was... that was a matter of what was in his mind and what he knew to that point in time. Awesome, what God gave to him! A prophet of God, known as a king but recognized in scripture as a great prophet, if you will, of God indeed.

And so again, you continue to go through time. And for us right now what is God mindful of? That part of His plan is about those whom He calls. It's about the Church. And for the last 2,000 years, at that moment in time, it's been about the Church and the people in it all through that. Because that's what He's been working with, "What is man that You're mindful of him?" So who is it that He's working with? The Church! Sometimes I don't think we have that vision to grasp where God's focus is and how powerful that is, the opportunity that we have that God gives to us, affords to us, that He, the Almighty God would call *us*, would call me, would call you to have opportunity at *this* time! That's the kind of treasure, the kind of way, the vision that we need to have with all of our being, and to embrace it and to ever be so thankful to God. Not to try to understand it, because you can't. Just to be thankful for whatever His purpose is, for whatever He's doing and however He's molding and fashioning us and giving us such an opportunity.

So again, now rather than reviewing all that was covered in the last sermon let's just jump ahead to what was covered toward the end of the last sermon, which, again, was *Part 4* of this series. Page 250. We're going to pick it up there in the section, again, "The Determining Test for The Church." So we will get through a little bit more today, hopefully.

Throughout time, there are things that God has done in the lives....

We're going through this because it gives a context of something that we continue to focus on. We did a little bit last time and now we're focusing on it again before we proceed forward, because this is awesome. Really, it's so incredible to understand how God works and how He's worked with the Church and the things He's revealed as a part of that process. He's sharing with us more and more to understand what He's been doing and why. He didn't have to give us this. He didn't have to show us these things, but He has.

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—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 why I've been referring to those two elders. A specific moment in time, "And what are you going to do? Are you going to stand firm for God and God's way of life and the truth that He called you to from the very beginning? Or are you going to turn against Him now? Are you going to *reject* those things that you saw and you understood and that brought you into His Church in the first place?" Choices. Choices. Choices. And so God's Church has always been tried and tested. And it

isn't that God doesn't know fully where we are, but He's going to manifest it. There are things that happen that manifest these things, sometimes for learning within the Church. Sometimes for the individuals that these things happen to, for others that see it happen to them. For those that it happens to, when they respond and learn from it and grow they'll hold on to those moments in time as being so meaningful. Just as we're getting ready to read about some of those moments that happened in Worldwide that I embraced early on, that helped me for the next time to embrace it even stronger! And individuals have the opportunity of growing and becoming much stronger. For others that didn't do well, that didn't do right, Great White Throne. Prayerfully, for most it'll be the Great White Throne when they have those opportunities to look back and to remember, "Ah! This happened and I made this choice." Weeping and gnashing of teeth, to feel so sickened. And the *feeling* and the emotion that some of them are going to experience on a spiritual plane to realize the *stupidity* and the *foolishness* of making such *dumb* mistakes when they had *everything* in front of them from the Great God of the universe. Opportunities delayed. Still have opportunity to be a part of the God Family but not in the same way as before, and not for the same purpose as before either. Going on:

Such a test will reveal openly where a person truly stands spiritually in their relationship toward God and His Church. 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.

Powerfully so. But it has to be made manifest, because, you see, that's when judgment is made. You're not judged fully by the things that are inside here, it's when you make choices and act upon them because you have opportunity to act properly and deal with it properly and fight against them and repent or you have the choice to act upon them and do what is wrong. But it's going to be made manifest. So things that are in the mind, judgment comes as a result of how we respond to them and what is manifest as a result of the thinking that's inside of us - sometimes thinking that we don't even understand until confronted with certain issues in life. And then we have to deal with it. And what are we going to do? Going on:

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 the level of commitment a person has toward God. However, these may reveal such great weaknesses 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. 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.

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. 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 God, powerfully so! Awesome!

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. 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 own Son to save mankind.

Beautiful. Beautiful for God to reveal to us, to show us His mind, His spirit. Page 251, we're continuing:

After this account, God said to Abraham, "Now I know you." This revealed the true mind and spiritual creation that had been developed in Abraham to that moment in time.

God knew what He was developing and God brought it right to the point in time that He knew. He knew what Abraham would do but it had to be made manifest. God does the molding and fashioning and it's up to us to respond to it. And Abraham, from the very beginning when God told him to move to a different area he went. He did what God said. He left family. He left everything else to do what God said. And that was just a beginning. Going on:

It revealed the level of commitment which Abraham was determined to live by in obedience and oneness toward God, regardless of the obstacles or trials that might come his way.

Oh, if we could all only embrace that and have it a part of our will, of our mind, of our thinking. Going on:

Similar to how God worked with Abraham in this account, God also allowed the Church to believe that the return of Christ was still going to occur in 2012, even after He had judged in mid-2008 to extend it by seven more years beyond 2012. God made this judgment in mid-2008 to move forward Christ's return after putting the Church to a test that revealed the true spiritual state and level of actual spiritual development in its members to that moment in time.

Now, that's talking about the primary part of the Body, not all the body. Not all the body. Because there were people lying and dragging their feet and being hypocritical and that were not in the temple at all. And God also manifested that over the next few years. Ministers included.

This was a test to determine the kind of choices individuals would make that would reveal their true faith toward God. It was a test that would force a response to be triggered that would reveal, one way or the other, what was deep down inside the spirit of each person.

This test was when God revealed a **new truth** to His Church that Christ would return to this earth on a Pentecost and not on the Holy Day of Trumpets as previously believed. Ever since I have been in the Church, it had been believed and taught by the ministry that Christ would return on a Feast of Trumpets. This would not be a small change for the Church, and it would reveal where everyone stood spiritually. Matters concerning Holy Days are very foundational doctrines, and the Church knows well that God will not change any truth concerning those days and their meaning for fulfillment. Although God had given His Church much truth concerning His Holy Days, there have been those things about those days that He never fully revealed. That was by design.

You know, to understand such things is awesome. God is letting us see and understand things in a stronger plane, in a stronger way than we ever have. And I find that *immensely* exciting. I really do. Because it's more of the insight into the very mind, thinking, actions, way of God Almighty and it's powerful. Page 252 and this paragraph here....

I think of some things we've gone through and God has not, had not revealed, things about the Millennium, things about the Great White Throne that we didn't understand, things that were not fully in balance that we have not understood. Not even as we began in part since the Apostasy that God revealed later on, things about the Last Great Day that were misunderstood and sometimes misconstrued with happening in the Millennium. You probably don't even remember what some of those things are because your mind has been changed. You see, you understand now where things fit better as far as the Last Great Day and the millennial period. And to understand the Millennium is not a period of time that's perfect. We still have things to deal with in the world. Human beings still have choices. And there are going to be people during the Millennium who reject God, just as there were in the angelic realm!

Just because Jesus Christ is on this earth, just because there are 144,000 resurrected out of a period of time over 6,000 years, as far as when they lived, ruling and reigning on this earth and teaching mankind in a very powerful way, after a while there are going to be those who just become lukewarm. That's their norm. Children grow up with that. That's their normal experience. It's their normal world. Just like right now what's happening is your normal world. You know, that won't be normal for them. What will be normal for them is something we don't understand. We've never experienced it. We can't fully even imagine it, what it's going to fully be like. We can try to appreciate it and think about it and, obviously, the world has incredible opportunity for a unity and a harmony and order in a way that it's never experienced. And that's going to be awesomely beautiful!

But there are still going to be some who drag their feet. There are still going to be some who won't choose - even in the best of times of all human history - *will not choose God!* And I think that's very difficult sometimes for us to grasp. But if we can see what happened in the angelic realm, we should *know* that that's in the capacity of all human beings at any point in time. That's why so many that live in the Great White Throne have to have such a jolt to realize the power of Almighty God and that He gave them life again a second time, and to come to see and acknowledge that everything they've ever believed was a bunch of hogwash, and to see and to experience the power of God. And there'll be greater motivation. But that, even then, during the Great White Throne *not everyone is going to choose God's way of life. Okay?* I hope we understand that. There are blessings, enormous power of God on this earth at that time, because there may be, we don't know, billions resurrected into the Family of God by that time to help, to serve, to work with people. We don't know the numbers. We don't know how it's going to work out, what all God's going to do. But it's going to be powerful. But human beings still have choice.

Just like today. Everybody has a choice. Everybody has a choice how they speak to one another. Everybody has a choice in the environment of the Church of God to choose how they think toward each other and how they treat one another. And for people to curse each other, for people to get mad and raise their voice at one another is inexcusable in God's Church. It always has been. But God's addressing it more powerfully now than ever before because we are a family and we must have that vision in our minds and that excitement and that desire for it, and to realize how awesome it is to be a part of *God's Family*. We belong to God. Every person in the Body belongs to God. And we're not to judge each other harshly. We're to give each other what? Time. Patience. Just as God has been patient with each one of us. Has He been patient with you? You better say, "Yes." He's been incredibly patient with me. We need to see our human nature, just like Paul did, "after twenty-five years, 'Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ that that's how it's accomplished,'" in essence, paraphrasing it. That's how it's done - the mercy, the patience, the love of God Almighty because of His purpose for us. And we, we must be that way toward one another.

For people to mistreat each other? It really just boggles my mind. I do not like it. I loathe it. And I'll come to fight for any individual who is hurt by anyone else. That's the way it should be. We're a family! Going on:

Over time, God reveals more and more truth to His people. It has been that way ever since Adam and Eve were created. Over the past 6,000 years, God has **progressively** revealed truth of Himself, His plan, purpose, and ways of life.

You may feel like you've *always* known that one. You haven't. You haven't understood that. You haven't seen the *awesomeness* of what God has revealed to us so that we can be in greater *awe* of how God has worked with mankind for the last 6,000 years. And that, in turn, should move, motivate, and encourage you to incredible levels of excitement, that *you* are able to see such things, that they are exciting, indeed, what God has shared with you. Because whatever truth you "see," it's because God has given it to you. He's given it to your mind. You can't go out here and tell other people about those things. They'd say, "You're wacky as all get out!" "You're nuttier than a fruitcake." That's all they can think. "You're strange." You're strange because you believe in the Sabbath and the Holy Days and tithing and those things alone, but some of these other things, you're really strange. That's how the world would see it. Family - you don't have to go very far in the world to find people that feel like you're a little out there. Compared to the world we better be.

So, again, progressively revealing truth, to understand that, to see what happened... Every time... I can't help it... It's just like the Holy Days. When I start talking about Holy Days and start going into the scriptures - I don't care whether it's Leviticus 23 or wherever it is - and start talking about God's plan I get excited. I get inspired. I can't help it. How can I describe it? We should all be that way. It just gives you strength and power and excitement to talk about it, to review it, to be excited about what God has given to us. And so does stuff like this! To understand that God has progressively revealed things over the past 6,000 years and to think about how little Abraham knew? He didn't know much! Noah knew less! Incredible! And the only things that Abraham knew above and beyond what Noah had, in essence, was that God had promised Isaac and something that God was going to do through Abraham, that he didn't fully grasp: A nation of people that were going to come through his loins, a Messiah, as well in time, in a seed? He didn't understand all those things but he knew more than Noah. Still very limited.

And then finally we come along, different ones through time, Moses, look what all God gave to him. Look at what's recorded in the first five books. The whole period of time before that is just in a few chapters in Genesis. And then all of a sudden here is Moses on the scene and the children of Israel and they're a great nation by this time. Then we get to the time of, well, just keep going on, the time of the kings, the time of Samuel before that, the time of David and some of the prophets of old, and then finally Jesus Christ after 4,000 years. Then the Church! Then Mr. Armstrong! More given to him than anybody before him! Powerful! And we're the benefactors of all of that. We've been able to build and become what we are because of what God gave to that man and what he worked *so hard* to build. So glad he didn't see the Apostasy, that he didn't have to witness that. Anyway, going on:

As an example, in the time of Moses, God revealed [well, already talked about it, but I'll read it here], revealed much more about Himself, His purpose, and true ways of life that mankind should live.

I think of, what is it, Exodus 3 I think it is, where God began to talk to Moses and began to talk to him about how that those before him had never known Him as Yahweh Elohim. And God revealed Himself by a new name that He had not revealed to everyone before that. Scripture is written in such a way, because it was written later on, that that word is used and Elohim is spoken of in things that are recorded there, and so forth, but He had not revealed Himself to those before him by *that name*. A period of time, a moment in time when God just revealed more about Himself, the Self-Existing Eternal Living God. Awesome! And a family! Anyway, going on:

God had worked with certain individuals and families for several hundred years before, but by the time of Moses, He began to reveal much more to Israel than He had to those who had previously lived.

As time continued on, God began to reveal more through His prophets and then through the greatest Prophet of all that was sent to mankind—Jesus Christ. It was at that time, nearly 4,000 years from the beginning of mankind's existence, that God began to reveal a greater amount of knowledge and understanding. Jesus Christ began to reveal the spiritual intent of God's laws and ways of life.

They had to wait 4,000 years! No one else had been given it on that plane, in that way. And then he came along and began to show a spiritual intent of the law and how people should live. Now, they were given fragments of certain things to understand, but they couldn't put it together like that until this time when it was revealed and God began to pour out more of His spirit so they could see it on a spiritual plane as a people, as a Church.

Jesus Christ began to reveal the spiritual intent of God's laws and ways of life. Even after the Church began in 31 A.D., God continued to progressively reveal much more to His Church through his apostles and the prophet John.

Over the past 80 years, there was only one other change in the Church that was of such proportion with the potential for trials as this one. It was when God had given truth to Herbert W. Armstrong that the Church should be keeping Pentecost on a Sunday and not on a Monday as the Church had been observing for nearly 40 years previous to this.

Now, I marvel at certain things like that because that helped for later on in time. That event has helped immensely to be able to see certain things and how God works that He began to reveal more here toward the end so that we could understand better, reserving certain things to be revealed. God has the power to reveal. He could have revealed all these things to Mr. Armstrong. Well, I'll just read on....

It was when God had given truth to Herbert W. Armstrong that the Church should be keeping Pentecost on a Sunday and not on a Monday as the Church had been observing for nearly 40 years previous to this.

So in 1974, when God led Mr. Armstrong to make this change within the Church, it was a trigger that forced people to address where they stood as a matter of “faith” in God’s Church...

And what's amazing was when this first started as soon as the subject matter came up there were ministers and members who made up their mind. They didn't wait on God. They didn't wait on God's apostle and revealed that they never learned the most basic thing that they should have been convicted of at the very beginning of their calling, that somewhere along the line they either didn't address it, didn't have it, or they just forgot it through time because of familiarity that breeds contempt so often in people's lives.

So in 1974, when God led Mr. Armstrong to make this change within the Church, it was a trigger that forced people to address where they stood as a matter of “faith” in God’s Church....

A matter of faith. So important to grasp that one, what it's talking about here. A matter of faith. What do you believe? What are you convicted of? And if you have the basic convictions you should have this is a cake walk. This is nothing. It's nothing but exciting and inspiring because of what God was going to give and what He was revealing through Mr. Armstrong. So again:

...where they stood as a matter of “faith” in God’s Church, how deeply they believed God’s calling, and how convicted they were of **how** God was working with them.

Dumbfounding how people so easily, and so much of the ministry and evangelists, forgot something so basic! That's the one thing that boggled my mind after the Apostasy and hearing ministers still talk who were a part of the different ones who are scattered to forget, to not teach, to not be motivated by you have to have a calling! You have to be *drawn* by God into His Church. It's God Almighty who does it. No individual does it. No individual is able to accomplish that. It's what God does. He brings it all together. He does the calling. He gives us to His Son. So many lost that, and, "how God was working with them." Well, now, let's see. The Sabbath and the Holy Days, the Holy Days that Mr. Armstrong and Loma kept for seven years on their own before he even began to teach it to the Church because it was so new and so different, something he'd never known, never done and didn't fully see it as he started to do it, him and his wife. But as they did it for seven years, finally after that *seven* years he was deeply convicted of the basic meaning of all those Holy Days and realized that he had to teach it to the Church, that it was his job, his responsibility to begin teaching now not just the weekly Sabbath but the annual Sabbaths to the Church. That's awesome! This had been lost.

And so everyone who was called after that they received that knowledge as they were drawn into the truth. They began to understand Holy Days. And where did they get it? They didn't figure it out. They didn't understand it on their own. It didn't somehow, it wasn't somehow to do with all their studies into Strong's Concordance, or whatever existed back then. Anyway, all the studies they could go into. It was because of what God had revealed through His apostle, Mr. Armstrong,

to give to the Church. And so was every other doctrine that came along after that, every other truth, every other thing that God was refining in and through Mr. Armstrong to give to the Church. Everything the Church had!

Now, isn't that a horrible thing to forget? And yet we have people out here in this very city area who were elders in God's Church who *forgot everything* of how they were called out of the Apostasy, *forgot everything* that God had given to them, that there is *only one* Eternal Self-Existing God. And they put it behind them and they ignored it. How can a human being do such a thing, forsake God in such a manner? But people do. Choices. Choices. Choices. Something comes along to try people in a moment, in a moment in time, and some can't take it because they're so *riddled* with jealousy, so *riddled* with harsh judgment toward others, whatever it might be, so *jealous*, so *envious*, so *hateful*, so *judgmental* that God can't work with them anymore. It cuts them off from the flow of His Holy spirit.

So that's why I cry out like I do right now at this time more than ever before. Because of the short time we have. Because of what's in front of us. Because of where we are. Because of what God's revealed and what He's offering to stir up in every one of us. Because that same spirit, that power that comes from Almighty God, God is giving to us in the Church, and I'm excited by seeing people responding to that and growing and being stirred up, moved and motivated, excited. And the majority of the body is. And that's exciting. That's inspiring. But you know, just like the 1 in 99, if they're out there, cry out. Cry out! Get on with the rest here! Do what you need to do. That's what we should desire of every individual. That's what I desire of individuals out here. I loathe, I hate having to write letters or ask someone else as a part of their responsibility in the Church, to tell someone why they're either disfellowshipped - as happened last week - or suspended from fellowship for a period of time, which is knocking on the door of being totally separated, disfellowshipped unless there are changes, repentance, honesty, a willingness to look in a spiritual mirror and truly be *honest* with themselves and with me as God's servant, because I'm not blind and I'm not blind to what they can't see. I just hope that they're able to repent enough to a point that they can begin to really "see." Otherwise they won't be back. And others are headed that direction too. Others are still headed that direction, too.

How often do I cry out, "Be faithful in your offerings seven times in a year?" How often do I cry out, "Be faithful in your tithing before God?" Because, you see, the point of that is if we're not we get cut off immediately from the flow of God's spirit. And so if it's for two months, three months, five months, a year, two years that we're playing this game back and forth and not being totally faithful to God in those matters we've just cut ourselves off from the very beginning and never get back on the right track because there's not real repentance there. And because of that we just get weaker and weaker and weaker until finally something comes along and we lose it. Sometimes people literally lose it with others because they're not in control anymore. They're not in control. They're not watchful. They're not spiritually on guard. They're not where they should be spiritually.

I'm going to tell you, too, the tests aren't over yet. Okay? God is refining us and I pray that we come through this more and more. And I know the main part of the Body is going to but I just... I hate it. I'm just so weary; I truly am, of people going by the wayside. It just hurts. It's painful. I *hate* having to write such letters. I *hate* having to pass along to an evangelist or someone else to send out a letter to someone and tell them why they're being separated. I hate it. I'd rather do anything else, almost, as it were, than that, in one way. But in the other I know it's right. It has to be done and the body's made stronger because of it, sadly.

You can't give it to people, brethren. No matter who you work with. No matter who you're around. No matter what they do. You cannot give conviction, you cannot give faith, you cannot give a spirit that is stirred up and excited about God's way of life like you are to anyone else. Doesn't work that way no matter how much we wish we could. Continuing on:

When that change was made, it truly did reveal where people stood spiritually. The response from members of the Church now allowed for each of them to be easily measured by God as to where they were in their spiritual development. There were large numbers of people, including quite a few within the ministry, who left the Church over this.

Oh yeah, it's all coming back. Sound familiar? Have we lived it before? And this is just... History repeats itself over and over again because there is a process that the Church always has to go through to be refined. We just go through it again and again and again and again and a stronger body comes through it all. But that which doesn't, doesn't.

Even in this, there were people who opposed this change who were on two different sides...

This is astounding, what happened back then. It took out... Did a big cleaning up real quick like. Because there were ministers on two sides of the fence there! I mean, they weren't going down the middle of the road and supporting and following Mr. Armstrong and what God was revealing to him. There were some in the left ditch and some in the right ditch, and they weren't getting out. They weren't even crossing over the midway part time; they were just stuck in the ditch. Incredible! People from two different mindsets, in essence.

There were large numbers of people, including quite a few within the ministry, who left the Church over this. Even in this, there were people who opposed this change who were on two different sides, nevertheless, it revealed where they truly were spiritually. Some would not make the change because they could not accept that God had revealed such a thing to Mr. Armstrong because they could not believe that **they** had been wrong all those years before this.

You talk about.... What a spirit! What an attitude! Couldn't humble themselves and couldn't grasp how God worked through Mr. Armstrong, and instead were just going out of stubbornness of spirit and pride to hold on to something. And to all of a sudden... I mean, how can you continue to follow, support, be a part of, and then all of a sudden come to a doctrine like this and think that

somehow God just left Mr. Armstrong, God just left His apostle? Without listening to, without even giving time for the studies and everything else that Mr. Armstrong said he was doing on the subject to be able to teach it to the Church. People made choices and decisions before that ever came out of what they believed and what they chose to do. But to follow and wait on God, to wait on what God was revealing through Mr. Armstrong? Nope. Totally impatient, so one group on one side. So this one part of this group....

... they could not accept that God had revealed such a thing to Mr. Armstrong because they could not believe that **they** had been wrong all those years before this. Others left because they believed Mr. Armstrong had not made the change quick enough. The test was a trigger that caused people to respond, one way or the other, thus revealing their true beliefs and convictions.

That was an incredible time. People who used it as an excuse. Really, what happens a lot of times, in people's lives they're already separated from God. And those ministers had been separated for some time. That didn't just happen overnight. Nothing happens overnight. Sometimes people go by the wayside, they're disfellowshipped and you *think* you know them. You *think* because you have spent time with them and talked to them that you know them and they would never do that. Well, that's what happens sometimes with a lying spirit. It lied to you. And you don't know what's really in their heart. You don't know what their deepest conviction is unless you know that they have always been excited about the sermons and excited about the truth and can speak it on a plane that's inspiring and exciting when they talk to you about certain things that are taking place. Anyway, that can give you a good clue. Not that you should strive to do those things to put on airs and everything else, because that happens too, but because they're genuine and true and because that's just what excites you. If it's genuine and true there are things that will come out of your life in things you'll say.

And so somebody goes, but they don't do it overnight. But there are points in time where certain things are manifest to such a manner that it leaves no option but to deal with it. And that's where we are. God just brings certain things to the surface so that, "Oh! It's clear where that ones headed." It's not a part of the body, hasn't been for some time. And sometimes I even know it but nothing manifests to address it. Matter of fact, most of the time I know it. But eventually at some point in time, especially now because of what's taking place, God will manifest certain things, bring it to the surface and then it's dealt with. Depends upon us and what we're doing. Are we repenting before God? Are we striving to change? Are we yielding our self to change and fighting for this way of life? Because that's what it boils down to.

So again here, I think of different individuals, and ministers especially at that point in time, that started going by the wayside because they really had some other desires. This matter of the time had changed, some accepted it, but they had other ideas. Some had ideas of keeping Sabbath on Sunday.... Whew! That was in the Church a long time ago within some of the ministry. Candidly, it didn't all come out. But some of it was back there, of things that people... that finally even led to

the Apostasy, were things in people's minds. Sunday. Some were choosing other times besides the Sabbath, besides Sabbath and Saturday. They were choosing Sunday. That's what they wanted.

So anyway, and others, again here, they stayed with Monday because they couldn't be wrong. They were so far to the right, so far out there, they were so righteous, led a lot of people with them. Quite a few people left that went in that direction, certain ministers that went off on the... Evangelists, one evangelist in particular, one or two. I know one in particular that was involved in that. Left because they wouldn't accept how they'd been called and how God was working with the Church and they forgot somewhere along the line, they took it to themselves to do something God had never given to them, never had given to an evangelist to do. He gave it to an apostle to reveal things to the Church, to give to the Church what the Church was to have. And that's how God works. It's just a simple, basic thing. And I have no qualms in saying it because that's just how it works.

And so as far as Mr. Armstrong was concerned they abandoned everything about a calling that they had believed before because the only reason they were there is because God had called them to the truth that He'd revealed through that man. Amazing. So they lost that somewhere along the line, became lifted up with pride, felt that they understood things. Because, you see, it wasn't just about Pentecost. See, that's the problem. It was about a lot of other things. It was about administration and government and different things, and becoming familiar with Mr. Armstrong, and they just didn't like certain things and how things were done and decisions that were made and how things were organized that they thought should be different in headquarters and blah, blah, blah, you know, the same old. Same old, same old.

Others left because they believed Mr. Armstrong had not made the change quick enough. The test was a trigger that caused people to respond, one way or the other, thus revealing their true beliefs and convictions.

And that's never changed. It's always been that way. That's why what happened to us, what happened in the Church, I've seen it over and over again of some of the things when God's revealed it. I remember being down in a basement. And I think of all the people who are not here who were at one time in a basement meeting together in the Cincinnati area, all the people who had opportunities. A whole group, I think, from the east and how they were there for a point in time until we finally came up to Passover and began to have some things revealed concerning Passover, and talking about some of those things and they had different ideas. So an elder and several people separated. Incredible, some of the things we've gone through over and over and over again. Some things never change, just the manner in which they're brought out that bring things to the surface and things that people have to address in their life. But these things you can count on within the environment of God's Church, that people will be tried and tested and refined. And right now more than ever. Going on, page 253:

God could have revealed this truth to the Church from the beginning, but He did not, and that was by design so that at a future time this might be used to test and refine His Church. This test worked to help cleanse the Church spiritually, and as a result, a stronger body remained as it continued to follow God's apostle, as he was following Jesus Christ.

Now, you think about the timing of some of that. When I see some of these things I just... I'm dumbfounded. I truly am. 1974, when this took place, Pentecost, the change for Pentecost, and you see the things that happened at different times like this. To me, it's so incredible to see how God works with the Church and how He molds and fashions the Church and how something like this was used to cleanse the Church. And you think about 1974, as I was getting ready to say, and what followed that. Because, you see, because the Church was cleansed at that point in time by a lot of ministers, and some evangelists, and you see what took place at that time, it prepared in part the Church for what it was getting ready to go through. Mr. Armstrong was going to get weaker and weaker and weaker, because something else was to follow. But enough of the Church was strengthened at this point in time to go through what had to follow. Not all, because there was still much more that we didn't know about that had to be cleansed in the Church, that this was a beginning mechanism that God used. Just as what has happened since the Apostasy. Because there hasn't been just one occasion, there have been numerous occasions of doctrine and truth that have come along that people have gone by the wayside. Ordination of women? "You've got to be crazy! You've really stepped out on that one there! That really shows where you're coming from. You lost it so long ago!" Anyway, amazing! And to realize how God works with us and what He gives to us and how inspiring it is, and the Church that sees that it gives them greater strength to forge through other things that are yet coming. That's why we're a strong Church right now, and the primary part of this Body is a strong body. Be encouraged. That's what so much of this sermon is about. Truly is.

Are there fragments dragging? Oh, yes, and I feel for them, I truly do. But there are just certain things that God is not going to allow anymore. That there's either change at this point in time because of where we are and what's being offered or we reap the results, the consequences.

So, anyway, I think of what happened in 1974, Mr. Armstrong getting to the point where he was weaker and weaker and came to the point of dying. And he came back then stronger than ever. *Awesome*, the power that God gave to him. And it doesn't miss me at all what God has done at the end here, some of the similar things. Because it gives me encouragement because I see God's spirit and power that's stronger than it was before. And I know the Church does too, as a whole. And that's exciting because of where we are and what God is doing. And so it should be. These things happen for a reason. We learn; we have experience in certain things that have happened in the past. And just like this process here, to never forget how God works with us, to be inspired, moved, and motivated.

That's why I talk about these 57 Truths so often. They are your power. God gives power of His holy spirit through those things. Power of conviction, power of strength. When you think on those

things... I think just of the 2005 Feast alone. That by itself is so far beyond what we can really even grasp. Can't find the words to describe how incredible it is. So again:

God could have revealed this truth to the Church from the beginning, but He did not, and that was by design so that at a future time this might be used to test and refine His Church. This test helped to cleanse the Church spiritually, and as a result, a stronger body remained as it continued to follow God's apostle, as he was following Jesus Christ.

It was by this testing in 1974 that many were weeded out of God's Church yet the vast majority of the Church simply took this in stride, and were thankful for another great truth that God had revealed.

That's what's amazing. If you're living what you should be living, if you love God's way of life, if you love the truth, if you grasp why and how you're a part of God's Church, if you grasp and understand how God was working with Mr. Armstrong and you wait upon those things as he said he was going to work upon this and have a year of study into the subject, basically, is what it amounted to. And he did and he had others studying into it. And then he went through it. He wanted to be so thorough about this because to him, which should be the case, it was not a small thing. He had to *know* that this was of God. And he knew it very early on, but he waited. He wanted to be exceedingly sure of what his choice was and that this indeed was a matter of his obedience to God.

So, "the vast majority simply took it in stride," because that's the way it is. And people were excited about it. I remember that time. I was excited by it. And what was incredible to me, the first time I'd experienced something of such magnitude, to think a year before that I could have sat down with anyone, I could have gone through certain scriptures and I could have shown you why it was on a Monday! And anybody else in the Church could have too, as a whole. I mean the ministry or different ones in the Church who studied into the subject, they could go through those scriptures and talk to you about it and *prove* to you how it was on a Monday...until God proved to us it wasn't and revealed to us where our errors were. We couldn't see it until God gave it to us. That's an incredible thing. You can't "see" truth, *the* truth, until God gives it to you in your mind. That's why you can't go out and study with anyone or give this to anyone. They can't "see" it. It has to be given by God.

It was by this testing in 1974 that many were weeded out of God's Church, yet the vast majority of the Church simply took this in stride, and were thankful for another great truth that God had revealed. They were excited by what God had given to them.

Such tests are designed as a trigger that forces a person to respond to something they have never yet been faced with in their life. At such a moment, they are forced to decide and choose what they will believe.

It reveals whether they are in the temple or out in the courtyard. That's really what it does. And it reveals how strong they are within the temple as well. Because a person, if not careful, can be weak there as well.

At such a moment, they are forced to decide and choose what they will believe.

See, we all generally tend to think we know what we believe. But there are certain things sometimes in life that happen that bring it to the surface, certain uncertainties, certain things that maybe aren't as convincing or convicted of as they need to be. And so God will bring something along and allow us to be tried by it and then, when we make the right choice and decisions, the light is powerful and He gives us the ability to "see" things that we otherwise couldn't see, but if the other way then the light goes out. Going on:

At such a moment, they are forced to decide and choose what they will believe. In this case of a change being made concerning when the day that Pentecost was to be observed, the announcement of this change forced people to respond to their true thinking and convictions. Each person was confronted with having to make a personal decision concerning what choice they would make in response to what they heard. This test, which resulted from this announcement of a big change in the observance of one of God's Holy Days, worked as a kind of trigger upon the mind. It would instantly spark a reaction that would begin to manifest where each individual stood.

For those who were convicted Mr. Armstrong was God's apostle, it was there, because they took it in stride and they continued to follow and they waited. They were waiting upon God. They were waiting upon Mr. Armstrong to show, to teach, because they had become convicted of how they came to know and understand the truth. They were convicted of God's government and how God's government works within the Church and how truth is revealed. Going on:

It would reveal one's faith and level of conviction or the lack thereof.

And it did.

Oftentimes, individuals don't even know their own true self...

The mind, when God says, "the mind is deceitful above all things," it means it. Our human minds can be ever so deceitful, deceiving. We tend to desire to deceive ourselves. That's the pull. That's something you have to fight against. That's where we have to rely upon God and cry out to God to help us to "see," because only God can help us to see what is truth and what is spiritual. And the human mind tends to work against that so often.

Oftentimes, individuals don't even know their own true self and actual convictions until such a test comes their way that reveals it.

I knew the day that I talked to those two elders there was trouble. I didn't know to the degree it was going to be there, but I knew that we weren't of the same mind. I knew there was resistance. But to think they would go as far as they did? That really hadn't hit me like that. But I knew there was a battle there, a battle taking place. And I've seen so many of those battles repeated over and over and over and over again in God's Church when a timing comes along and an individual or individuals have to make a choice of what they're going to do, a decisive choice that's going to determine their course from that moment forward whether they continue on in the Church or whether they take a detour and become separated from it. On page 254, continuing on:

In this particular example, people were instantly tested as to their actual conviction and belief in God's Church and of their own level of confidence that God was leading Herbert W. Armstrong as His apostle. It would reveal each person's level of conviction, their belief in the doctrines of the Church, as well as their belief in the means through which God reveals truth to His people.

So again, that's just the way it is. That is a reality. And we've gone through a lot to receive such convictions in our life in God's Church. Truly. Going on:

It was at Pentecost 2008 when God began to reveal a new truth—the 50th Truth—to His Church concerning the Holy Day when Christ would once again stand upon the Mount of Olives at his return. The response to this truth from God's Church would be the determining factor for what year God would send His son to establish His Kingdom on earth.

There were two objectives God had for the Church if that return was to go beyond 2012. God's purpose wasn't that the members of the Church just simply carry on as they had over the previous 13 years, simply continuing a process for the normal transformation of the mind that was being created within each of them. The Church had already been on a very long, turbulent journey since the Apostasy, and there was no point that it should simply suffer more unless there was some **far greater purpose** for it.

That's incredible that God has shared this with us and helped us to understand this, how He works, how He works in our lives, the kind of love. Because, you see, it's about the Church!

Instead, if the Church was going to be carried forward another 11 years, up to the Pentecost of 2019, God was first going to make it a Church that would become even far, far **stronger in faith and spiritual strength** than it had ever been. This would entail a creative process that had never before been done on such a level within the Church.

And I can't give that to you. Whether you "see" that and grasp that and embrace that and are thankful for that, that's between you and your God. But it is a most powerful thing, it truly is.

God's greater purpose for continuing forward was that if indeed a greater creation were to be worked within them, then they would also do **a much greater work** than could have been accomplished after 2008 and up to 2012, if that had been the time for Christ's coming.

If the Church was not where it needed to be by mid-2008 in order for these additional things to be accomplished within it, then there was no point in continuing further.

It's about the Church! Isn't that awesome? To think that God Almighty would make a *judgment upon the world* because of where *we were* at a moment in time? That ought to move you, because that's exactly what was taking place. That should show us. We should be so encouraged by such a thing, by such understanding, to understand the kind of love and the kind of purpose God has when He draws people and gives them opportunity for this way of life and His desire for us to succeed, to become a part of Elohim or to become a part of living on into a new age, to be an example in a new age of the continuing Church that will continue on. To think because of what we went through and because of how God brought us through it, because God brought us through it. God did it all. That was His design from the very beginning. Going on:

Instead, it would be more expedient to simply carry out the execution of prophetic end-time tribulation upon the world, a world that had already been judged worthy of tribulation.

Talking about the final tribulation, on page 255, continuing here:

This new truth that was to be a test on the Church was given to it on the 28th of June in 2008.

And that's a flashback for me, because before that sermon was given I saw things coming out of people's lives that I knew were going to be some big problems. And God also let me see that if that sermon were not given early and if we waited until Trumpets to give it that there would be a great loss in the Church. Not small, but great. So this was a time of trying and testing, and a purpose why this was given when it was to determine things later on. God had a desire, a love for the Church, and knew exactly how we would deal with various things. So, I'll read it again. I don't really think as I go through this that we understand how delicate this was, because it was. It was a powerful event that took place.

This new truth that was to be a test on the Church was given to it on the 28th of June in 2008.

It was then that this change about Christ returning on Pentecost was revealed to the entirety of the Church. This did prove to be unsettling for a very few, which included a handful within the ministry.

When I mean unsettling for them, I mean to the point that they would eventually leave God's Church. And I knew with some from the very get go the ground they were walking on was exceedingly dangerous, and candidly for some I guess really deep down inside knew that they wouldn't come through it. Knew that there would be things take place because of their response and their reaction. You know, some things that God gives more, if He gives more to some in

certain things as far as opportunity and spirit (because He does), if we don't respond in the way we should there is far greater judgment and far greater condemnation if we don't follow through and do what we are to do because it effects the Church in a very powerful way. And all you have to do is go back to 1972, 1974, 1978, 1986, and on. That's all you have to do and it's right in front of us over and over and over again. Going on:

This did prove to be unsettling for a very few, which [It was unsettling for more, but I'm talking what it led to for the few.] ...which included a handful within the ministry. These did not respond well and this began to reveal their true spiritual state.

Now, some that had some difficulty at that time repented and learned from the experience through repentance. And God had mercy upon them as He does always on us when we repent, when we see something in ourselves that we really hadn't seen before. And some deeply repented. And I'll also say that there are some, going back to this date, that because some things weren't fully addressed in their life are still walking on a slippery slope. And I hope they get their act together before this is all over with and put God first *always* in their life. Not anything else. Not *anyone* else. *God must be first*. And every one of us in tried in those things. Is God first? Or is your mate, or is your child, or is your parent, or is your whatever it might be? Who is first? I'll tell you what, of so many things that happen sometimes within God's Church, God, it will be known whether God is first. And God must be first. And where He is not, woe to the individuals who put something else there and make choices and decisions that aren't right, that aren't in agreement with how we are supposed to live our lives. Going on:

This did prove to be unsettling for a very few, which included a handful within the ministry. These did not respond well and this began to reveal their true spiritual state. In time, most of these became weakened by other events and eventually went by the wayside.

That's where it started. For some I know *exactly* where it started because of the kind of response that was there. And in time one little event after another and you saw things that weren't in agreement, things that were being said, things that some individuals stated that were so wrong and so out of line it was just a matter of time. And I knew it. And finally God took care of it. Going on:

This was a test that triggered a true response within these individuals that then began to become manifest...

See, it begins to become manifest and God begins to make things clearer.

...and proved to be a major turning point in their life as they turned away from God.

However, for some in the Church, this proved to be a great spiritual wake-up call, as they began to recognize that a lethargic spiritual condition of Laodicea was starting to creep into their lives. [In some cases, *again*.] This motivated these individuals...

Because, you see, before the Apostasy that's what led to the Apostasy. Lethargy. Laodicea. And it just keeps trying because we live in that kind of an age where that is... that is one of the biggest battles out there. Truly is. Going on:

This motivated these individuals to repentance and greater spiritual growth.

For most who were actively growing on a continuing basis on a spiritual plane, this new truth proved inspiring, especially as they then began to see a far greater importance in it. The Church became more excited about this change as the weeks progressed, and it proved to be a strong catalyst for far greater spiritual growth.

Doesn't mean trials are easy, but there are things that test and try us. But when we respond the right way to God He blesses us and He gives us greater opportunity for greater growth. That's what this was all about. Going on:

There was more to this new truth beyond the fact that it revealed the actual Holy Day when Christ would stand on this earth once more. It also revealed a big change that was to occur in what had been seen as the actual day when Christ would return. This in itself proved to be exceedingly exciting for God's Church.

As it was stated, before this change in understanding that Jesus Christ would return on a Pentecost, it was believed that he would return on a Feast of Trumpets, which is autumn in the northern hemisphere. Several months prior to this change given in June 2008, the Church had come to believe that Christ was going to return on the Feast of Trumpets in 2011. [Why? Going on...] The reason for seeing that it had to be that specific year was because God had revealed that 2008 was the year that a final witness to the world would begin to be established, hence the title of the second book, *2008—God's Final Witness*. Since 2008 had been revealed to be the year when God would begin to establish a final end-time witness, the Church knew that witness would be accomplished within a prophetic period of 1260 days as prophesied. The only Feast of Trumpets that could be measured from any date within the year of 2008 and out to a future Feast of Trumpets had to be the Feast of Trumpets in 2011.

And so, hence, when it was changed and it was Pentecost, the same thing, it had to come out of 2008 - 1260 days later. And God revealed what those things were, inspiringly so because of how those things then fit together.

Let's stop there. Well, we're going to have another part here it looks like, for sure. I don't know if there are going to be two. I never know how far I'm going to get in some of these so we'll just keep going until we get through this section here. But again, it's this continuing theme that we need to be encouraged, to grasp what God has given to us, to be sober, but to be excited. And you know, if we're in the temple and we really desire this way of life and you're fighting for it, you have nothing to fear. Just like what we read in those verses earlier. And we need to go back

to those and understand the importance of being faithful to God, zealous toward God's way of life, and move forward.