

Hello, brethren. Please turn with me to Luke 12 and we'll start in verse 37. That's **Luke 12:37**—**Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he comes shall find watching. Truly I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken into. Be you, therefore, ready also. For the Son of man come at an hour when you think not.**

Brethren, let's also turn to Matthew 24:42. That's **Matthew 24:42**—**Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord does come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be you also ready. For in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Truly, I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

And brethren, also please turn with me to Mark 13:31. That's **Mark 13:31**—**Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take you heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house and gave authority to his servants and to every man his work and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch you, therefore, for you know not when the master of the house comes, at evening or at midnight or at the cockcrowing or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.**

Brethren, in verse 32 it states, "But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not even the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." And in verse 33, "Take heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is."

Brethren, we know when Christ is returning to this earth. It's Pentecost 2019. These verses are not talking about his physical return, but the spiritual. We do not know when Christ may return to

us spiritually. This warning is for us spiritually: "Take heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is... Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Brethren, are we watching? Are we on guard and ready? As I was listening to a recent sermon series, *Own Your Choices*, I kept asking myself if I was doing all that I could do to be ready. Was I doing all I can to be both physically and spiritually productive? Was I bringing honor to God, to God's throne in my daily activity? The more I considered this the more I realized I needed to cast my eyes on myself and consider what it was that I should be doing and measure myself against this. If Christ was to return today, would I measure up? Was I ready? I suddenly realized we have less than three years to go. We have already passed the first 280 days of the final 1260 days. Time is running out. If I haven't got it right I need to change and change quickly.

Brethren, this caused me some stress. How do I know what I need to be doing? Where am I letting down? I needed to find the instruction as to what I should be doing so that I could know what to measure myself against. Where would I find a list of things that I needed to be doing so that I could tick each one off as I went through the list? Tick the box. Done that. Check. Next on the list. Done that. Check. And so on.

So the first step for me was to create the list. Where's a start? Brethren, in this split sermon I'm going to share with you my journey, my journey to find the list, my list of things to check to make sure I had done what I needed to. Some of you may relate to the things that we're going to cover. Some of you may be beginning to smile as you've possibly been where I am and travelled a similar path, possibly with similar findings.

The title of the split-sermon is *How Ready Are We?*

So my first step was to look for instruction in God's book, to identify scriptures that would tell me what I needed to do to prepare myself for the return of Jesus Christ, the things I need to change to shift from my carnal way to the ways of God. It seemed a simple enough task. Now, which chapter do I start with? Maybe the 10 Commandments? Possibly to eye level as the more you look through God's Commandments and the longer you're in God's Church the deeper you go and the finer the detail.

Brethren, we've been told by God's ministry that the longer you are in God's Church the more that is expected of you, a greater level of understanding is given by God and a greater level of performance is required. Maybe I need to consider the New Testament. There should be something in there that will give me an instruction, a checklist. I began reading, and reading, and reading. Then as I was reading it came to me, what was I thinking? Had I gone that far from God? I can't do this myself. To know if I'm adhering to God's Commandments, His ways, only God can show me.

I had identified the most important first step in answering my question: Am I doing all that I can? Am I ready for Christ's return? I can't do anything without God. So the first thing I needed to do was ask God for His forgiveness, get down on my knees and seek His forgiveness: "Father, please forgive me for my puffed up arrogance, taking to myself the things that only You can show me." I needed to ask God for His help to show me myself and what I needed to change, what I need to work on to better serve Him, and ask for His help to make the changes that I need to because without God's help to change I will never make it.

Another question came to mind: Why am I here in the first place? How did I get to this place, God's Church? It wasn't my doing. God called me to this.

Brethren, we have all been called by God. We know this because God tells us in His book. The evidence is in scripture. Let's see this. Let's turn to 1 Peter 2:9. That's **1 Peter 2:9—But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises (character, virtue) of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

Let's also look at this in John 6:44. That's **John 6:44—No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**

And again, let's turn to James 1. That's James 1:17. **James 1:17—Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creation.**

Brethren, please also turn with me to 2 Timothy 1:9. **2 Timothy 1:9—Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.** Brethren, this last verse is powerful and it's something for us to keep in the forefront of our mind. We were not called because of anything we've done. We have been called because of God's decision to call us for His own purpose.

So how do we know if God has called us? How do I know if God has called me? This is an interesting question, and one that I've been asked by my family, as I'm sure many of you have. Family members have asked you this question, I'm sure, many times.

Many years ago, back in the early '80's (1980's that is, not 1880's), I began reading *The Plain Truth* magazine and began taking the Ambassador College Correspondence Courses. I looked forward to getting my marks back each time I finished a section of the course. At the time my father had been in Worldwide for around five years and after many months of reading and studying I came across a particular subject that I couldn't quite understand and asked my father to explain it to me. He responded that if I was supposed to understand it God would help me understand it. I didn't fully understand or grasp what my father was saying at the time, so I thought it was a sign

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that I wasn't supposed to be doing this "religious stuff," so I stopped all the reading and correspondence courses and carried on with my life in the world.

At the time, I suppose I felt a relief, as I had seen what my father had given up to be in the Church, and now I didn't have to do the same - or so I thought at the time. Many years later, when I was blessed to be called by God, I knew straight away that this was different. I had an instant understanding of scriptures and could clearly see the things that I had read in the past and not understood, but knew that I needed to follow the instruction. It wasn't a maybe or where I thought I could think it over; it was just a knowing that I had to do these things. So when I answer the question, "How do I know if God has called me?" the answer is clear to me. I just know. This doesn't help my family much, but hopefully in time they will get the opportunity to have the same knowing.

So, back to my quest. If I believe God has called me, do I trust God's word? Do I have faith in what God tells me? Let's look at this in Jeremiah 17. That's Jeremiah 17 and we'll start in verse 7.

Jeremiah 17:7— Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

Verse 8—For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Brethren, when we consider the blessings God has poured out on us since our calling, how can we not have absolute faith in what God tells us is true? So if we trust in God, have faith in His word, His promises to us, then should we not do as He tells us? And in doing as He tells us shouldn't we do this with all our might?

Please turn with me to Ecclesiastes 9:10. **Ecclesiastes 9:10—Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go.** Brethren, this verse is very clear and is intended as both physical and spiritual. We have been blessed with God's calling. This makes it very clear, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where we go." Once we are dead we have nothing until we are resurrected, if we are resurrected.

We have been given this amazing gift from Almighty God, a treasure beyond measure, and it is our choice if we want to take it, if we are willing to fight for it. How hard are we prepared to work for what has been offered?

Brethren, have you ever set a goal and spent time planning how you're going to achieve that goal, what things you needed to do to achieve the goal set, and then set forward to achieve the goal? Once achieved, have you had that self-satisfaction of achieving the goal, patting yourself on the back for the achievement? How did this make you feel? Pretty proud of yourself? Pretty puffed up?

There was a time when I chased this type of self-appreciation, glorying in what I had achieved, letting all who would hear know what I had achieved. Looking back I feel pretty sad for my behavior. Setting and achieving goals is good for us, and with God's spirit we get a satisfaction and confirmation that the achievement is a result of God in our lives working with us every step of the way, a reassurance in the knowledge that the achievement is not of our own doing, but God working within us.

Brethren, have you ever set out to achieve a goal and failed and when you look back on why you failed realized if you had just worked a little harder or done a little more preparation you could have achieved it? I, too, have been in this situation, and looking back realized the goal was just within reach, but I let down a little, sometime only a fraction, and failed.

Brethren, think for a moment about those many thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands who have been called by God in the past, who have had possibly the opportunity to be one of the 144,000 or to live on into the Millennium but have let down and are no longer in God's Church or have since died. How do you think they will feel when they are resurrected (if they are resurrected) when they realize when they have let down, fallen at the last hurdle, and looking back realizing how close they were? Do you think they would have worked a little harder if they had known at the time how close they were to making it? What a disappointment for them. Weeping and gnashing of teeth, I'm sure there will be. This is a place I'm sure they never thought they would be, but as they look back there they will be.

Brethren, I would that this doesn't happen to anyone, however, it will and it's part of God's great plan. Hopefully, we can with God's help make sure we're not amongst those who are in the Great White Throne looking back with regret.

So brethren, this verse in Ecclesiastes should be a motivator for us all. Are we doing all that we can do, especially spiritually within God's Church reflecting the behaviors that God asks of us?

If we go back to the beginning of this split-sermon I asked the question of myself: Am I doing all I can to be both physically and spiritually productive? Was I bringing honor to God in my daily activity? I now want to ask the question: Could I be doing more? I am beginning to realize, yes, I could. God has blessed me to see that I have let Him down. I have not trusted in Him or asked for His help in showing me what I needed to be doing.

Creating a list of things to check off, how carnal! This is of the world, not what is expected of someone called by the Great Almighty God. This quest of mine was no longer about finding a list of things to check off, but a panic to get moving, to shake myself up, and as Mr. Armstrong put it, "Get behind this thing!"

So, back to what I need to be doing. The most important reminder, we can do nothing without God's help. We must ask God for His help to see where we are letting down and His help to guide us through the changes we need to make.

Brethren, the encouragement we receive is in the knowledge that God's word is true. He will not let us down. We let Him down every day, but God will never leave us. It is us who leave Him.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 3:5. **Proverbs 3:5—Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall make smooth your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.**

Brethren, let's turn over a few pages to Proverbs 30:5. **Proverbs 30:5—Every word of God is pure. He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.**

Let's also look at this in 2 Corinthians 1:9. **2 Corinthians 1:9—But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raised the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.**

Brethren, also Hebrews 13:5. **Hebrews 13:5—Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me.**

Also, brethren, turn with me please to Psalm 27:1. **Psalm 27:1—The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?**

Brethren, these verses show us clearly what God tells us - to trust in Him and that He will never leave us. The fact that God is showing us the need to change and He is helping us to see the need for this change should be motivation that He is still working with us. So brethren, as we ask God for His help to show us where we're letting down and His help to change be watchful and on guard to ensure we receive the instruction and follow the guidance given.

As I reflect on my activity to identify the things that I need to be doing I'm reminded that this is a never-ending quest. There will never be a time while I'm mortal where I will be able to tick off all the items on any list of the things that I need to change to follow God's way, to live His way of life. The longer we live and have God's spirit dwelling in us the deeper our understanding of God's ways and how we should be living God's way of life. The deeper this understanding the more we need to change, the more we see in ourselves that needs to be changed.

Brethren, in the sermon series, *Own Your Choices*, Ron referred to the word "plummet." Ron mentioned in this sermon the importance and significance of the words that God uses in scripture. This word "plummet" is one such word. I'm going to read a section from *Own Your Choices, Pt. 1* regarding this "plummet" as it has real meaning to what we need to focus on.

So, *Own Your Choices, Pt. 1*. This is Ron speaking: "See, every era of the Church there are people who have hidden things in their lives, who have not lived in spirit and in truth and where certain things haven't

been addressed. And every era has experienced some of those kinds of things to one degree or another. And we just happen to live in a time where God's focus is very sharp now, more than ever before, upon what's remaining – the remnant – and those who are brought in to share in the remnant body. And it's a spiritual matter."

"This word 'plummet.' I want to take a look at this word, 'plummet.' I mentioned this again here last Sabbath, but again, a unique word, the two Hebrew words, the two words that are used here. The first comes from the root meaning 'to build,' but it has more to do with stones that are being hewn as stones; in other words, shaped into place. We look at ourselves, we talk about all the pieces that need to be chopped off, that have to be chiseled out of our lives so that we will reflect that or become that which is intended. And we recognize that there is a lot of that that has to take place in our lives, a lot of chipping away that has to take place to get rid of the things that shouldn't be there."

Brethren, how are we to know what these pieces are that need to be chopped off? We need God's help to see these things, the things that we need to be working on. Anyway, back to the section from *Own Your Choices*. "The second word comes from the root word that means, 'to separate or divide,' and used to mean, 'dross, and a lot of times for tin,' less valuable metal, that in this case here is not like silver and gold that they desire to keep. So it's being taken off the top when something is heated up, speaking of silver or gold. So the dross comes to the top."

Dropping down a few paragraphs: "Anyway, we're going to focus more closely on what is meant by this 'plummet.' And it has everything to do with this ongoing process that involves the continuing measuring of the temple. It's a continuing process. In the beginning I candidly thought it was just for that period of time, 3½ years, and then it would be over. But God soon began to reveal, no, no, no, it's going all the way to the end. This continual measuring and the focus is going to become sharper as we go along, a cleansing of the temple, a purifying of the temple, and a measuring of the temple, if you will."

"And so in the beginning primarily talking about different leaders, different ministers and so forth that God took care of very quickly, brought things to the surface so they could be seen. Certain things happened in the Church to bring things to the surface so they would reflect what was in them, so that they could be made known who they were. And so God allowed those things to take place."

Dropping down a few more paragraphs: "And, anyway, things happen sometimes in God's Church to try us, to see what we're going to do. 2012 was a big one for God's Church, because that year wasn't going to make your life better no matter what happened. 2019 is not going to solve your drama, if you have drama because that's spiritual. How you think, how you live toward others, how you deal with others in life is you. It's who you are. The decisions, the choices you make, they're yours. They're yours alone, nobody else's, and so how you deal with certain things, a year, the return of Christ doesn't change that. You think everything's going to change just because Jesus Christ is here, just because 144,000 have been established? I tell you, absolutely no. See, the day before he comes you're going to be a certain person, and if you're here the day after he comes you're still going to be the same person unless you happen to be one of the 144,000. Then there is

going to be a big change, because from that point on you have God in you through time, age-lasting life, and that life always in you and you in a spiritual plane that we experience now in physical bodies. Awesome!"

"Anyway, that word 'plummet,' talking about measuring. The word 'plummet' is used here in Zechariah. It contains all the meaning that involves the building of this end-time Church as each stone is being shaped, and it also contains the meaning of separating or dividing out the dross, or the tin, as it is described. So we're stones that are being made, molded, fashioned by God if we yield ourselves to that process, but we can also be dross. And you know what? The choice is ours. What do you want to be? And I believe, as a whole, everybody really wants to be stones that God is chiseling away at forming and molding to fit, to fit in a specific place in time. So we have to yield our self to that process."

"And so we're going through a continuing measuring of the temple, if you will, a temple that is being highly refined at this time. And so this matter of trials and tests and things happening in life are going to bring things to the surface one way or another. There are things happening out there that are bringing things to the surface in people's lives. They already did for the ones in the ministry who went by the wayside and showed themselves for who they truly were and what they were at that moment in time, and God told them, 'No. You're not going to have part in this,' and made certain things that came to the surface. Some of those are kind of dumbfounding how they came to the surface. God said, 'No,' and they went by the wayside or were put out and made to go by the wayside."

Brethren, let's remind ourselves of the scriptures at the beginning of the split-sermon, the warnings to be watchful and on guard. Here is evidence of what will happen if the warnings are not heeded, especially following Pentecost of 2012.

Let's look at **Matthew 24:48**. **Matthew 24:48—But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and an hour that he is not aware of and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** Brethren, many of those who were with us up to Pentecost of 2012 are no longer with us. "The lord of that servant came in a day when he looked not for him, and an hour that he was not aware of."

Let's go back to the section from Ron's sermon, *Own Your Choices in Part 1*: "And as time has gone along, and especially in the last few months, God has given a renewed focus. And a reason for the sermons that are being given – to warn, but to encourage, but to warn those who are not doing what they should be doing, 'Get behind this thing! Get behind it! Get on with your life! Become productive spiritually and physically in your life! Do what you need to do!' This is not time to coast and just kind of wait around for 2019. 'I'm just going to kind of slide in, see?' Oh, no, you're not going to slide in."

"Isaiah 1, because it talks about dross here. And I'm really kind of amazed at some of the things. And then you go back and read certain things in a specific context with a specific focus, and this is one of those that we have a specific focus of what God is doing right now. We have every power and blessing in front of us, to grab hold

of it. And that's all we have to do, just grab a hold with all of our being and realize it's a fight. And we need to grasp that even more so, that you've got to be in the fight. There is no coasting. There is not taking it easy... not even in our physical lives let alone our spiritual lives. There is no coasting! You've got to fight! You've got to pour yourself into this! And God wants to know that anyway! Do you want this? And if you do, how much do you want it? Do you grasp what's in front of you, what He's offered you? And if you do, you'll fight for it! That's why all the examples about military and fighting are so important, putting on the whole armor of God."

"These things are exceedingly important for us to grasp because this isn't some cake-walk. It was never meant to be easy! You've got a hard life? Join the club! Whatever it is you're given to bear, whatever it is you're given to carry as a part of your life, to make the changes within that period of time, you have opportunity to make changes. You have opportunity to grow in that period of time. That's the most important thing you can receive. It's not about all the physical things of life. That's just a part, a means to an end. What's spiritual is what's important. What's in our mind is what's important. What God is offering us is what's important."

"You know, as much as I'm crying out I know there are going to be some who still are going to stroll. And that hurts. To think that after hearing all these things there are those who are just not going to make changes in their life, who are not going to throw themselves into the race, or to fight. Fighting! If you're not fighting, you're not going to make it and you're not going to be offered this to the end."

"You've got to grasp that what you've been offered is the greatest thing that human beings can be offered. It's the most awesome especially in this end-time! You're being offered the most awesome thing that any human being can be offered. And how you look upon it and how you address it reflects how you think about God. It reflects your attitude and your mind towards the Great God who started drawing you in the beginning. And if you don't treasure it and you don't want to fight for it, why should He give it to you? And the truth is He will not do so – absolutely will not do so. You come under greater judgment. And so either we fight for it or not. See, and that's the difference. If you fight for it, God will help you fight. God will help you win. God will help you come through this. God will give you strength. God will help you learn the things that need to be learned. He will bring you through whatever suffering there might be, God will bring you through it. And all you have to do is hold on and cry out to God for the help to do it."

"But if you don't throw yourself into it – you kind of want it, but you don't want to do the work involved to get there, you're really kind of, 'I want that. I want what's offered,' but you're not going to work at it, you're not going to apply yourself, that goes against God's ways. It goes against God's law. God works! Jesus Christ made it clear. He said, 'I work and my Father works.' He set the example at creation of how we're to live our lives. So it's physical and it's spiritual. It's not lazy. It's not lethargic. It's not coasting. It's not Laodicea. And all we have to do is grab hold of it. And if we don't who are we (1 in 14,000,000) that don't treasure what we have? Who are we if we don't treasure it? We not only won't receive it, we come under a curse big time."

Brethren, this refining process is ongoing. If we are putting in the effort, as in Ecclesiastes 9:10, and asking God for His help and following God's guidance then we will not be cast out as the dross but will be refined and shaped into what God needs us to be. Brethren, in these few paragraphs that Ron delivered during his sermon, *Own Your Choices, Pt. 1*, he is showing us clearly what is

required of us. How much plainer can he make this? We need to shake ourselves and follow the instruction. This is from God through His apostle on earth - a warning to us all.

So brethren, in my quest to identify a list to check off the things I need to do, I need to put my trust, my absolute trust in God and have faith in His word and seek His help every day - even multiple times every day, to show me the things that I need to change, and ask for His help to make these changes. If I do these things with all my might, as stated in Ecclesiastes 9:10, I just may, with God's blessing, be ready for what is required of me as part of God's Church when Christ returns.