

We're going through a series entitled *Real Freedom* with this being *Part 3*.

As has been mentioned in each of the other two sections of this we know that real freedom can only come from God. This world has its ideas about it, ways of giving peace, ways of giving freedom to people, but it isn't real freedom. We look forward to that which God can only deliver, and we're now focusing upon how God is leading us through the process that leads to that.

In *Part 2* we had just started covering part of what the apostle, Paul, had to say about this subject in the book of Romans. Romans has a lot to say in this, and really, with this focus we have of real freedom, I'm inspired because it helps us to dig a little deeper, just because of the subject matter, into some of the things that Paul explained in the book of Romans to help clarify certain matters in that regard. I can't help but think about Passover that's coming up as well because a lot of this has to do with preparation for Passover as well, let alone following up on some of the other series that we've gone through. I'm always inspired by how God lets us dig a little deeper into what He is giving to us. Even though they are scriptures we've heard many, many times, when there is a particular subject He lets us dig a little bit deeper, learn a little bit more, be inspired a little more deeply. So it's an awesome thing this process of how God molds and fashions us.

We are continuing on then today with this process of being freed from bondage, that it begins with God's calling. He calls us. He begins to let us see something that we could not otherwise see and He helps us to learn that indeed it's akin to the story in Egypt when the children of Israel were led out of bondage and we're reminded of that at that particular season of the year, as we're approaching that now, even, as I mentioned. But that analogy or that type that's given there, that it's very similar to what we're doing on a spiritual plane then because we're coming out of a spiritual Egypt and God is leading us out of bondage and giving us or letting us begin to taste of, if you will, real freedom. We're not there yet, but it's a process. It's a long process; it's a lifelong process in many cases. It takes a lot of work. It doesn't just happen.

Just as the Israelites, it took them a long time to come out, to do the things they did, to go along the course that they did. They were only given a measure of something that wasn't complete. For us, it's complete. It's absolute true, real freedom.

So we're going to pick up where we left off last week and that's in Romans 2. We just barely got started so I want to pick that up right quick like. But earlier on in *Part 1* we talked about the story of that which is given as symbolism of the woman in bondage and her giving birth to Ishmael through the physical effort of Abraham to fulfill God's promise. In other words it was something that he was working out, not looking to God to work out, because he believed what God had to say and what God was going to give to him, a son, and all the promises that went with that,

because there are a lot of promises connected with that. So the things that Abraham was given, because it wasn't happening right away, it was as though he had to work it out, and so he went about that.

There are lessons in that that we can learn as well as we go through some of this that we're talking about, because it comes up over and over again and it'll come up in the book of Romans again, some of this analogy. Then we looked at the other side as well, of the story of Sarah, whereby God did fulfill His promise to give a son, but it wasn't through the methods of Abraham to try to work it out on his own to fulfill the promise. That's the difference. Even in God's Church so many people, when we first begin the journey, we tend to rely on self. As we grow spiritually and as we go through different experiences in life, different trials and so forth as God molds and fashions us, we learn to rely more on God, to trust in God, to look to God knowing that everything we're able to accomplish comes from God, everything we're able to know comes from God, and yet we have to work hard at it. We have to apply ourselves. We have to want it. We have to desire it with all of our being. There are choices we make along the way, but when it's all said and done God is the one doing it, but He's making it possible for us to do a right kind of work.

That's important for us to understand. It's not something that we're trying to do to feel better about ourselves by our efforts, but we still have to apply ourselves. That's a part of what is being discussed here in this process, the difference between Sarah and Hagar, because there's a great difference in how people think. It has been with the Church as well even over long periods of time, of things that have to be learned.

So again here, back in the book of Romans, **Romans 2:28**. So he begins by saying, **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...** So to a Jew what does that mean? Well, it wouldn't mean a thing. But to the Church it does. See, to the Church, he was addressing the Church; he wasn't writing to the Jews. There were Jews in the Church and those as well here in the Roman world to whom this was addressed, and so he's still saying here, **he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.** So carnally somebody would hear that and think, well, that's kind of ridiculous, "He is not a Jew who is a Jew or a Jew physically," I should say. How is that possible? Then circumcision here, as well, when it came to what the Jews believed. He's showing here there is much more to this than what God intends and what God intends that we grasp and understand.

But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, it's what's inside, that which only God can work with and change. ...and **circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit.** So again, the spirit, the spirit essence that God has given to us. We understand that much more now than we used to in times past during the different eras of God's Church until God revealed it to Mr. Armstrong, what that meant. That goes back to a period of around 1970ish, 1971 when he wrote *The Incredible Human Potential*. In that he discussed how that there is that spirit essence in the mind that God has given to human beings, and that with God's holy spirit we

can be begotten in that spirit essence that we're all given, that make us different than the animal world, if you will, the animal kingdom, and for a purpose.

I can't help but think of how different ministers, different ones went off on that one too, because they began to say Mr. Armstrong, he's teaching the immortality of the soul now. You think, where did they get that one? Well, it just shows they were sinning, they were doing things they shouldn't be doing, and when you do you cut yourself from an ability to see something that God gives, and they couldn't see it. They could only see it in physical terms, not on spiritual ones, not for the truth that it was.

So it's in the spirit, circumcision is that of the heart...**not in the letter**; not in the physical outward part of the letter of the law, that you strive to do things by your own ability. That's what he's discussing. It's not in the letter of the law because people try to feel better about themselves by the things they can do. It's done in the Protestant world to a certain level. Not too much, but to a certain level; they go to church on Sunday.

I remember a young fellow that I became acquainted with when I was a teenager on harvest runs and cutting wheat in Kansas, up through Dakotas and so forth, and he was a Catholic and I hadn't been around any Catholics before and some of the things that we would get into discussions about or talk about sometimes blew my mind. I wondered how could they believe some of this. I didn't have much understanding of anything, but it didn't make sense, thankfully, because it wasn't sensible, what they're taught. But some of the different ideas that people come up with sometimes, a great distinction here about what we think and what we believe when God begins to work with us, that it's not a matter of the letter of the law, it's not a matter of trying to feel better about yourself.

It's not a matter, even for the Jews, a matter of living what they thought they were doing as far as the 10 Commandments. They keep the Sabbath. They tithe. They do these various things. So by going through that they felt better about themselves. They had offerings and so forth that they would give so that they would feel better about themselves. They would give various kinds of animals for sacrifice so they would feel better about themselves. But it only made them right with the rest of the people as far as the community was concerned, but it didn't take away sin.

God let them have that to feel a little bit better about themselves. It was good that they did strive to live by the law. The more people strive to live by the law, even on a physical plane, the more they're going to enjoy life. It's going to be better for them. They are a people who are known for tithing, and they're blessed because of that, because they obey that law. People who obey various things, even from a physical standpoint, are blessed. If you don't kill people, if you don't murder you have a better life. You're not screwed up up here. You don't go to war, you don't kill people, you don't kill children, you don't do these things, you're going to feel better!

So the more you obey God the better you're going to be. The less you commit adultery or do these kinds of things that are being done in the world, the better your mind is going to be, the

happier your life is going to be, the better your family life is going to be. So the more people obey certain things, even in the letter of the law, the better their lives are going to be. But it's not spiritual. There's a giant difference in that.

That's what God is showing, the difference between Hagar and being in bondage, and that which is by Sarah, a matter of promise and what God does in us, in the mind and what He does in the spirit of our thinking and transforming of the mind. It's a beautiful picture because there is so much more in Romans to understand and comprehend than just reading the book with some of the comprehension of certain things that we do have. That saying, "It's a gold mine." Spiritually, it truly is. There is so much there that even within the Church it takes a long time to come to really grasp and comprehend because growing spiritually is not a physical matter. It is indeed a spiritual one.

Again here, **He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not from out of...** which is what it is here, the words. Sometimes just certain words and some of the things that were translated as far as Old English is concerned, and then the bondage that other people in traditional Christianity have that they still have certain thoughts and thinking in their mind that are messed up. They might translate something a little bit more clearly at times because they see a certain Greek word or a certain Hebrew word and they do a little bit better, but they still don't understand, they still don't grasp God's purpose and God's spirit because they can't. But we can and we can grow in these things, in greater understanding.

I try to point some of these things out at times here about what is truly being said because, again, that is something spiritual that God gives because it's an understanding of God's purpose in the words and how they're used sometimes in the Greek, that they picked the wrong ones or have the wrong twist to it that give the wrong implication or the wrong thought.

Again, **it's in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise,** in other words, "worthy of praise," as we talked about, **is not from out of men but from out of God.**

And then **Romans 3:17**, speaking of all mankind it says here, **The way of peace they have not known.** All that mankind really knows, though he doesn't understand it, though he doesn't really know it, but what he is is the way of selfishness, drama, and bondage, and that which comes from that. That's all they can know. They don't know the truth. They don't grasp it. They don't comprehend it. That's their life. They don't understand they're in bondage.

What did the children of Israel think? Were they trying to leave Egypt? Did they want, when they finally got a little ways away, what did they want to do? They wanted to go back to where they could count on how their day was going to go, even though as hard as it was. They didn't understand what it was to be free. They didn't grasp it because they had a certain way that they were taken care of and they got used to that. They wanted that at a certain time when things weren't going the way they thought they should be going and what they thought they were going

to get right away. You don't get it right away. You work for it. You fight for it. You continue to fight for it. You keep moving forward. Whatever you're given to believe you hold on to it with all of your being and you do whatever God asks you to do. Because our life is His and He knows what's best for us. We don't know. We think we do so often.

The way of peace they have not known. So mankind has never known the way of peace. Mankind has never known the way of real freedom that comes with that as well. **There is no fear of God before their eyes,** and that's the reason, because people don't have a fear toward God so they're not striving to live God's way of life.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law... Not the best of translations in the sense of the context and the Protestant world and what this is saying because their concept is is that we're no longer under the law. Well, what do you mean by that? Well, the law has been done away. It's the same old thing. What law is it that they hate? They hate the things that have to do with whatever conflicts with what they believe - primarily the seventh day Sabbath and the holy days. That's the big start right there. That's been done away with. Think, "Well, then I can have your car? I can go out and take your car?" "No, don't steal. That's good." So it doesn't even make sense, but people can't be sensible. They can't think those things through. They're blinded to it.

So when you're in bondage you don't know it. Only when God calls you do your eyes begin to be opened and you can begin to see what people are in bondage to. That's why Christ said, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing." When you can live your life like that and not hold things against others no matter who it is - especially in the Church - should never do that! But even in the world, should never do that. Because they can't help it.

Sometimes we have expectations of saying that others should be at a certain point or they shouldn't ever have, do a certain thing, and yet we don't see ourselves. We can't see in the mirror. We don't see ourselves for what we really are as human beings. We're all in the same boat. We're fighting against our selfish human nature. We're all in the same boat, we truly are, fighting against our own selfish human nature. Nobody is better than others, see.

We should always have that attitude of mind that Christ had and that Stephen had, "Don't hold this sin against them. They don't know what they're doing." So that's a matter of something, whether we believe it or not, as to how we respond. If we really believe that you know what? We're going to respond, "They don't know what they're doing. They're in bondage. I'm not. I can't expect of them what they can't do. They're incapable of it." So if we really have that kind of thinking we'll automatically have a certain response. We won't even have to think about it, but it takes time to grow in that.

So again here, **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law...** So again here, it's not like the Protestant world says, that the law has been done away with. This is a part of what Paul is talking about in the book of Romans because of the ideas that

the Jews had, but the same principles hold true and ideas that people in the Church have had in their beginning of their calling, or in the beginning of even setting the truth back on the right track, if you will, or being able to restore the truth in the Church that happened during Philadelphia. There is a growth period. You don't receive it all at once. The first tendency of the human mind is to think physically. That's the way it's always been.

God has shown, because of the Philadelphian era, that it takes time. It takes time to grow. It takes time to build. It takes time to mold something in us, to get to a certain point where we can see things better. Each group that comes along as time goes along - those who were called in the 50's, those who were called in the 40's, it was different from those who were called in the 70's. Why? Because the stability and the balance and the truth was stronger by that time; the ability to see things was clearer because of the growth that had taken place in the Church. That just continued on into the early 80's, even more so because of Mr. Armstrong talking about putting things back on the right track. Then, after his death, then we had a tough time.

The way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. And now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law. What does that mean? It's talking about, and an understanding here that you can only know by the truth, you're under the penalty of the law. In other words, you're under the death penalty unless you have more of the story - your Passover - otherwise you're under the penalty of death of the law. Because the law is out there; it's always been there. Paul is explaining some of these things to them.

Chapter 3; now we're going to go on. I just wanted to pick up those verses there. **Romans 3:20—Therefore, by the deeds,** in other words, the works or the physical effort **of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.** You're not justified by how well you keep the Sabbath. You're not justified by how well you keep the holy days. You're not justified by tithing. You're not justified by doing, living the law. You're not justified by that. That's a hard thing for people to grasp sometimes. There is a stark difference between what the Jews did, but even within the Church, the ability to understand this, the ability to know and grasp what is being said here is difficult.

So again here, the reason these things are being pointed out? It goes back to this thing, this concept, this idea that's a carnal one in a human mind, of the difference between Hagar and Sarah, the difference between trying to work something out on your own and seeing things on a physical plane and what you put into it and your efforts, or understanding God in the picture and your reliance totally on God and that you have to do certain things, you have to strive to live certain things, but it's by God's blessings and help and power and His fulfilling of promises. You still have to do certain things.

Therefore, by the deeds, physical effort and so forth **of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.** That's pretty simple. Because of God's law you can understand what sin is because God has said "This is how you're to live," and because this is something, in essence, that is generally referred to, going back to the 10 Commandments, the

outline of the law, in that respect, though it can be summed up even more so by just one word - love, agape, God's love, but as far as the law is concerned, because of that we know what is against the law. We know what sin is. That's all he's saying. You can understand it then. You can understand that there is a certain way of life that God says we should strive to live, and here is how it's stated, whatever it might be: You shall not murder. You shall not kill (murder). You shall not steal, whatever it might be. So you know right and you can learn certain things of what is right and wrong.

But now the righteousness of God... Now, it's not "without." The word means "apart from." **The righteousness of God apart from the law is made manifest (revealed), being witnessed by the law and the prophets.** Again here, it's showing there's a righteousness of God and He's helping, striving to help them to come to understand there is that which you can have as far as righteousness is concerned, but it's not by your efforts, though you should put effort into it. So there's a soundness of mind there and a balance and an understanding of how it comes about.

"...apart from the law." It doesn't mean the law has been done away with. It doesn't mean that the law isn't in effect at all. Satan has really done a number on people. He really has, and because of that there is that which takes time to come out of, out of bondage. Because a lot of people in God's Church, especially the stronger your religious background was in the world, in Protestantism or whatever it might be, Catholic Church, different ideas that people have, the harder it is to come out of some of that. It truly is. There are things that can be back here that can just in the beginning of your calling, even more so, that can kind of gnaw at you and kind of give misinterpretation of certain things.

So again, **The righteousness of God apart from the law is made manifest (revealed), being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is through faith.** It's about faith. It's about the ability to believe God, which you can only do if you're called by Him. Because being called and drawn by God then He communicates to us things that we could otherwise not see, we couldn't understand. But He gives us the ability to see.

What are some of the first things people begin to see if they haven't grown up in the Church, if they're just called into the Church? Christmas. Easter. Those are the big things. Sunday. All of a sudden you begin to see because God is showing you these are wrong, look where they came from, and this is what's right, the Sabbath, the seventh day Sabbath, the holy days. It starts with Passover, not a high day, but before you even get to the first high day you have a Passover. Things that people in the Protestant world and in the Catholic Church and many times never heard of in all their life. "Feast of Unleavened Bread? What on earth are you talking about?" "Feast of Tabernacles?" "Atonement?" A lot of people have heard about Pentecost, they just don't understand what it is. Because they keep a day, a holiday in Europe called Pentecost, on Pentecost, as a whole.

...even the righteousness of God, which is through faith in Joshua the Christ, to all and upon all who believe. They're the only ones, those who believe. How can you believe except God give

it to you, if God gave you the truth and you're able to see something, you're able to see the Passover, you're able to see things about the holy days, you're able to see about the seventh day Sabbath and the creation of God and all those things that we're to remember. He is our Creator; He made us, and everything else that goes with it, 7,000 year plan. Awesome! When you see those things what words can describe that. It's awesome!

Because there is no difference; because all have sinned. There is a righteousness of God that comes through faith, as it says here "in Joshua the Christ." That's where it starts. That's where ability to begin to grasp starts. We're drawn to the Passover because...what does that mean? You know what you're drawn to? Baptism. That's what this is about. You're drawn to understanding of things about our Passover, Joshua the Christ, and why he died and why you want to be baptized, and the whole process of those things connected with that. So that's what this is talking about. It begins here. You learn other truths, but this is the one you're drawn to, this is what you want, this is what determines whether or not you'll be able to come on into the Body of Christ, the Church of God.

So it is a matter of faith **...to all and upon all who believe. Because there is no difference; because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.** All mankind. All of us. We all have sinned and we still do. We have sin in our life that we have to fight against. **...and become justified freely...** Awesome! He's saying you can become justified freely. You can't earn it though you have to work, something the Protestant world just can't get because they have this thing about works in their mind. Why? Well, because they hate certain things about the law. They hate certain things that they don't want to live by. If it's about idols, they don't like that one. They don't like the one that talks about idols. So what does that mean if you have all these little figurines and things around the room and Mary and whatever it might be, statues and so forth that people think they have to have. Well, all the more reason not to believe in the law. It's been done away with. That sounds good. Yeah, we're freed. We're not bound to the law. Think, how dumb! How dumb is that?

...because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... There is a glory of God that we can have in life. It comes from God. As we already read, man, it doesn't come out from man. There is no glory that can come out of man that's right. It's impossible. It has to come out from God. Then when you share in that, when you're given that life is so much richer. It becomes richer and greater all the time the more you grow.

...and become justified freely by His grace. There is nothing you can do to earn it. You can't earn forgiveness of your sins. If there is any place to start or to be that's where you start. There is no way we can earn or have the sacrifice of Joshua the Christ unless God draws us to it and gives that to us and offers it to us and with that goes every kind of favor.

Grace is about many things. It's about being able to be loved by God because the reality is we can't share in and receive the love from God in our lives unless this is true, unless we have this relationship with Him, unless we could be forgiven of sin. Because what does He do? Is He in our

life? Is He in anyone's life, sharing in their life? No, because of sin God won't dwell there. He just won't dwell there. But we're blessed that He will dwell with us. He gives us a fellowship, a relationship with Him and His Son and with others in the Body then automatically.

"...we can become justified freely by His grace..." It's talking about the ability to be forgiven of sin. That's where it starts. Who can earn that? He's the one that chose to give his life, Joshua did. He's the one that as he learned more and more about who he was and came to understand what he was to fulfill, that he made those choices all along the way. That's what he wanted in his life - to fulfill it, to accomplish it for the sake of all mankind so we could all become a part of God's family.

...and become justified freely by His grace, through the redemption... Again, that word meaning "release from bondage through a payment," through something that someone else paid for. We didn't. You can't earn it. It's insane, like this concept of trying to bring about the promises of God in our life by what we can do. Like I've made mention of, should a person pray and study and do things that they can do? Sure! We should want to do certain things. We should want to read scripture from time to time. We should. But to have something down to where you feel better about yourself as so many taught for a period of time, that you have to do it for an exact period of time, whether it be half an hour, an hour. Different ministers taught different things. "Every day, if you don't have a half an hour of prayer, you've got one foot in gehenna." Think, that sounds like the old brim, fire, and hell sermons that some in Christianity give, you know, when they want to preach in that way. It's like preaching fear: "And if you don't do that..." That's not what it's about. There is so much more, yet people in God's own Church have misunderstood some of these things and misapplied some of these things. So we grow in different ways.

To understand what it really means to receive a freedom from God? Just like I said here about forgiveness and sin and the past here, it's gone! Do we really believe it? Because sometimes it's just reflected in our lives whether we really believe it or not. It's like understanding, if we can understand this concept of Christ saying, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." If you really believe that you can't think any other way because it's who you are. You're not going to hold anything against someone who does something despicable and ugly and mean and cruel to you in life because they can't help it! They're in bondage!

So if you believe that you're not going to hold something against them. Why would you do that? Your boss, other employees, they're in bondage. There should be a feeling of empathy, of a desire to see them one day be freed of this so that they don't have to treat others like this. Can you take it? Can you receive it, whatever it is they're dishing out at you? Sure you can! Because you know the truth! You know they can't help it and you live in a world that's in bondage. Hello?! That's not hard to understand. But we do have a difficulty with that because we're human beings that have various emotions and when someone attacks us so much of the human response is to defend or attack back or whatever it might be. We don't have to do that.

That's why Christ said what he did. You're in God's hands. Your life is God's. He knows what people are doing to you, what they're saying to you, how they're treating you, whatever it might be. You can learn from that.

So just as much as that, if we can understand other things, like this matter of forgiveness, if we really believe it you're going to respond in one way. You're going to walk away free. You're going to get from your prayer you're free. You're not carrying anything with you. See, the two, to understand it, to live it is another thing. "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing." God says I've been forgiven of my sins. I repent, I'm genuine in my spirit and my desire is to do what is right. I loathe what I see and I confess that before God and I tell God, "Please, help me; fill me with Your spirit and help me to get rid of this mind. Help me. Please, continue to transform me," knowing full well, will it ever pop up again? Possibly so. But you're going to deal with it when the time comes. But for now you're clean! Walk away cleansed.

You don't always do that. You can't always do that because we're selfish, carnal, and so we have this war. Paul talks about some of this, this war inside of us, that which is physical because we're in this physical body. We're still in bondage. We're not freed yet. We're coming out of bondage. Just like the Israelites coming out of Egypt, we're not out of Egypt yet. We're not out! You're not out until you are out. And when are you out? When you're changed. Whenever you're changed. In the meantime, it's a battle. It's not going to be easy.

There are times there are going to be when you don't have what you really want to have, what you would like to have, or something is not going your way, like the Israelites. "Let us go back where we had the flesh pots, where we had the great big pots and we shared and we had this, like giant potlucks," you know, or whatever, "and we had the stew and we had the meat and it was provided. Yeah, we had to work hard, but we were provided for. Here we're out in the dry desert, hot, sand, and this is uncomfortable and I don't have what I want right now!" So they got mad at Moses. They got mad. They got upset. Didn't take very long. Sometimes we have the same kind of carnality that we have to deal with because something is not working out the way we want it to, because, you know, we're in the Church and isn't everything supposed to work out good for you in life? Sometimes it's a long battle.

You keep going forward and God continues to bless you and help you and intervene for you...in His time because He lets you learn through experience. If you don't have the experience you're not being changed, you're not being molded and fashioned, you're not growing. It's not meant to be easy. It's meant to be hard. Meant to be hard. Meant to be difficult. It is because of what? Carnality. Because of that mind that you have to fight and battle. Every time you do you're acknowledging to God, "I want You. I want Your ways and I don't want mine. I don't want the way of this world." Every time you repent you acknowledge to God, you're growing in character. Every time you repent you're becoming stronger. The more you do it, the quicker you do it, the stronger you can become because you're acknowledging to God, "I am wrong and You and You alone, You

and Your Son, are right. I am wrong. I need your help to be right.” It’s simple. It really is. It’s very simple. It’s hard to live sometimes.

... **become justified freely by His grace, through the redemption**, again, being released from bondage through payment **that is in Christ Joshua, whom God has set forth**, meaning foreordained or purposed. Whenever I read this I just marvel. Inside I marvel because I know what this means. When did He set this forth? When did He foreordain? When did He predetermine this? Before anything was created. Everything was built upon the need for (a necessity of being part of God’s family), the need for a Passover and a High Priest and the King of kings and Lord of lords.

...**whom God has set forth to be a propitiation...** This is a process of reconciliation. It’s a process. That’s what we’re discussing in the sermon here - a process of being freed, a process of coming out of bondage. That’s what it’s all about. ...**through faith in his blood**. Awesome! Faith. We believe it, that’s why we wanted to be baptized, that’s why we keep the Passover year by year.

But how far, how deeply do we believe it. That’s the question that’s being added throughout this series. How deeply do we believe it because then it’s a matter of choice to live by that. That’s what faith is and faith is what sets us free. Truly is. Because being able to live by faith then is when you have sinned and you have repented greatly before God for your sin, and you get up from your prayer and you know, you have a peace of mind. It’s spiritual. It can’t be because you feel better about yourself. It’s because of what’s in the mind, because of what you believe, and you believe what God says and you know you’re freed, you know it’s forgiven, you know that He’s listening to you.

What an awesome thing to have that kind of confidence to know that God hears. That’s why many of my prayers I keep that part up toward the beginning, the repentance part, because I want to be heard, I want to address the sin in my life, whatever it might be, asking God for help, and then I know He’s there, He hears me, I’m free.

So again, **whom God has set forth** (purposed, foreordained) **to be a propitiation**, the process of reconciliation, **through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission**. This word here basically has the meaning of “passing over.” Interesting. Amazing. Sometimes you dig a little deeper. ...**to declare his righteousness for the passing over of sins that are past**. Remission - passing over. It’s where it comes from. So whatever it is, can you get up from your prayer and feel that way and know? Because it’s a matter of knowing. It’s not a matter of carrying it with you. It’s not a matter of beating yourself up. It’s a matter of knowing you’re in a fellowship with God and His people and you’re cleared.

“...of sins that are past.” How past is it? It might be one minute. It’s past. It’s past. You’ve told God what it is. God knows. But you’re sharing with God, “I know. I know what my sin is. This is what it is. I need help! I cannot conquer this of my own ability. I can’t. Only you can. Through the grace that You’ve given I can be forgiven of sin. You give me more strength, and help, and favor,

more of Your spirit. I can continue dwelling in you and you in me. I can grow then.” That’s the knowledge, that’s the belief we have, the ability to believe that we have. That’s living by faith.

You can’t carry it with you. That’s a good measure oftentimes of where we are, because it reveals how much we’re relying on ourselves—Hagar—and not really being freed. If it’s a matter of Sarah because you know the promise of God, you believe what God said through His Son... He said this. He said that as you repent you’re forgiven. That’s by God’s promise and because you believe in that that’s what frees you, until you are freed fully.

...of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. I love it, how it says that, “Through the forbearance of God.” We are so incredibly small. We are so incredibly weak. The more you grow the more you grasp that. We are nothing! And yet look at God - almighty, all powerful, and we are His focus. The Church is!

To think that anything that happens in the world depends upon this Body is awesome and that’s the reality because the Church comes first. God’s purpose and God’s plan in the Church comes first. The sealing of 144,000 comes first. The first of God’s family comes first. That’s what God is working with. That’s what God’s working on, to mold and fashion, to prepare, to prepare us and the rest of the Body for His Son’s return to this earth. Awesome! Everything!

...through the forbearance of God. God knows what we are, but He has great patience. He’ll work with us. He’ll continue to work with us. He knows what we are. He knows our frame. It’s not an excuse to sin, but we can have that confidence in a relationship with Him and love Him for it...and love Him more for it, and His Son.

...to demonstrate at this time His righteousness. It isn’t ours. I think of times past of people who were lifted up by their righteousness, within the Church, ministry, brethren, because so often people learned it from the ministry. People really had a measure of certain righteousness so often by and of themselves. That’s why there was conflict at times even between ministers. One is better than the other. In this area, one saw themselves better than the other. Some of you who were in this area know exactly what I’m talking about - battle going on and competition between ministers. That’s great to have in God’s Church, isn’t it? Of each one thinking they’re better, thinking their choirs are better, and because their standards are better, and because of whatever it might be, and because of the way we had ours dressed, they’re better than the others. The others thought, well, because we’re more colorful and because we have a better understanding of some of this, we’re better.

Our sports teams, they’re better, you know. Yes, our basketball team, it’s better. If it doesn’t work out that way sometimes they get upset at the refs, you know. Sometimes there would be war. I mean, there’d be battles! There was one minister that people didn’t even like their team to play because he’s going to lose it. Now, that’s a great example to have in a Church and for people to see and young people to see in Y.O.U., to see a minister who goes out and argues and

gets mad and argues with the referee and actually changes the calls because, well, he's the minister! He can do that. He must be right!

I think of some of the things that have happened in times past and it was to teach us - so much of what not to do - because you could see this isn't godlike, this isn't of God's spirit. I marvel at what we've gone through through the forbearance of God. He let us live through certain things like that so we could learn in time.

It's not a matter of competition even though they preached against competition and said one day there'll not be competition in the world! There was one expression of one minister I worked with at one time. He had a certain standard of certain things. It was all physical and certain people that he would be down upon and he'd say, he'd use this expression, "A leopard can't change its spots." It about blew my mind each time he said it. I hated that expression because I thought, "Yeah, and what about God and His spirit? He can change the spots. You're not even giving them the chance that comes from God." Hope that makes sense to you.

So again here, verse 26. So again, this forbearance of God is great, is an incredible thing. He has patience with us, a lot of patience. I think of my life. I think of what I've gone through. I think of things that I've experienced. I think of my battles. I know that God has been exceedingly merciful to me and given me great blessings. The greatest of blessings have been because of forgiveness of sin so that we can continue on and continue to have a relationship with Him and with the Body, that we can leave sin behind.

...to demonstrate at this time His righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Joshua. What is it you're to believe? Well, what he did, first of all, to really believe it! It's easy to use those words, "Yes, I believe that he died for my sins. Yes, I believe that he's the Passover." But when you sin and you ask for forgiveness do you really believe it? How deeply do you believe it? Because it's reflected in how you get up from your prayer and move forward. It's gone! It's gone!! You don't have to carry any guilt. You don't have to carry any more except the knowledge that you don't want to be that way and you're going to fight against it.

You ask God for help to fight against whatever those things might be - the use of the mouth that sometimes just gushes out things or like the llama, it comes out the backside, you know, and it's just this drama, you know, that's wrong. So we know there are certain things going to come back our way because "I'm selfish. I know I'm going to have certain battles at different times, but the lesser they can become the more I can grow. The more I can catch them earlier on, that's what I want." So you fight! You fight hard. You're asking God for help to fight hard because you can't do it on your own. That's why we need God's spirit. That's why we need forgiveness of sin so He'll give us of His spirit and help us to continue in the fight, whatever those fights might be.

So do we really believe? And then are we justified? Because we're justified by faith. You're not justified in how you bring about God's promises like with Hagar. You're justified with your

following through with what God has given you to believe. You live by it. You live by it. That's faith. You live by what you've been given to believe.

Where is boasting then? If you're not lifted up in self and justifying self and feel better about yourself because "I do this," and because, "I do that," and "because I'm better than that person over there and that person over there." If we think that way you're boasting in yourself. You're not glorifying God because your real strength and power to change, to grow, to overcome comes from God. Glorify God. Your boasting is in God. Your glorying (that's what the word is), your glorying is in God not in self. There won't be any misconceptions, mis-idea, wrong ideas of thinking that we're better than someone else. If we ever have that then we're screwed up in the mind and we need to repent, see, something is wrong in our thinking.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. I love that. It's excluded, null, it's not there. Forget about it. **By what law?** How is it excluded? By what law? What regulates that? **Of works? No, but by the law of faith.** By the law of faith, that's how we're justified. **Therefore, we conclude that a person is justified through faith.** It's not this word "without" the deeds of the law. See, because this is recorded in a certain way because of the screwed up Protestant minds, of this thing of the law has been done away with. That's not what this subject matter is at all. **We are justified through faith apart from the deeds (works) of the law.** You have to work. You have to fight, but you're justified through this process of faith, but you have to have both.

Romans 4:1—Then what shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? So it's going back to Abraham. It's bringing out this story again.

So it goes back every once in a while here talking about various things about Abraham and the process he went through. First of all trying to bring about the promises of God in his life through his own efforts, in the sense of Hagar, and then learning later on, as it brings out, as we're going to go through the scripture later on, it brings out things about the other aspect of Sarah which teaches us the spiritual example of something we're to learn from. That's why the types or those analogies, if you will, are there.

So basically, what it's asking here is, I'll just paraphrase this differently, "So what can be said about what Abraham found out according to working things out physically?" That's what it's asking because it's in the story flow here. If you go back to what it said about Hagar and what it said about Sarah, he was trying to work things out physically. We are to strive to work things out spiritually.

So it's asked this question, "What can be said about what Abraham found out?" So it goes on to say, **For if Abraham (verse 2) had been justified**, meaning declared righteous, **by works**, by what he was able to do with Hagar, **he would have something to boast in**, to glory in, to be proud about. He brought about God's promise. He figured out a means, a way to do this, and it wasn't looking to God to fulfill the promise, it was a matter of something he could do on his own

abilities, his own reasoning, as they did. They used human reasoning of how they were going to bring about these promises and have a son. Not really her son, but you know.

...but not before God. So again here, it's this matter of realizing, wait a minute, there is something else in this and it's about God.

Verse 3—For what does scripture tell us? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Pretty simple statement. “Abraham believed God,” and God just attributed that to him, accounted that to him for righteousness. It wasn't that he was righteous. None of us are, but because we believe what God says and we choose to live by that, we want to live by that, we fight to live by that, that's what God attributes to us for righteousness. The fact that we believe what He says about sin, that as soon as we repent of it we walk away from it knowing we're freed, God has given that to us, counted that to us for righteousness. What does He do then? He lives in us. He'll dwell in us then because there is no sin. It's what God has done through His Son, the Passover, that we're able to have such grace, and mercy, and blessings in our life. It's a beautiful thing. So it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Verse 4—Now to anyone who works, the wages are not accounted as grace but as debt, something owed. If Abraham was able to work this out on his own and it wasn't a matter of God's promise that God was going to work out and intervene in His life to bring about certain things, to help in certain things that were otherwise impossible to be accomplished - just like coming through the Red Sea was impossible to accomplish - if it wasn't something that God was going to do then it's what they can do and they don't need God. But that's not what God gives to us.

So now to anyone who works the wages are not accounted as grace. So again, it wouldn't be a matter of God's grace. It wouldn't be a matter of God's intervention in life if Abraham was able to work these things out on his own. He's going to work out the promises of God. He's going to have a son through a different means, through Hagar, and then it's like, okay, he's going to be the one then that God's going to work these things out through later on. That wasn't a part of the story.

But to one who does not work, doesn't rely on self, what self can accomplish, what self can accomplish or do physically in this case, as part of the story goes, through their own efforts, **but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly...** Who are the ungodly? Well, when we have sin that's what we are. When do we not have sin? The moment we've asked for forgiveness because we believe in a Passover, and we're freed, we're no longer in bondage. We know that God's dwelling in us and we're dwelling in God. We can have that comfort. There's a peace of mind in knowing that.

Sometimes people get to a point where certain things happen in their life and they wonder if they're in the Church. It's like “Am I? What is my relationship with God? How close am I really to God?” Well, it depends on that matter of repentance; if there's repentance there every time you repented you're close to God, God's dwelling in you and you're dwelling in God. How much closer

can you be? What an incredible thing. But it's a matter of believing those things because that's what God tells us. That's what faith is all about.

... but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

What a simple, beautiful picture. Just believing God and God attributes that to you for righteousness, and because there is no sin that's why He dwells in you, because of His Passover, because of His Son.

Then a little later it goes on to explain what Abraham actually did. **Romans 4:18—who, against hope, in other words, something that normally would be impossible, who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be.** So again here, there were things that were promised, that were stated, that were given, and a little later on then God had to have another, some other conversation with Abraham and let him know this wasn't the way He was working it out, that there was another way. He believed God.

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body that was now dead. It was beyond that of having children, he believed, he thought, but God had a conversation with him telling him it wasn't Ishmael. It wasn't through Hagar that His promises were going to be fulfilled. He and Sarah would have a son and he believed God. He had had experiences in his life before that, so many things had happened in his life, God was working with him, he knew. He knew and he believed. In other words, he acted upon what God had given him the ability to believe. God had to give that ability through the things that He did in working in his life, and he believed what God said, that God was going to do it in another way.

It goes on to say **(since he was about a hundred years old).** So he was a hundred years old and he believed that he wasn't able to have children, and he had a lot more children. He had more even after Sarah died. Incredible because there were some other things that were given to Abraham about some other nations and things that were going to happen. Incredible. Incredible stories.

Again here, at this point here he considered himself too old, and God told him otherwise. He just believed what God had to say. **...nor the deadness of Sarah's womb.** He didn't even consider that. It was like, he believed God that she would be able to have a child. Because why? Because God said so. He believed God. That was attributed to him, accounted to him for righteousness. He didn't do it by his own work and his own ability to work it out, to work out God's plan.

It says, **He did not stagger at the promise of God...** Sometimes we do. I've known many, many, many, many, many situations, and I don't try to keep track of people in times and when they go through various things and various hardships and various sins in life and it's like certain ones that they feel are just beyond ability to be forgiven. It's like, "I can't shake it." Whatever it might be. I don't care what it is, God forgives if we repent genuinely before God. If we really, truly desire God's help to be different, to think different and we cry out about that.

That's why I talk about number 1, 2, and 3 on our lists, because you better keep track of those and recognize where your major battles are, and then other battles as well, but some of those you have to deal with when they pop up because they might be flared out at different times, but there are certain ones that are just who you are, your greatest weaknesses, and you need to know what those are and you cry out for God's help in those battles and fighting in those things and when you fall flat on your face you don't beat yourself up! You go and repent before God. You repent and you cry out to God to forgive you. You want to be different, you want to think differently, you want to have a different mind and you don't want to do it just because it's a physical command, or a command, if you will, and we're looking at it physically, but because you've come to a point where you're in agreement with God. The more and more you become more convicted that God is right and you want to be right with Him because it's right and you want your mind to be right.

We're screwed up as human beings and there is a lot of bondage to come out of. Egypt is pretty sick, and that part in our minds is sick. How blessed are we that we're able to be able to be forgiven so we can have more of the mind of God and see things more clearly, and see our battles more clearly? That's an awesome blessing.

It's like I've mentioned about, if you see the truths there is only one reason you do. Because God is giving it to you. So what does that mean? It means He wants you. He's working with you. He wants to forgive sin. He wants to continue to work with you, to mold and fashion you. So we believe God. You know you're strengthened by that spiritually? If you can believe that way, if you live that way, your life, more fully, more completely, and sin is behind you, there is a peace, there is a mindset there, there is a comfort there, a knowing with God. Awesome!

So again here, **He didn't stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith...** I can't help but think of the series *Be Strong and Courageous*. These things come from God. You don't work them up. You don't try to do this, "Today I'm going to be strong and courageous," whatever that might mean, this type of some of these "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" type of thing. Life doesn't work like that. You cry out to God for the things you lack and for the things you want to change that are in the mind, to have strength.

Again here, **but was strengthened in faith.** So it's a growing process. ...**giving glory**, the praise, the honor **to God**. There is a lot said there that can't be given. God can give it. It comes from God, but it's about a relationship with God. So giving glory to God is a process of thanking God. When you thank God what are you doing? You see something to be thankful for. You realize you wouldn't have it except that God grant it to you, except that God give it to you, except that God offer it, so we thank God. The more we thank God for the things we see we're strengthened in that, we become stronger in spirit. Strengthened in faith because, if you will, you're giving the thanks, the glory, the praise. You know where it comes from. It doesn't come from you. It didn't come out of you. You have to fight for it. You have to cry out for it because you believe it, because God's given you the ability to believe what He says, but you have to cry out to God for

the strength and the mind to do what is right, to live what is right, and you're thankful to be forgiven of sin.

You know, the more you see that the more you love God. I hope you understand that. The more you grasp and see what God has forgiven you of in life, the more you see the freedom He's given to you, the more you see He's drawn you out of bondage, the more you see that, truly, the more you will love God, truly, and the closer your relationship with Him will be, your ability to believe that because you see it more clearly, because you believe it and you live it, because you live it.

Verse 21—and being fully persuaded... The word means “convinced, convicted,” if you will. **Fully persuaded, convinced, convicted, that what He promised...** How deeply convicted and convinced are we, that when we pray and ask God to forgive us it's gone? It's gone! I've known of too many situations, too many things in people's lives where they don't feel that freedom. You don't have to carry your head low. You don't have to feel beaten up. You don't have to carry a bunch of rocks behind you because you won't let go of them. You're free. That's what God offers. There is a peace with that that can be explained in no other way but the experience of it, of a closeness in a relationship with God.

...what He has promised He was able also to perform. We believe it. We're forgiven. He performed it through our Passover. That's why he died, so the Father could continue to dwell in us and we in Him and in His Son. **Therefore, it was imputed (accounted) to him for righteousness.** It's beautiful what it's saying here. It's not by how good we are. We're not good. It's God that's good. The more that God's in us the more we can experience good in our life.

Now it was not written for his sake alone that this was imputed to him, but for us also. Things have been written to help others later on. It's like being a pioneer, and something happens and God gave that example there for a purpose so that others could benefit from it and learn from it. The whole Church since Paul wrote about some of these things has been able to benefit from and learn from this process. Incredible! There are certain things written in scripture that if they hadn't been written there I wouldn't be where I am by any measure. But because of what they went through, because of what they experienced, because of what is passed along to us, we're exceedingly blessed, especially being at the end now of all the experiences of human beings in 6,000 years and the different eras of the Church and all the things that have grown and what God is giving now before His Son returns. We're so blessed. We've been given so much.

Verse 24— But for us also to whom it will be imputed if we believe on Him, or it is “before Him.” Again here, some of these word's it depends on how you see it. **...who raised up Joshua our Lord from the dead.** It's believing Him. We stand before Him. We are before Him. He has called us. We have a relationship with Him. We believe these things and what they mean in our life day in and day out. The primary part is the ability for God to dwell in us because we're asking for forgiveness of our sins because He won't dwell in sin, but if you're faithful in your relationship with God when you sin you'll go to God immediately, I mean, quick as you can and say, “Father, forgive me.”

...who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Beautiful! So we can be justified because we could be forgiven of sin. If we believe it, we're free. We're given a freedom there. We don't have to carry anything around. We don't have to hang our head down low. Indeed, our head should be held high. They truly should be held high. Nothing to cower about, nothing to feel inferior about. Feeling inferior about something is because we're carrying around a big bag of rocks and we haven't been able to forgive ourselves because we don't believe what we're given. Ask for help to be able to believe that more deeply, more fully. When you repent it's gone!

Who are you? You are the children of the Great God of the universe, the children of Almighty God. If you're striving to live right with God and everything has been forgiven you and your Great God and His Son dwell in you and you dwell in them how great is that? How incredible in what we share in? That should give strength and that should give true courage of life to meet anything that's ahead of you, I don't care what it is, and to have this kind of confidence in life that your life is in God's hands. Even when death is staring you smack in the face, so be it. God has a plan. Life will go on. God's life goes on. Nothing can conquer and defeat and fight against God, see.

Romans 5, Paul just continues to build upon this story concerning Abraham and the way God delivers us from bondage and gives us real freedom. It's a beautiful thing, real freedom, the ability in so many ways to repent and be free up here.

Romans 5:1—Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Joshua the Christ. That's what we've been talking about. This is where peace comes from. There is a peace with God that you can have in no other way. To be at peace in your mind about life, about where you are, about who you are, about what you're doing because you know that your life is in God's hands and nothing happens to you but that God allows it. For what purpose? For you becoming stronger, for you becoming better, for Him being able to work with whatever it might be that you're going through in life, that as you look to Him, as you're trusting in Him and exercising that in your life, that God will bless you to become stronger and stronger and stronger.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Joshua the Christ, because it's talking about forgiveness of sin. That's how we're able to have it, and not only that, that we have a High Priest that we're able to go before, in the sense that we have him between us and God Almighty, and that this is what our prayers are about when we talk to God the Father, because that's who we address, **through our Lord Joshua the Christ.** That's made possible because he's our Passover and our High Priest, which has to do with prayer and a relationship with God Almighty and being able to converse with God Almighty because that's who you're conversing with, through him, through what he's done, through what he's given us, through his sacrifice.

...through whom we also have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand. That's how we're able to stand, and stand indeed with great confidence and boldness of life. What an incredible thing, to be able to have your head up high. Not to cower, not to have feelings of

inferiority. And yet that's something we have as human beings. You know where that comes from? There is a knowledge of God and then there is this human part back in our mind where we know what we are. We know the secrets in our mind. We know what our battles are. We know things that we don't want others to know, that we're thankful it's only between us and God because sin is embarrassing. It's a shame. It is in life.

We all have minds where God reveals things to us where we see them and God lets us see the lid every once in a while and we look down in that hole that has this horrible smell coming out of it, you know, as the lids lifted up. We see ourselves a little more clearly and it's not a pretty sight. Thank God He has a plan where He's the one who justifies us, where we can be strong in Him, not in ourselves.

Again, **through whom we have access through faith unto this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.** Do you know what that means, what that's all about? In the glory of God that we can have now, what is that? His life in us. That's what the glory of God is; that we know we have the glory of God in our life. You see and know and believe 57 +1, as we heard in the prayer. We believe those things with all of our being? There is only one reason we can. That goes back to God. There's a glory because of God's spirit, because of God's mind, because of His life that dwells in us, in our being, and we in Him. There is a fellowship, there is a bond there that's on a spiritual plane made possible because of Joshua and because of this matter of forgiveness of being freed from sin, as long as we walk in that God says He accounts that to you for righteousness because you believe Him and you live by that. What a beautiful thing. Give thanks to God, otherwise it wouldn't be possible.

And not only *that*, but we glory in tribulation also. Oh yeah? How often do we do that? You're going through a trial, things are nasty in your life, things are troubled in your life, whatever battle you might have right now: "I'm loving this!" No. Afterwards or as you're learning the lessons you're learning when you go through it, as you're learning experience from it, and then you glorify, you thank God that He works with you in whatever situation that might pop up in your life whether by design or by chance. So much of it is by chance. So much of it is just because of us. We've done it and because of what we are, yet God works with those things to mold and fashion us. What an incredible thing. What an incredible God to mold and fashion the mind to think differently. I love that. To bless us so that we can think differently. That's why I love the word "repent." It means "to think differently." That's what it literally means in the Greek language - think differently. God gives us the ability to do that.

...so we glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation works (produces) perseverance. So there are things we go through. We go through hardships. As we talked about earlier here, this way of life is not meant to be easy. You've got to fight. You've got to battle. You got to strive to obey what is right. You want to obey what is right, but you know you have to have the strength and the spirit of God in order to do it. You can't do it on your own ability. If you do, you're back to Hagar.

...and perseverance, character. Perseverance. Think of the things we've gone through. There is just a lot of people who haven't persevered. There are far more who have not persevered. Why? Certain tribulation comes along, certain trials come along and we don't trust in, we don't look to God, we don't cry out to God for deliverance, we don't strive to stay close to the trunk of the tree and it will get us. We're not repenting as we should when there is sin and that's what happens to people; they begin to get cut off from God's spirit. That's one thing I've always marveled at, in one respect, that sometimes people will hear a certain thing, that someone is no longer with us and like, "Well, I never... How is that possible?" It's like this just happened. No, it's been happening for months and probably years and years and years. You just haven't known it. It's a spiritual thing in a relationship with God that was very well hidden and God allowed it.

We learn from those things and we can grow from those things that we experience even within the Body. Some haven't persevered. Do you want to persevere, whatever it might be that we go through? Another year? So be it. Seven beyond that? So be it. If it has to be it has to be. Do I understand it? Absolutely not. But I know in time God will reveal it because He always has at some point.

When we went through the Apostasy I didn't know what it was in the beginning at all. It's like, this is God's Church, how could this happen to God's Church? Thankfully, God blessed me to see why, gave me the right questions to ask because He had a plan and a purpose for what He was getting ready to do. Everything was by design. Everything has been prepared years in advance. It's what God did - not any human being, so we're just blessed to be a part if we share with something that God is doing. How incredibly blessed are we?

But this thing of perseverance says a lot. That's why I think of races. And I can't help it, you know, different examples, Paul uses different kinds of things of having to do with athleticism and whatever it might be, whether it be boxing or running, or whatever it might be. There are lessons that can be learned from some of those things that are on a physical plane, but you realize spiritually what it means to you. Perseverance, you don't give up, you press forward, you keep going forward, you look to God, you elevate God even more so and look to Him and cry out to Him for guidance and direction. You believe God. Nothing is going to stop you.

...and perseverance, character. What a beautiful thing. If you persevere you know what? You grow in character. These things are even in a physical plane as far as physical attributes in that respect, as far as physical life is concerned. But there are certain things, there are traits and so forth, that come out of this even physically for people, but spiritually how much more does that mean? So much more! **...and perseverance, character,** or strength of character as some translate it, that comes through experience. God blesses us with experiences that we can grow in. We can grow in character.

...and character, hope. The more you grow in character, it's like I mentioned earlier, every time you pray and repent before God you're acknowledging, you're growing in character God is right and you're wrong. Even through that experience of going through that, that hope becomes

stronger in you because it's who you are. You're doing that because you believe it and it's who you become more and more.

And hope does not make (produce) shame... That's what it's saying. Hope doesn't produce shame. The hope that God gives to us of His way of life, it doesn't produce shame. Sin does. Disobedience does. But hope in something that hasn't been fulfilled yet in our lives doesn't change what we believe. We believe it. We hope in it. We have a unique hope in this era more than anybody that has ever gone before us, obviously. We know that we're at the doorstep right now. We know the world stage is set.

It only takes one thing. One thing! One thing in Venezuela because of Russia. One thing! One thing in the Middle East. They're already happening there and have for many, many years now, that one day we're going to come to understand had a lot more meaning of things that have already been fulfilled than we grasp and comprehend, because it's set, the world stage, different things and alliances that people have made because of what's come out of that part of the world. Things about the area of Israel, things about different nations around there and surrounding that region and the things of politics, and the things of oil, the things of a bunch of sons that came from Abraham long after Sarah was dead, who are fulfilling things prophetically at the end-time in their nations that God said would take place. That's what's happening right now.

See, Abraham and the sons that took place there, twelve, things of twelve areas of princes that finally became a reality in time as well as twelve nations of Israel. There were twelve others that people don't know or don't talk about as a whole, things that are in the world today that are very much a part of the world stage in the Middle East. Incredible, things that have gone on, things that have already happened. It's like people waiting, "Well, when is this going to come about?" It's already been happening. It's like the Apostasy, it didn't happen overnight. It's been happening for several years. It's just finally this is when it exploded.

So when is it going to explode? Well, we don't know. Eight days? I don't know. It can. Much farther than that then kind of gearing up for the Feast, though I'd prefer not. It's like my kitchen. I would just prefer somebody else finish it for me. I'm referring to that because it's kind of torn up right now in places. That's the only reason I started it. I'm just kidding.

And hope does not produce shame—Why?—because the love of God, agape, the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is given unto us. God lets us experience that. God lets us grow in that. The more we grow, the more we believe God, the more we can live this out to others. The simple thing of coming to understand how patient, forbearing He's been toward us, that ought to teach us something about our relationship with others, of how we should treat others.

I've learned a lot because of how God's worked with me how to work with others. One thing I've told the ministry to be different from the ministry I've known in the past - back off. Let things happen. We're aware of certain things that go on and until something has to be addressed in life

we don't have to go poking around. There is no need. Give space. Give time. You know, that's what God does with us. He doesn't come down and deal with everything that's going on in our life. Thank God. He lets us learn through faith, through a process here of our own relationship with Him to come to repentance unless it's causing harm in someone else. Then God will lead us to see that no, this needs to be addressed right now. Then when it's repented of it's forgiven and it's no longer there, it doesn't matter. It's gone. It's gone. You don't have to be concerned. God doesn't hold it against you and neither do I with anyone in God's Church no matter what has happened in your life.

If you're here, if you're in God's Church because you believe God and you believe the truths that God has given to you, it doesn't matter what's happened in the past. It's in the past! You're here because you've repented before God. What a beautiful thing! You're my brother. You're my sister. You're my family, whatever it is. That's the way we should see each other. Frankly, I'm a little older now, so a lot of you are just my children. That's the way I feel. I understand what Mr. Armstrong had to say, Paul had to say, different ones had to say. It's like having a lot of children and that's a beautiful thing. Parents don't hold on to what's happened in the past, of something that was wrong or done wrong. That's a part of life. That's a part of growing. It's behind. I've been there, done that. Thank God He forgave me. I can continue on. That's what we want for each other, to continue on together as a family, fighting for each other, desiring what's best for each other, wanting to see each other succeed.

So again, **because the love of God is poured out in our hearts.** What a beautiful thing, to grow stronger in your love to God, of God, of His Son, and of His family. See, because it's easy to say, "I love God," in words. "I love Christ." Do we love each other? Because that's our arena of proof as to whether we truly love God, see. How do we treat one another? How do we act toward one another? That shows our love of God and our understanding.

...because the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is given to us. It's only made possible by God's spirit. You can't work up agape. You can only work up philia, a fraternal love. You can work that one up, but you can't work up agape. It comes from God.

For when we were yet without strength, according to the time (I love this the way it's truly stated), **according to the time...** Well, what are we talking about? **Christ died for the ungodly.** Whenever you're called it's your time. It's God's time for you to have this in your life, to have this opportunity, this benefit, His love shed abroad in your hearts, in your life, to be forgiven of sin so He can dwell in you. That's why Christ died, not just to forgive us of sin, where the world stops. That's where the world stops when they talk about his sacrifice and what they see. They don't grasp that rest of the story, that the reason he did it is so that he and his Father would be able to dwell in us and we in them on a spiritual plane because sin has to be forgiven because God will not dwell with sin.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good person some would even be willing to die. But God demonstrates (establishes) His love (agape) toward us, in that while
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we were still sinners, Christ died for us. It's totally free; it cannot be earned. The payment, the reconciliation, the atonement, all that's made possible paid for by His Son that we're given freely, that we can benefit from and have a relationship with God and be thankful to God.

What an incredible thing that God doesn't bring up our past. Why? It's gone. It's gone. We don't have to carry it around. We don't have to be burdened by it. We don't have to feel inferior because of it. The reality is we just are inferior. We are. Because God is almighty and that's what we want more and more of in our life, that kind of life, that kind of mind, that kind of unity, that kind of conviction, that kind of...well, that mind.

For when we were yet without strength, according to the time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good person some would even be willing to die. But God demonstrates (establishes)...establishes His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We're going to stop there and we'll continue in *Part 4* next week.