

God's Righteousness, Pt. 1

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Today we're going to begin a new series and it follows in a very orderly manner the past few series that we have gone through. I'm inspired by these things because to me it's awesome how certain things, I don't know where they're going exactly until they're given, and that's the way it's been with some of the past series here, but it's always been that way; but the point being is right now as we're approaching Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread and the messages of those things we're going through right now, without planning it, without focusing on that, is just what's being given.

To me that's an inspiring thing when we go through that. Just like right now, it's very difficult for me, probably will be today, of not getting into some of this because I'm going quite a bit ahead. It's just like the Feast of Tabernacles and you start preparing certain sermons and it's difficult not to get into some of the other things that your mind is focused upon.

So, anyway, we're going to continue on in Romans and this sermon series is entitled *God's Righteousness*, with this being *Part 1*.

It just so happens that this series follows what Paul was addressing earlier in the book of Romans and we're going to just pick up from where that was and continue on with this particular type of focus here about God's righteousness. There is much to learn about this in a way that Paul expresses some of these things and also in a way that some of the direction of this sermon is going anyway, of things we're to learn from it.

I'm always moved and inspired by how God continues to give us more to build. It's a building process and we build upon what is established and God just continues to give us more; we just keep building on top. That's very much how this is going.

We're going to go back and read a few of the verses, just a few in Romans 8, and pick it up there in the story flow with a different focus here now, in that respect. But again, some of the things we've been covering are still a part of the story and they still fit into what we need to understand and what we need to grasp as God continues to mold and fashion us.

Romans 8:28—And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God. So again, inspiring sermons here, messages that God gives to us and verses here that we're going through and reading. So often we've read these verses anyway, but they mean so much. "All things work together for good to those who love God." If you're a part of what God is doing, if you have great desire toward God and honoring God and serving God then God's active in your life and working with you and things will work together **to those who are the called**, or called. So

again, that's a part of the story. We understand that God has to call us first before we can enter into a relationship with Him, and then He begins to mold and fashion us, as it says here, **according to His purpose.**

For whom He did foreknow... So again here, it's not a matter that a predestination and God knew who would come into existence at a certain point in time, save one specifically, and that was His own Son, but all others God has given through time as a matter of free choice. He has involved Himself in certain families to bring about prophetic events, to plan and prepare various things, just like twelve nations of Israel, whatever. Some of those things that God has planned out and influenced and worked with people, otherwise it's a matter here that God let's life happen. He lets mankind populate the earth and those things have taken place and what's predetermined is a plan and specific parts of His family and those who are going to be in the God Family and they're going to come from those in the human family. God works with people and calls them at different times to fit into His plan according to His purpose.

He has a purpose. The first great purpose has been to build a Temple, the first part of the Temple, and the first fruits of a Temple over the first 6,000 years of mankind. God has drawn various ones. I've known of various people who have believed in this thing of predestination and it's like it doesn't matter what you do everything is going to work out because everything's been written of who you are, what you are, how you're going to live, what you're going to go through. That's a bunch of bull. Life isn't like that and God doesn't want it to be like that.

So again, **those who are called to fit into God's plan according to His purpose for whom He did foreknow**, in other words, as a part of His plan, **He also did predetermine to be conformed to the image of His Son.** So the purpose, again, is to be in His Family and everything has to come into that light, into that focus, **to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.** We have that example before us, that which we want to attain to, that we want to be a part of an inheritance as well, to inherit those things with him that God has set aside, that God has promised.

Moreover whom He did predetermine, those He also called. There is no other way. If there's a plan here then God's going to fill that plan. If there are 144,000 then over 6,000 years, if that's God's plan, which it is, then He's going to fill that plan. That's all it's talking about. So He's called people through time.

What an awesome thing to understand, each one has to be called by God Almighty. Each one of us. If we don't understand that, "Why me?" You're wasting your time to think about such things. It's just a matter of being thankful that you are a part of something at this time and to strive to grasp that or appreciate it because of understanding that you're one in so few of people throughout time who have had such opportunity.

...those He also called; and whom He called, those He also justified. He had to! It's a part of His plan. It's about being justified. It's about being cleansed from sin. It's about being able to have

that process whereby because of what we are, selfish human beings, that there has to be a means whereby God can have a relationship with us. Because God can't be around sin; He will not dwell in sin, so we have to be cleansed. We have to go through a process and have a means then whereby God will dwell in us. It's all in our Passover, through him. That's the means. That's the process.

Again, as we approach that period of time God is helping us to focus on some of these things in a different way, in a unique way. Though we've heard so many of these things before it still helps to put things in a different part of the building process here of what God is giving us, inspiringly so.

...those He also justified; and whom He justified, those He also glorified. Sometimes we don't grasp that that, as I mentioned before, this isn't just about some future thing, of being glorified; it's a process that begins the moment you have hands layed upon you. "To be glorified." How many on the earth have ever had God's holy spirit, a portion of God, the begettal of the Great God of the universe in them? Very few! Very, very few, yet it's a part of God's great plan and God's great purpose.

So we are exceedingly blessed, not better than anyone else - not at all. On the contrary. Scriptures indicate just the opposite! Not the great and the mighty because of human nature that doesn't fit with what God is doing as a whole because they don't want God! God works with others because they can more readily be worked with, those who are more readily able to be humbled. Those who have a difficult time being able to be humbled, the time isn't going to be spent at this time on them, as a whole, because they won't receive it and they'll turn away. That's why so many have been called and so few have been chosen.

That's why at the end of an age we, candidly, are a bit of a representation of what the end of this age looks like. Hope you understand that. Because what that's talking about, what that means for us is that indeed, as scripture talks about, God has gone out on the highways and byways more than ever before to bring people into this Body. Because the proof is, the evidence is, the witness is that even after all who were a part of the Church who have been given opportunity, the overwhelming vast majority have said no, wouldn't receive it, those who have been given opportunity, let alone the others. Because, you see, there is a haughtiness and pride, because of going to sleep, when you go to sleep you can't help it, unless God just really jars someone, but even then, those whom God has jarred, shaken even more so to humble, to awaken, have refused this.

That's just out of the past of those who should be more inclined, more easily (you would think) able to be worked with. Not so. Not so. Anyone new that's brought along, as a whole, out of this world, again, not the great and the mighty. God is doing all this for a reason. Do we see who we are? And how grateful are we? We're not the great and the mighty of this world. We're looked down upon.

Even if we were of tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands we would be looked down upon. But we can't be because it's a part of a process and what God is doing, and the reality is we're in an age, at a time when we are, the world is like the days before Noah and the flood. Not just Noah, but specifically the flood. It's bad. Human beings are getting really bad. It's progressing so fast, the technology and the use of technology today. The mind is becoming so corrupt so quickly today compared to times past, in ages past. What took several hundred years to get to in the days of Noah now takes 5, 10, 20 years to get to a point where the mind is so contaminated, so warped, so ruined that even in the Great White Throne it's going to be difficult. It's going to be difficult, possibly more for this generation than any other generation that's ever been before.

The world won't be like what it is today, when people die and they're resurrected. I think of a time just before the Apostasy, or just after the Apostasy, and different ministers who were making a stand at that particular point in time at least against that which they saw was totally wrong, to go from God's way of life back into the world and what we'd come out of, that there was a kind of a humorous thing that was going around (because it was happening), "Do whatever you want to, to me, but please don't take me off of the email connection I have with others." Because that's what we had for communication.

Back then phone bills were expensive, compared to what they are today, and it wasn't uncommon for ministers being in contact with each other to have 4-5-\$600 phone bills a month because we did so much talking to each other. That's how much things cost back then, so we had this - doesn't seem humorous to you, but it was to us at the time - "Take anything away from me, but don't take away my email, please." I got mine taken away for a period. It wasn't too long. It was just a short time and then it became a long time. Another story.

But, you know, it's hard for us to grasp and imagine what it's going to be like to be resurrected at a certain moment in time at the end of a thousand years and what the world is going to be like. We are accustomed to certain things. You see, I think of the period of time before me. I was talking to someone before services here and talking about, made a comment, that we didn't have the kind of technology that you can have on TV today and in computers. We barely had a TV and we could only get one station. I didn't go into the story that it only came on, like, at 10:00 in the morning and went off like 7:00 in the evening where we lived in Kansas at that moment in time. That's all that was out there. I still remember the stupid commercials because there was primarily one advertiser - Hazel Bishop Makeup and they did the majority of advertizing at that time. So we were, I guess, in one way kind of grateful for them because we had TV, something to watch.

But how do you describe that to somebody who's never had it? And now a days? I think of when cable finally came along, or it doesn't even matter there, but when people had to pay for more, to have more TV stations. I remember in the Church when people had hard times, difficult times, and they wanted help from the Church, when we had a system of 3rd tithe set up and there was a need to help people who were in distress more than there is now because the government wasn't

doing as much to help people at that particular moment in time and the understanding then of there was that benefit given to people.

Anyway, there was that benefit given to people. So there would be occasions where we'd go counsel with somebody and work with someone to figure out how much to help them with to make it, to do, to get through a hard time. The one thing that always baffled me and kind of irritated me was people had to have their cable TV, had to have that monthly charge on there. Now, when you're hurting and you're trying to cut back there are times in life where you have to be willing to give up something and to work through something. That's just a part of life.

Now days people don't want to give up anything. They want to max out your credit card in order to have it, if you have to, whatever you have to do because have to get what you want and you want it now and you don't want to wait for it. That's kind of the world we live in today. But there is time for sacrifice in life and doing without because you learn from that. You learn from working and striving as a part of growth and a growth process.

Why in the world did I get into all of this? But anyway, I want to get back to that. The point being is it's hard for us to grasp sometimes what it's like for a specific moment in time to do without a thing, do without cable.

Today, what would young people do? What would old people do? What would people do in a restaurant if you took their phones away when they came through the door? They might have to talk to each other. They might have to have some kind of interaction. A lot of them can't. They don't know how. They're losing the ability to share and life is about sharing. They think they can share by texting. I don't do that. I loathe texting. How much texting do I do? Very little texting. If you ever get a text from me it's almost to the point of being a miracle.

So to take things away that you have so people who are in a different world and they can't do what they used to do? They can't have Facebook? There won't be any Facebook in the Great White Throne, okay? There won't be things like that. It's not going to exist. People are going to learn how to converse with each other. People are going to learn the importance of family. People are going to learn the importance of friendship. People are going to learn the importance of being able to express themselves with others and sharing in life. You think that's not the way it's going to be not too long in the Millennium here?

Do you think Facebook's going to continue on, or some of these other social media? Twitter? Who wants to listen to everybody else in the world? I'm sorry, but there are people who do. They want to keep up on those things. So tweet away, but you can't do it soon. There's going to come a time here soon where you're not going to be able to do that anymore. Because what's the purpose in it? What would be the purpose in the Church of doing that? Because things of pride and haughtiness and lifting up self, the things that people do, they use the media to feel better about themselves. And they don't. They get in these things and they get in these systems and if they

don't have something work out in a certain way it can turn quite ugly to where people actually commit suicide over it. Horrible!

My point being in all of this is we don't realize how bad this world is today because it is our norm. Especially young people, because it's your norm. That's all you've seen, that's all you know and it's hard to imagine something different. It's almost like I don't know if I want to live at that time. You know if people were really able to think about some of those things, "I don't know if I want to live in a world..." I'll tell you. That's exactly what would be out there, that doesn't have Facebook, where you can't tweet away, where you can't have social media, where you can't meet people online and date online. Because you don't know how to talk to people, you don't know how to meet someone, you don't know how to converse with someone, so let's do it through some kind of social media like Farmers.com. Or Farmers something? I don't know. I've seen that thing advertized on TV. It's like, "They don't get us so we have our own private thing." What's that one song like, "He likes my tractor," or "She likes my tractor," whatever, you know. You think, okay? We live in that kind of world and it's hard to understand what it is and how far away we've become from reality. We don't live in reality as far as a society anymore.

We are sick. Society is sick. It doesn't know how to function properly. What a sad thing when families don't know how to function properly. They go to a restaurant, four at a table, doesn't matter what age the children are, the parents, and all four are on their phones, oblivious to what's going on around them. I don't know about you but that hurts me. It's sick. It's sick! They're robbing themselves and they don't understand what they're robbing themselves of and they're blocking out everything else that gives any potential for a meaningful relationship. They really are. They're hurting themselves in what should be an opportunity to strengthen a relationship.

Satan's done a pretty good number, he really has, because everything, as a whole, is misused and he works to inspire that. So we live in a world that's worse than before the flood. It's hard for us sometimes in God's Church to understand that, that this is where we are and that's why the world has to go through what it does to be shocked into a reality, to be so shocked, to be so horrified, to be brought so low, to have no hope in anything that they have been accustomed to in order to shake the mind so that it can begin to be worked with when God begins to reveal what is good and what is right to them.

So it's all difficult sometimes for us to grasp how blessed we are to be called, to be called at this time, and who we really are. There is no reason for anyone to get a big head about themselves, how good they are, how much they know, whatever in life we sometimes do as human beings that we can get lifted up by. Thankfully, we could be humbled. Thankfully, God could humble us and work with us and draw us out of Babylon, out of Egypt and begin to reveal more fully His life, His mind to us. We are learning and have been learning to embrace it.

So hardship in life sometimes and difficulty in life sometimes, we don't grasp how great a blessing that is. Those things can enable you and help you to be humbled because God can only work with God's Righteousness, Pt. 1

that which is humble. I think of Isaiah when it talks about the high and the lofty ones, and that God can't work with those things, will not work with those things because it's contrary to His spirit.

Verse 35—Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? The more you understand what I've been saying, the more you see what we're talking about here, the more you understand this love, of what we have opportunity for, the love of God, the love of Christ in our life that we're able to share in, the more you see that and the more you recognize who you really are, what you are, that's a blessing. We're not great. We have nothing to be lifted up by but we have a lot to be thankful for. God blesses us mightily in what He shares with us and gives to us.

And so, **Who is going to separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written: For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.** We have to realize, again, what our life is about. It's one of sacrifice and if we're not willing to sacrifice? The hardest thing to sacrifice? This. Self. To say no to self, what self wants. Not only that but to see self and to say, "I loathe selfishness." I loathe selfishness. I don't want it in my life because it hurts all relationships.

Yet in all things we are more than conquerors. It's a word that means to overcome, to be able to overcome. An overcomer; one who is able to overcome. How are we able to do that? Because God calls us and He justifies us and He dwells in us, and then by His holy spirit we're able to fight this successfully, we can continue in the fight. **...through Him who loved us.** That verse there, I'll tell you what, because of what we're getting ready to go through, jumps out at me more powerfully than what it did last week, what this means, more deeply. I hope you receive that.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come... Talking about conviction. We're talking about our thinking toward God. How much do we love God? How much do we appreciate? How thankful are we for what we have? How convicted are we that we are going to continue moving forward; nothing stops us? Because that's what God offers us at baptism. He really does and if we agree to that and say that then He makes it possible. Absolute. It's just a choice we have to make. If that's our choice, that's what I want, I don't want anything else then He makes it a reality in our life by working with us and by our yielding to that.

...nor height nor depth, nor anything created shall be able to separate us from the love of God. So how important is God? You know, I've talked about the 1, 2, and 3, and that's caused some conversation; some not sure. Don't worry about those things. I made a comment about 1, 2, and 3, and if you don't know what they are you're out in the courtyard, you know. Well, I'm sure if you think about your life and you think about the hardest battles you have and the things you don't want to pop back up in your life at any point, of things you've worked on in the past or have been working on then you would know.

I'm going to tell you my number 1, okay? Because it's the most important to me, maybe because of and probably because of things of even more deeply so in my mind because of the Apostasy and those things that God gave about spiritual idolatry, what that's all about (talked about that a few times in sermons), and coming to see those things more deeply, the thing that I see the most is I don't want anything to stand between me and God, and any choice I make of selfishness I raise up in idolatry. So it doesn't matter what number 2, and 3, and 4, and 5, and 6, and 7 are. If I do any of those I have messed up my number 1, and I do not want to do that. Okay? That's me. That's my thinking. That's my mind. Because this is what I want with all my being. This is what I said at baptism, see? "I belong to You." I don't want this world. I don't want what we can achieve. I want what He can do in us, in me.

So again, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, they're private, okay? They're mine. They're my battles. Sometimes it's difficult maybe for us to see sin. We'll talk about that maybe in some of this series or the one to follow, but you know, sin is anything that's contrary to God. It shouldn't be that hard for us. Even the use of the mouth. And maybe our feelings and our thinking toward someone else. Is it always pure and good?

I don't care if it's as simple as driving up the freeway up here and someone cuts you off. That'll bring out your human nature. At least it does mine. Think, what is wrong with people! Well, we know what's wrong with people in the world. You can get caught up in those things if you're not careful, see? So it doesn't matter what it is - at work, at a job, whatever it might be. I've got a lot of little pet peeves sometimes that come my way and I have little battles to fight.

It might be like walking through a mall. I don't care how wide the aisles might be, if there's a group of people they're not going to get in a line of two or three and maybe talk back and forth. They're going to go right side by side, "Hey, Joe! Did you hear that..." "I didn't hear that one!" and come right at you. They don't know that you're there. They don't care! But you've got to get out of their way. There's some times I just stop and stand. Now, I don't do that very often but I have done that.

I remember two young guys in Portland, Oregon area, we were on the Vancouver side of the river walking down this area by the river to enjoy a nice walk along the river and these two young guys, they knew what they were doing. They were coming down through there and they were taking up the whole sidewalk. And I thought, "You think I'm moving over, you are nuttier than a fruitcake!" I stood there and I braced myself because if we're going to hit we're going to hit. You know, there's just sometimes you stand your ground in life. I had to learn to do that for three years otherwise people will take advantage of it in a wrong way. There's sometimes you do that and it's not wrong. It depends on your spirit and your attitude and what is going on in your mind. Now, I don't always do that perfectly either. There are times I sin mightily in the mind in thinking in those ways.

But they got by and then they turned around and I don't know exactly how they said it but it was like, "He didn't move!" Now, they were doing it on purpose—Amazing!—just to see what others

would do. Anyway, that's the kind of world we live in. Most people do it because they just don't care. We live in such a selfish world. It's easy to sin in a selfish world just in your thinking toward other people and what they're doing and how you think toward them.

The more we understand we live in a selfish world the easier it is to deal with some of those things, though I don't do it perfectly at all. I mess up often. Generally, when I get in the car. Because people are reckless; they do stupid things. Then if I'm not careful I'll do something stupid, see? Now, I get reports back sometimes, people think, "Boy, he's got to be a bad driver. He's got some problems there." Well, just sharing with you honestly.

What are your problems? What do you battle? If you don't battle things in what you say and how you say it and how you think toward others, do you love everybody in God's Church perfectly? Are there times that you maybe have a thinking or a thought towards somebody that isn't the way it should be as far as God says, because I know that happens a lot in God's Church, you know, where there is conflict and people have thoughts towards each other, wrong thinking. Because why? Because we're human beings. Because we're selfish by nature. And if things don't go our way, if something conflicts with that, there can be conflict.

So again, my number one is that I want God to be number one, and wherever He's not that's the primary purpose and focus for my repentance of whatever other sins exist, and if that weren't there I wouldn't be as motivated to repent of other sins.

So it's about a relationship with God and how you feel toward God and how you think toward God. There ought to be certain things that you realize are your primary weaknesses in life that are going to pop back up, whatever it might be, from time to time. So what's going to separate us? Because, you see, I've seen so many people go by the wayside. So many people in God's Church go by the wayside. It's horrible!

Who shall separate us from the love of God... Because that's what it's about. It's about a relationship. Do you want to have that kind of a relationship with God to where He loves you and you know it, and you love Him and you're convicted of it? Because many have lost that. The vast majority. ...**which is in Christ Joshua our Lord.** That's where it's at. It begins with our Passover, continues in with our High Priest, our intercessor, and on it goes.

Well, Paul goes on to speak to a specific people (this is the book of Romans), who are primarily gentile. But as with so many in the gentile world there were Jewish people in various areas as well. So oftentimes when he writes and talks about various things he's addressing a little bit of both, about the Jewish world that he was in and those Jews who do tend to come around when they're being drawn by God, obviously, in various areas, and then the gentiles because primarily he was sent to the gentiles. But there were still those who were Jews in the area, as he addresses in other books as well.

He's going on and talking about some of these, and basically here, when speaking of a specific people, as the Romans, or when it talks about gentiles and the like, basically for us and to understand, and what he's addressing and others address in scripture, it's about non-believers. Non-believers. They can be Jewish, they can be gentile, or whatever, but generally in the context of things that are written in the New Testament it's gentile or maybe some specific peoples because of what it was to teach later on in the Church. Because some of those things were given on a very physical plane to understand physical principles that Paul spoke a lot of so that those who were being worked with would begin to understand spiritual principles.

So although Paul is addressing some of these things somewhat in a very physical way they're designed to be that way for a purpose. This is just the beginning of the Church and some of these things are basic in nature, in many ways, but they're profound spiritually. That's why God inspired them to be written in that manner, to be used by others through time more and more with what is being said.

Romans 9:1. So it's, again here, about addressing those things about God, those whom God is calling, whether it be Jewish or Israelite or gentile, and Paul talks a great deal of this in that respect.

Verse 1—I tell you the truth in Christ. That's a powerful statement: "I'm telling you the truth in Christ." He's making a point to the Church, in that respect, to those who are called, to those who are converted, to those who have God's spirit in them, because they're the only ones who can understand that, that he is in Christ and he's saying this knowing this with great confidence and boldness. "I am in Christ. I am in God. God is in me." That's what he's saying, in essence, to them.

I am not lying. Why would he have to say something like this? The Church is new. Paul is dealing with new areas. He's writing to areas who aren't very far along, in that regard. In many ways what he tells them are very physical principles, and as they grow they'll come to understand more the spiritual of what he's saying because that's how God works.

He says, **My conscience is also bearing me witness in the holy spirit.** So it's like, "I'm not lying. I'm telling you the truth in Christ, and the holy spirit, the power of God, is bearing witness." That's great confidence. ...**that I have great heaviness, or sorrow, as it in Greek, and continual grief,** a word meaning pain or distress **in my heart. For I could wish that I were...** Not "accursed." It's a word that means **separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren...** In other words, "If they could be saved it's like I'm at that point where I'd be willing to do that for them." So you talk about sacrifice, that which is most important to him. He's just speaking in terms here that has to do with thinking and how you think, knowing it's not going to be a reality because God is not going to require that and there's a process, as he goes on to explain, whereby God is saving them.

So that's why he says, **I could wish that I were separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh.** He's even saying here, in this respect, by physical lineage as he goes on to say here, **who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service, and the promises.** So again here, he is talking in very physical terms but understanding it for him is very much in spiritual terms as well. He's explaining something in a very physical way to teach principles when they're able to receive it on a spiritual plane. **...which were to the fathers of old and from them according to physical lineage, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever, truly.** That's what the word "amen" means, "truly."

He says I'm telling you the truth and basically here this desire that's in his heart and his mind about Israel and what he desires for them, the Israelites, that they be able to be saved, as he goes on to explain in the things that follow here.

Verse 6—But it is not as though the word of God has not taken effect. For they are not all Israel who are Israel. So now he's starting to explain something that only with God's spirit are people going to get. Only within the Church can you get this. Even those whom he is addressing, they're not going to get it unless God is working with them, unless His spirit is in them because God has to give it. That which is spiritual, God has to give. If you read something like this all you're going to get is a physical story. Traditional Christianity only gets a physical story. They can't understand anything—anything—spiritual that Paul is talking about here. It's impossible.

He says, **But it is not as though the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel.** What on earth does that mean? He's explaining something here, that the Israel he's talking about is not a physical nation of people. He's talking about the Church. He's talking about those who are able to receive of God's spirit, spiritual Israel, that God's purpose and God's plan is about Israel, but not the saving just of a physical nation of people. When they were brought into the promised land, that's not what it was all about. That is a type of something far, far greater on a spiritual plane, in reality of what God is leading all to become a part of. In time all can become a part of Israel, not physical. The physical isn't important; the spiritual Israel is, the Israel of God, the Church of God, Mount Zion, Jerusalem, on and on it goes of those things that are used in scripture that are about the Family of God, the government of God, the way of God and so forth.

So he goes on to say, **neither are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, In Isaac shall your seed be called.** Again here, he has this desire toward Israel but now he's explaining that there is a way that God is working with even Israelites or Jews and gentiles, as he explains in a moment, that is what is truly important, but we start out with the physical because that's all we can see in the beginning. Then in time we begin to get and understand the spiritual.

In Isaac, so he's giving this that's prophetic here, **In Isaac shall your seed be called.** So again here, it's not a matter of a physical lineage. It's a matter of a specific seed and what is going to

happen as a result of it. It's about Christ. It's about Joshua. It's about God's plan. It's about how we become a part of spiritual Israel.

That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, in other words, simply a physical lineage, **they *are not* the children of God**. See? They're not the children of God. God worked with a physical nation, but they are not the children of God. On a spiritual plane all the world of God's creation of mankind are God's children, but that's physical. This is going way beyond that.

But, what he's saying here, **Only the children of the promise are counted for the seed**. So again here, who are they, those that are able to be part of a promise that God has given? As it says here, "are counted for the seed." In other words, only those called to spiritual Israel. **For this *is* the word of the promise**. So again here, it goes back to what Paul addresses earlier in Romans about Sarah and Hagar. It talks about how people go about to establish their righteousness. It talks about how people go about striving to obey the law in order to be righteous, and they can't do it, or to fulfill God's promise, and you can't do it. It's only by God's promise. Paul is getting ready to expound on this very powerfully so as he continues on in the book of Romans and so he keeps repeating some of these things in different ways to drive the point home.

For this is the word of the promise: At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son. Not only *that*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac (for *the children* not yet being born, and neither having done any good or evil, so that the promise of God according to selection...) God has a plan. He calls to be a part. That's what we've just been reading about earlier here at the beginning of this first part of this series, of those verses we just read. So there is this selection of what God is doing in order to piece together, put together a family, to fulfill that which is predetermined before time. It's been predetermined. God calls people to fill in what needs to be completed.

It says here that "...for *the children* not yet being born, and neither having done any good or evil..." In other words, God has something He's working out here and children are going to be born. There's going to be a child here born. Another child is going to be born and there are going to be things taking place here that God is going to fulfill in order to what? Well, through a lineage of people in time there's going to be one, a seed through whom the whole world is going to have opportunity of being able to be delivered, to be saved out of bondage, to be given freedom, and so, so much of the focus is about the Son of God and what God is doing and how the Temple is being built and on and on it goes, how Israel is going to be established, spiritual Israel.

He's making a point here it's not a matter of what the children did, right or wrong. What are they going to do? They're going to do things that are wrong. They're going to commit sin that needs to be forgiven. So they're not called. They're not called to fit into a specific place because of any good or evil that they've done. It's just God's plan. He's going to work out certain things in a physical nation of people to bring about in time something incredible that's spiritual.

...(for *the children* not having being born, and neither having done any good or evil, that the promise of God according to selection, in other words, as a matter of God's choosing, might stand, not of works but of Him, it's of God...) See, that's why this sermon is titled what it is, *God's Righteousness*. It is hard for us to grasp the depth of that and what God wants us to see, what God wants us to understand - that we have none. We have absolutely no righteousness in us save what God blesses us to have. It's God's. It comes from God and it comes as a matter of a calling. It comes as a matter of grace. It comes as a matter of mercy.

Verse 12—It was said to her, **The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, I** (this is amazing) **I have loved Jacob, but I have...**It's not the word "hated." God does not hate, and yet the world of traditional Christianity has verses like that in here and so they have this idea of God being a harsh God and He sent His Son in order to kind of make things better. You think, how dumb is that? I mean, really, just how dumb is that?

But it's saying a lot here. This word is *agapaō*. It just means "to love." It doesn't say what kind of love. Doesn't say whether it's *philia*. But we can know one thing, it's *agape*. It's *agape* because that's the only kind of love that God has. His is not a fraternal kind of love. It's not a *philia* love. It's *agape*. But it's using this word for a purpose so that we can learn something from it.

I have loved Jacob, but I have loved Esau less. Now, that's not really even the best way of this being translated. Basically, he's saying, "I have not loved Esau." That's what He's saying. It's not just loving less, it's literally saying, in essence here, that "I have not loved or shown love to Esau." What does that mean? Does that mean God didn't love Esau? Not at all. Does that mean God doesn't love His creation? Not at all. But for God to express and to show and to give love, which includes mercy, favor, intervention in life, it's like, akin to, for us to understand, when someone is disfellowshipped from the Church. You cannot express love. You cannot have a relationship with them, to have them benefit in what otherwise they benefitted in before. You can't do it because God's not doing it. God has separated them, cut off from His holy spirit. There's a distinction made. Does that mean you don't love them anymore? Does that mean you don't have love toward them and look forward to the time that they can be moved and motivated, that God can open up their minds?

I feel that there are into the few thousand at least of people I've known that I look forward to, and love them, that they come to a point of being able to be brought to humility and awakened spiritually. I think of those who have been a part with us in PKG. No one I hate. No one that I look down upon. I hate what they have done, in many cases. Some have said some really, and done some very ugly things toward me personally. I don't hold that against them. I truly don't. I wish they hadn't of done it because what they did to themselves and what they did to the Church and what that does, and the rippling effect. But as long as there is a wrong spirit and a wrong attitude it's better they be gone, because the Church is always better when that is not around any longer, until it can come to repentance.

I look forward to the day that people can be able to be, hopefully and prayerfully will receive it then when that time comes. See, for some I know it's going to be the Great White Throne - especially those who are a part of PKG as a whole. God may have mercy on others in that situation, but there are some I feel very confident it's the Great White Throne. I look forward to that time, after a thousand years of embracing them, and starting on, continuing on from where we left off when things were right, see, when we did walk to God's house side by side and counsel blended sweet, and that time comes back.

So if we can understand then what the mind of God is like, it's only agape. There is no one He hates. He doesn't want us to make wrong choices, but He knows by the way He created us we will unless or until He calls us and we begin to have His holy spirit in our life because of our Passover. Then we can begin to make changes where we can begin to have a real meaningful relationship with Him and He can then work with us and He can love us. He can't love us in the world. He can't love us separated from Christ. He can't love us unless we're justified. He can't love us if we're in sin, in the sense of expressing love to us. I hope that makes great sense because that's the way it is. It's about grace, which is love.

So grace was given to a physical lineage of people. Not because they were better. Not because they were righteous. Because they had done no good or evil even before they were born, but it was predetermined that God would begin to give mercy to, grace to specific ones for a purpose He was working out of a physical people even, let alone a spiritual one that would come out of that because of the seed, because of His own Son.

It's a beautiful picture and it's awesome to understand how God has worked with mankind, how God has worked with a physical nation of people, not because they were better than other physical nations, because they weren't! But God had a plan. Someone was going to go into captivity. Someone was going to be given a Passover, to put blood on the doorposts and to stay in their houses and to wait until God delivered them and showed Himself in Pharaoh and in Egypt what He was going to do. That He IS God Almighty and that He is able to destroy an entire nation of people very simply so! He is able to open a sea and let people go through on dry land. He's able to do all these things because He is God! Awesome! God had a plan.

And do you know what, that Red Sea thing was not something that all of a sudden just, "I got them up to the sea and I wonder what I'm going to do now. They can't go, so..." They were led. This was all determined long before. The way they were going to come down there was determined long ago. Why didn't they go up some other way, the way that actually existed along the Mediterranean? Why not go along the coast, go into the promised land that way, you know? Why go through this hard way through a mountainous region and then come up to a sea? For God to show that He is God to a very carnal, physical people, and that other nations might receive the word because it's going to spread. Pharaoh is dead. Egypt has been decimated, their entire army wiped out. Every nation knew about those things! They knew about it forty years later! It was still being spoken of! Awesome!

None of those things were by accident. Predetermined. God had different ones that were going to fulfill His plan, His purpose. Predetermined. Predetermined that there was going to be a baby and that baby was going to be miraculously found, not miraculously, but by God's doing, and raised and grow up in a very unique place, within the realm of the government of Egypt. Awesome, the life of Moses! Then what was going to happen? Forty years, forty years, and forty more; it's over, his life has ended 120 years old. Forty years, then he was separated from his people, forty years, and then forty years in the wilderness, incredible, after leaving Egypt.

o the things that have happened in life, the things we go through in life, the things God works out and what is being explained here in the book of Romans is incredible. How God works: A selection, because He's the one that has to select from whomever He will in the world to fill a certain place.

I grew up in a little town of less than a hundred people scattered all over the place. Middle of nowhere. Didn't live very well. Didn't do very good as far as how to live toward others. Then, thankfully, about the age of 18 God began to smack me a little bit with a 4X4; had things taken away from me to humble me. I am so thankful for that, things we go through in life. Why did God pick us from where He did? Who are we? Just be thankful that God did.

So we rest in that, we are thankful for that. We thank God for that and for what He's given us throughout our calling. So God determines who He's going to call. There were a lot of people far better. It's not about who was better. Isn't that amazing? It's not about who is better than someone else. There were a lot of people that if I were sitting back there I'd say they're a lot better than what I am.

Verse 12—It was said to her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, I have loved Jacob, but I have not loved Esau - really is the best way of translating that. Just not his time. He's not being selected to accomplish what He was going to accomplish through the lineage of Isaac.

What shall we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Because that would be the normal thought of a carnal mind. Well, how can God do that, choose to love one person and not another? Well, because He has a predetermined plan and that plan is going to be molded and fashioned and worked out to perfection. There will be, in time, 144,000 that will be worked out to perfection and until that's accomplished it's not finished. When it's finished, well, we know what's going to happen, right away, God indicates, as soon as... as soon as it's completed then something begins.

Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! That should be simple to answer and it is with people with God's spirit. That's what enables us then to see farther. That's what enables us then to see this matter, oh, God has a plan, He has a purpose that's been predetermined and He's going to fill it in. It's His selection, His choosing, no one else's. It's not a matter of any good or evil that anyone has done because all have sinned.

For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. God chooses when He's going to grant mercy. What does that mean? Well, then, He's working something out in a person's life. If He's granting mercy to someone, as a whole, it's going to be for a purpose. **...and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** God is God. Who is going to tell God what He can choose or not choose within His creation. We're a part of His creation. We exist because He's given us existence.

How thankful are we for that? How thankful are we for the fact that we can see color, that we can enjoy many kinds of foods? I can't understand this thing of manna in the wilderness for forty years. That'd be pretty tough. It'd be really tough on this age of people because you can go in the grocery store and, "Oh..." or you get in line somewhere, "Whew, there's so many choices. I don't know what to eat." Then people are behind you and it's like "Grrr..." They don't care. "Ah, what do I want today?" That's just the way it is. So many choices.

So then it is not of him who wills, in other words, by or through one's own ability or righteousness, what we choose and what we want, **nor of him who runs**, which means you try to work it out to accomplish it on your own. It's not about that. **...but of God who shows mercy.** How much mercy have you been given? You know, the more you really understand that and the more you really see it, the more you really see your own nature, the more you really see your own sins, your own mind, the more you really see those things, the more you'll come to love God. Do you know that? The more you will come to love God, because you're a believer, because you have experienced certain things in your life and you know.

If you're sitting here today you should know the mercy that God has given to you so that you can sit here today. Because not a one of us deserves it. Not a one of us earned it! Not a one of us! We're here because of God's mercy, because of God's plan, because of God's selection. The only reason after the Apostasy I was able to move forward was not because I was better than other ministers, not because I was better than other people, but because God had a purpose of something He was going to work out with the remnant group of people. Only because of that! Only because of God's molding and fashioning. Not because of being better. There were a lot of ministers far better, far beyond me, okay? But God has a purpose and a plan of things He's going to work out.

Same with every one of you that came through the Apostasy. You didn't come through because of how well you did things. You didn't come through because of how sharp you were. You didn't come through because of how righteous you were. You came through because of God's mercy and His selection! He had to choose from around 97,000 people who it will be that He's going to work through to use to give opportunity to continue on to become a part of a remnant and because of that He woke you up. Otherwise you would be asleep along with all the rest who are still asleep, and if you don't believe that you don't know what God is doing.

So again, it's of God who shows mercy. He's shown me a lot of mercy, a lot of forgiveness of sin. He's forgiven you of a lot of sin. And frankly, some of it you don't even understand or know

because you still don't know your own mind fully yet. You still don't fully grasp and comprehend your spirit, your mind in all the sin that's really there. God reveals that to us through time. He can't show it to us all at once; we couldn't take it. We couldn't take it. So He shows us things in a progressive manner, just like in building a building. And in time, when it comes that time, He opens up that lid that lets us look down there again and take a whiff. You stink. I stink. So we get to see a little bit more. We get to see a little bit more of the reasoning and the thinking of the mind.

I marvel at that and over the last couple of years how God has been working to show us more of the thinking of our mind and how everything starts there. It's not in our actions. By the time it's out in actions it's too late. It's gone. It's there. Something comes out of our mouth, it's too late. It's just like vomit—blech—it's there. It's too late to take it back. It's gone.

But you know what? When those things come out of us, it's all in the mind, and it starts there and how we think and why we think toward others or whatever it might be the way we do. It's our own fault.

Verse 17—For the scripture said unto Pharaoh... It's hard to talk about this without talking about what God did, because that set the picture of something that's to be understood on a spiritual plane. **Even for the same purpose I have raised you up...** God raised up THAT Pharaoh! He intervened and caused certain things to exist around his life to mold and fashion him, to help mold and fashion him. Not to make him do it. Because you know what, we're all carnal human beings and it's not that hard—well, it is—but to work with human beings is not that hard to lead them into sin. God didn't lead them into sin, but He made it available by what He gave them.

You know what happens when you're made a leader of a nation and depending on how you grew up, how spoiled you were when you grew up, and what you're going to become? You think that's a hard thing to happen, to take place? You're given everything in life?

Think about the Church of God. Think about the Church of God during Laodicea, how spoiled were we? It says because we were rich and increased with goods - at least we thought we were and how much we thought we knew. We became lifted up with pride and didn't even see that pride. And what did it lead into? Did God make us do it? No. But because of our human nature He made it possible. Because Laodicea was going to be fulfilled, a people who would do exactly what they did. Did God make them do it? No. But God did it to save people. That's awesome to understand. That's another series and then we wouldn't grasp it fully.

It's about what we learn. The seven eras of the Church. God gave those things prophetically, but He brought them about. He's never made people make the wrong choices; He just knows what human beings are going to do because we're selfish by nature. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life is how we're controlled. We don't control those things. You don't control yourself physically, carnally in this carnal human world. People out here are not in control. Not the way God says we are to be in control. Because that's of the spirit, it's of the mind. That's a different

matter. God has to grant that and give that ability, because people are moved by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. That's why Facebook is so popular. That's why tweeting is so popular. That's why people talk about it the way they do. It can be on national news almost every day. What is the latest tweet? I don't give a flip! But the world does because they're of the world.

God doesn't make us act that way, but He gave us technology and what's the result? He said the world would be a certain way at the end during a lifespan that's considerably shorter than that during the time of Noah, and because of that God knew exactly what we'd do, just as exactly what He knew Laodicea would do when Mr. Armstrong was able to restore 18 truths. He knew what would happen in time if He backed away and let people do what they wanted to do, what the ministry would do in time. Incredible, the mercy of God, the patience of God.

I don't know about you, but see, when I talk about some of these things I am so incredibly moved by the power of Almighty God and His righteousness to do what He's doing. He does it to save. Pharaoh was raised up to save people, and yet Pharaoh and his entire army was destroyed. See, it's not about a physical life that's important. It comes and it goes. You live and you die. But if there is nothing beyond that you have nothing. But with God, He has a plan, to become a part of His family. That's God's focus and that's God's purpose of how He can bring into that family and help mold and fashion those who have choice to receive it or not, what He's offering. Because it's going to be a choice. You can't force people to feel, to think a certain way. The marvel of God's creation.

That's why I can't help but think we weren't too far away from this thing of people going to heaven, you know, thinking that people are going to heaven and if you will at the last minute on the bed there, choking, gasping for air: "Let me give you your last rites..." then "You're up there." You think, okay, doesn't matter how you live your life then as long as you get someone around wearing a black robe and a little white collar and all of a sudden they can sprinkle some whatever it is on you and wave these magic things in his arms because he has the power to do so, and all of a sudden "I don't care what kind of a life you lived, if you'll just make a little bit of a confession here, at least nod. Do you???" The person coughs and gasps. "Yes." "Okay, it's done. You're there. You're going to be in heaven."

We had the concept in many ways that everyone is going to be in the Great White Throne who is not in God's family. That is a bunch of bull. We came to understand that God does not owe a resurrection to people who have lived so hideously on this earth in the period of 6,000 years, who have murdered and corrupted and raped and done so much evil their minds are so twisted and distorted, that if they were resurrected with that mind what good would it do because that's who they are, that's what they want, and they don't want God! Do you think God knows who will humble themselves enough to say, "I choose, I want You"?

That's why the corruption of the mind is such a bad thing. That's what happened to Satan. He did it. Spirit, it's over. With human beings it takes longer but it still happens. That's where we are in the world today. Minds are becoming corrupt.

I'll tell you what, there are things you watch on TV sometimes here and you wonder where is there any soundness of mind? Whatever happened to a little bit...? Yeah, I'm speechless! I'm not acting; I'm serious. What on earth? For some people to think and believe what they do? Where is the mind? What is there to work with? There's got to be something to work with.

And I think, what a horrible thing that people do to their minds sometimes and they don't understand it. So haughty and so proud and so out there in space! Sad. Pathetic. Sick. Because there are many that just...they're not going to receive God.

We live in an age today, where I don't care if everything we've ever had printed, written, and everything, it was being broadcast on every commercial out there for weeks on end. Not even on a physical plane let alone a spiritual one, if God all of a sudden just started pouring out His spirit in the world. You think a lot of people would start coming? That's where we are. That's how bad it is. That's why there'll be nuclear weapons. That's why there is going to be so much devastation, hurt, pain, and suffering in this world because that's the only thing that will help to begin to sober mankind into a mind of humility and loss of hope, to begin thinking, "Does God exist?" Incredible! That then they might listen. Because right now nobody listens, nobody wants it, nobody desires. Even if God pours out His spirit it's not there.

Even for this purpose have I raised you up that I might show My power through you, Pharaoh, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth. And it was, that God that you serve, that God that you say you followed and went through dry land and the wall of water...

Therefore He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens.

Awesome what it's saying there. Starts with Pharaoh, the story; hardened his heart. What does that mean? You let him have his own way. You back away. Take away a certain plague what happened? His heart became more hardened. Every time. Something more powerful came along and Pharaoh was maybe just brought down a little bit to where he was helpless because his magicians, they couldn't do anything about it at a certain point in time, and so what do you do? "Call for Moses. The people are tired of suffering. Remove this from me and go to your God." And then he lied. Then finally took the death of his own son. Now, that shook him up. Just for a little bit though, see. That didn't even hold him back very long. Isn't that an amazing story of God saying how He hardened his heart? God didn't make him hard. He didn't harden his heart in the sense of how we might think as human beings, that He forced him. No, He just gave a plague, bring it on, and then take it away and what happens? Something happens in a carnal human mind, see, and that's what God did. That's how He hardened his heart; He took it away, see. He showed mercy. Then Pharaoh went right back and became worse in what he was doing until finally just right toward the end then.

Incredible story. Very moving story that we go through so often around this time of year because of what it teaches, and if we can't understand that then we can't understand this, see? **He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens.** What does that mean? It's so simple. He didn't give Esau mercy. He didn't intervene in Esau's life as it's going through here in some of the story, as he did with Isaac. He didn't give him love in the sense of showing him love, because it wasn't his time yet.

God has chosen us. When He calls us He is showing us love. He's extending to us mercy and grace, and giving us an opportunity to receive His love. He is saying, "I have chosen you, to love you now." So many others are going to be given love, shown love, able to receive agape in the Great White Throne. It's so simple. That's when God can show them love because that's when they're going to have opportunity then of receiving of His holy spirit and being able to begin to see their own minds and come to repentance and making choices in their life as to whether or not they're going to receive God's truth, and on and on it goes. That's when God is going to show His love, give His love to them. Even to Esau it'll be in the Great White Throne.

So God chooses when He's going to do this toward mankind, when He's going to extend mercy. Because when He chooses to call that's when He chooses to give mercy, that's when He chooses to extend that. That's when a selection begins that process. It's incredible, the plan, the purpose of God and how He's working it out.

Just by the fact that God doesn't extend mercy and give grace and give help and give understanding and give His holy spirit, do you know what happens to the human mind? It becomes hardened. When Pharaoh was being brought down that was a good thing. To be humbled? To see that there is power greater than his? To see things happening that he couldn't understand, that his magicians couldn't do, that there has to be something here that he didn't understand, there is some kind of being, God, or whatever that's doing these things? Because the Israelites have no power. "I'm powerful; they're not." Then the firstborn dying? And you think, how incredible is that?

You know when God began to show me mercy? When I got the 4X4 up in the forehead. That's when God began to show me mercy. It hurt! The breaking of my jaw. The flipping of my car end over end. The taking away of certain dreams that I'd had to become a jet pilot. All those things that had happened one after another in a short length of time. Probably at that point my best friend getting shot in Vietnam. All those things that happened in such a short length of time. I thank God that I experienced them, because without them I couldn't have made the right choices when He began to open my mind.

That's how God works. He has to soften the mind first. He has to bring us to a point of humility where our ways, our hopes, our thinking is interrupted, to where we come to a point, as I did later on because of God's drawing, of wondering and praying, basically, "If You really exist," because I didn't know, "please reveal Yourself." That's when I got my jaw broken and shut my

mouth for 10 weeks. I had time to stop and think a little bit. God used that. I thank God for all those things.

So with Pharaoh it wasn't doing that to bring him to a point of conversion, but that's the process so many people have to go through in life before they will humble themselves enough to listen to God. Now, he came to a point, not because he was going to be given the holy spirit, but to come to a point on a physical plane to where he would say, "Get out of Egypt and take all your people with you, and take all the livestock! Get out!" That was the message he sent to him. Then as soon as they'd left and he started thinking, what happened? Didn't take long and the heart starts getting hardened again. See, that's what happened to him right away. Did God make that? No, it's because of his own carnality. Now, one day he's going to likely have that opportunity to be resurrected to see himself and "Boy, did I do some dumb things."

So, "Whom He will have mercy He'll have mercy, and whom He hardens He hardens." God is righteous. See, that's the story through this. God is righteous. The world looks upon God as being hard. He requires too much. He requires so much. You mean, to become a part of the Church I have to tithe? Okay. You mean to come to the Church I may have to say no to my family and to their wishes? I've known a lot of people who haven't been able to make that step because of that, because of family, because they loved something more than they could begin to love God. Well, that's a choice. So you mean I have 3rd tithe? I'm sorry, back then it was 3rd tithe. 1st tithe, 2nd tithe, you learn about those, and, oh, yes, you're not going to work. You normally work on Saturdays. That's more income. How in the world am I going to make it?

And so people are challenged in those things. What are you going to do? Your budget, your expenses, look at this. You think a lot of people make choices because of that and have chosen not to respond to God's calling because of that? Absolutely. A lot who never even made it to the point of being wet under the water. Then there are a lot of them who finally got wet under the water and had hands layed upon them that at some point later on because of those same things they made choices: "That's too much to ask. It's just too hard. God is a hard man, a hard being, a hard God."

No, God is righteous. It's only because we're blessed to be able to see His plan and how He's doing it and how He's working it out, and by the things that Paul is going through and explaining that we can come to appreciate that more deeply in our lives. God is righteous and we are far, far from it. The righteousness we get to experience is by God's mercy and because of the blessing of being able to have a fellowship with Him, to see what we see, to latch on to what we latch on to and to begin to understand the power of His life in us, the life you can experience.

Then it goes on to say, **Then You might say to me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?** Well, that's carnal thinking. We can understand that. So sometimes we just don't grasp the spiritual side of things and we can only see the physical. "Why does He yet find fault?" Well, because the reality is, look at us. "And who has resisted His will?" Well, many have, haven't they? It's choices, choices, choices.

No, in other words, he's saying here this is not the case, or basically here, **don't say that, but, O man** (mankind), **who are you to reply against God?** That's the problem. We can be so lifted up by who we think we are and by what we think we should have and by what we think is owed to us or how we think God should treat us because that's how people think, and how God should work with me or deal with me.

Sometimes it's like being in one organization and people say, "Well, I don't get this, I'm going to this other one. They'll give me what I want." This has happened within the environment of the Church. I remember one person who because he finally came to a point where he realized he couldn't be a part of a certain group here, it was the 144,000, he was going to go to a group who said, "Yeah, you can be. If you're part you can be a part of the 144,000." "I'm going to be with them because that's what I want. That's what I believe." It's not a matter of what else they might have believed in the Church; it's a matter that this is what he wanted and so that's what he's going to go get.

That's what people do in the world. Choose this and choose that. They don't believe this, they don't believe that, so I'll go over here, and if you get offended by something, "I'm going to take my marbles and I'm going elsewhere. You're not going to get my money. I'll take it someplace else." That's the way people think. Sad. Pathetic.

So who are you to reply against God? It's just a matter of coming to a point where we just say, "God is right. I am wrong." I mean, if we can't do that what are we? That's why it boggles my mind sometimes some of the simplest most basic of laws we can think we can get by with breaking and somehow think we can be in the Church. It doesn't work that way. It never has, but people haven't understood that and people have been cut off because they didn't change and they didn't understand they were cut off and they weren't even in the courtyard, they were somewhere maybe on an island somewhere. I don't know.

Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me this way? Because that's basically what people do. "Well, that's not fair. That's not fair. You're going to take away our tree?" "What's wrong with a birthday? And even though it's not that right time of year, what's wrong with that?" "What's wrong with having presents for the children? How could you think about taking that away? God requires that?" Yep. "You mean just the seventh day of the week?" "And this thing of sunset to sunset? I mean, that's a little old, isn't it? I have a watch here and at 12:00 it's straight up and that's when the day starts and ends. And you want me to go back to this old time thing of before they had clocks and you want me to go out here and be regulated by the sun when it goes down and somehow this is going to please God?" Yep. It's just a matter of obedience. Who are you?

Pride is an awful thing. It's so easy to get so lifted up by who we think we are and what we think is owed to us and how we think God should treat us. Well, there is nothing greater than the love of God and to be loved by God, to receive of His mercy, to receive of His blessings in life, to

receive of His calling. But you have to experience those things. Sadly, so many who have experienced those things have done the same things, been lifted up by pride.

So do we really grasp what we do as human beings when we sin and what we're saying to God? It's like, "I can go ahead and do what I want to do," and think you're going to get by with it?

Now, I've made comment. I want to make this comment too, here, because thinking about this, that when I made comment about when you repent it's forgiven. That's true if you're genuine and true in here. If you genuinely repented before God. But if you just continue in the sins and there's that which you're not really battling and you allow, and you just keep doing certain things and you keep allowing certain things to happen in your life and you continually are cutting yourself off and you get into this flow of life and you begin to say no more to God than to yourself, be careful. It's using a freedom that God has given to us, and Paul speaks of this (I believe it was Paul), talks about not taking occasion, in sense of using that freedom to do whatever we want to do before God because we know that God's going to forgive us. If it's genuine and true.

Understand, too, that when there is sin in your life and you have genuinely repented, understand that you're going to be paying a penalty. Penalties don't mean that just because you've repented of something that somehow you're not going to pay a price. So often in life there is a price to be paid, whatever that might be. Again, that would be a sermon in itself as well.

Be careful because you can't have things your way. You can't continue repent and sin, repent and sin, and that just go on and on and on. If you're genuine and you're genuinely fighting it and you're genuinely crying out to God, and I mean crying out to God because you are sickened by yourself and you're crying out, there is a patience that God will extend by His own purpose and mercy. And how long? It's up to Him. It's between Him and you in those cases.

But I'll tell you what, if you continue to fight and you're honest and genuine with God and you're crying out to God and you want to conquer and overcome, God will help you. God will work with you. God will strengthen you. He'll give you strength if you're asking for strength to do what you need to do and through time we're molded and fashioned and we become more at one with God. There is a soundness of mind in that and balance that only God can give.

So this thing here again, how can we argue with God and say or be so lifted up? And that's a hard thing to see within self because unless God helps us to see it we really don't grasp it. But it's done by people with pride all the time.

Doesn't the potter have power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor? If God has a plan and a purpose, what a beautiful way of saying this that He has the right to say to any of it at any time if He has a greater purpose being worked out here, especially for what God is doing, offering and working toward people to become a part of His family forever, into time age lasting life, if to get there God will do various things and allow certain things to happen on earth in order to save people? What happened to Laodicea and the

Apostasy is one of the greatest things to help save people that has ever taken place in time. Truly. It's the pinnacle of lessons - that even with God's spirit you can turn against God, you can fall asleep spiritually. That'll be taught throughout the Millennium because that's going to be a battle in the Millennium. So much abundance. So much in everything. On and on it goes.

So, how to choose and raise up a particular leader of a nation of people to give him opportunities knowing what would happen to him the more opportunities and the greater power He gave and the way he was raised and it went to his head. Do things go to people's heads? Do people think themselves great in this world sometimes in a way that's pretty easy to see? "I'm great! Who are you?" It's in politics all the time because everybody believes, as a whole, their way is the best way. If you don't agree with that, you know, something is wrong with you. That's just human nature.

So it comes down to a point of accepting whether God is the potter, has the power as a potter over the clay. He made us. What are we? Who are we? We only exist because of God. Sometimes we don't even appreciate on a physical plane this creation and what we have opportunity for just physically that's beautiful and good and right, but there is so much more.

...and of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another for dishonor? So I think of all those who weren't awakened. Vessels to dishonour. Anyone better than them? Not in the slightest. It's not about that whatsoever. On and on it goes.

Well, we're going to stop right there and continue on next week with *Part 2*.