

With that said we're going to launch right into this sermon. It's amazing where we are in time. We're coming right up on Passover and Unleavened Bread and its coming fast. I'm excited and inspired because of how God's been leading us up to this point in time, kind of in a unique way this year. So that's good. That's exciting.

This series follows the last series entitled *God's Righteousness* and this new series is a matter of building understanding, and more importantly in one respect, responsibility on our part concerning this particular subject. So this series is entitled *Growing in Righteousness*, with this being *Part 1*. So it's just a natural follow up, in that respect, to understanding God's righteousness, how it works in our life, and going on from there to see what God is doing in our lives and how He's working with us.

It'd be good to begin this by first considering some important points about this subject, starting with a couple of things stated in the last series about God's righteousness. From *Part 3* I'm just going to give a couple of quotes here. From *Part 3* (and I'll be adding a little bit here, couple of words here and there), basically saying, "We are to grasp more fully, more deeply the righteousness of God that works to lead us into His Family. Paul covered much of this," in what we had read to this point in Romans anyway. Again, "Paul covered much of this and this now leads him to state how we should respond to God's great mercy that He has shown to us, how we can now begin to become transformed." So we basically worked up to that point about becoming transformed and how that works in our life. Anyway, "...how we can become transformed into oneness, into one mind, into agreement and unity with God and how we're given of His righteousness which He attributes (accounts) to us a righteousness because of faith," because of how we live.

Because He's opened our mind to be able to believe and then it's our choice to act upon it and if we act upon what God has given us the ability to believe, just like we mentioned, starting with the very basic things about the holy days, Passover especially, the Sabbath itself, and we begin living by those things, they totally change our life because we no longer work on holy days, we no longer work on the Sabbath from the very beginning. There's a process that begins that is, then, living by faith. The ability to believe, God has to give you that. The ability to see truth, God has to give you that, but it's always your choice to put it into practice, to start living it, to ask God for help to live it in the right way. He works with us in that process. Again, that choice is a matter of faith.

I mentioned this again, there have been so many people through time who just quit living by faith though God had opened their mind, the mind, the ability to see and to know the truth. They know it's true. But when various trials and things come along and it becomes something different for them, each one making their own choices and they begin to go backward, God cuts them off, cuts

them off from the flow of His holy spirit. There comes a point in time where they really can no longer live by it anyway because they begin losing the truth, they begin losing conviction of the truth, and if you don't have conviction you're certainly not going to live by it. You're going to fudge here and there. You're going to make excuses. You're going to justify various things in your life. I've seen this happen to literally hundreds upon hundreds, if not a few thousand people that we've known in different regions, putting them altogether.

So again here, it's an awesome thing that God gives to us to account us as righteous, though we're not, we know we're not. But to be able to be accounted as righteous, that's an awesome thing. Because as a result or because of that we are able to live by something that God gives us, a righteousness, which means He gives us of His holy spirit. Because if we're not accounted as righteous, if we're not able to have that given to us by God because of faith that means there is sin. So it's a matter of forgiveness of sins and being made right with God.

So then from *Part 4*, "It was mentioned at the end of *Part 3* that we should be grasping more fully, more deeply, again, the righteousness of God," as I mentioned. It was mentioned how, "Our Father blesses us with the forgiveness of sins that He and His Son might dwell in us. Because He will not dwell in sin." So again, a part of this process of being accounted as righteous, because of that, because we repent of sin, because we live by faith. Especially there, especially concerning things about our Passover because we believe what God has given us, not just the other truths, the many truths that God has given, but starting with that one primarily because everything revolves around, is built upon that truth, that we have a Passover, and because of sin, when we sin we can go before God, repent, and we're living by faith there. It's a matter of believing God.

That's why we had that one series and going through it and talking about the fact that once we've repented and we believe what God has given to us we should walk away not carrying a big bag of rocks, but freed, knowing we're forgiven. We don't have to carry that guilt anymore. We are forgiven. That's a matter of faith. That's some of the most basic and fundamental and the primary groundwork that we have to live by, is a matter of faith and is a matter of righteousness that God attributes to us.

So anyway, incredibly awesome what this process involves.

Going on with what was said in *Part 4*. "Where there is no sin, what remains? Righteousness." Awesome! If we're forgiven totally of sin God counts that to us, accounts that to us as righteousness, though we're not. But when we repent He forgives us and we're right with God then. That's beautiful.

So again, "'Where there is no sin there is righteousness that remains,'" but we know that we still have sin that comes up in our life and we know that we are not righteous although God accounts us as righteous, because of faith." I basically said that, but I wanted to make sure I read it all again as what was given in *Part 4*. "And also as a result of this process that works in our lives as we yield ourselves to it our very minds are being able to be transformed, to be changed into new

thinking.” That’s why, again, I’ve mentioned this many a time here about the word “repent” in the Greek language. It literally means “to think differently.” We have the blessing, the opportunity to begin thinking differently than selfish human beings than we have before we knew the truth. That’s because of coming into a unity and agreement with God.

So in Romans 3 Paul quoted these particular verses. I want to read this: **Romans 3:10-11—As it is written: There is no one righteous, no, not one.** We understand that. There was only one who lived righteous before God. That’s why he was able to be our Passover, our High Priest, and is going to be our soon coming King. So again here, **There is no one righteous, no, not one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks after God.** No one does until God draws them, until God opens their mind.

Now, someone who is blessed to grow up in the truth, it’s a little bit different in how that works because they’re able to grow up with learning truth. But there comes a point in time, getting closer to a time of what’s referred to as a time of accountability. In the Old Testament it was 21. But in the Church it’s different because it has to do with maturity and coming to a particular conviction. But then a choice is made as to whether a person wants to continue on with how they’ve been blessed with what they’ve been given to see and to know. Again, that’s another matter, but God still has to draw them to that and work with them in that.

So again, “there is no one who understands,” when it comes to God’s way of life; no one can until God opens their mind. So even as one who grows up in the Church, to really start putting it together and seeing it can’t happen until God makes a choice to draw them.

“There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks after God.” It’s just how can you seek after that which you don’t know and you don’t have and you think you already have. No matter what religion it is in the world, they already think they have the truth. They’re content. They’re satisfied. They’re not looking for something different, and if they do look a little more deeply for something that they think is of God it’s because of their past teaching. So they may start going to Bible studies more, and so forth, but it’s with what they already believe. They just want to learn more about what they’re taught in their particular church or religion.

1 Corinthians 1, concerning being called of God. Here, again, just some reminders of some things that help us to get into this particular subject of growing in righteousness, which is a series and is going to be spread out quite a bit because we have the days of Unleavened Bread coming so we’re going to have some different subject come in regarding specifically that period of time, and because we’re going to be in Europe different people in different parts of the world are going to hear some of these things at different times. But this is a series that will go past the Unleavened Bread period.

But right here concerning being called of God in **1 Corinthians 1:27** it says, **God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound**, or to put to shame **the wise**. So it does confound and it is a matter of being “to put to shame,” because if they really come to see it what are they

coming to see? They're coming to see what God has done with people He's called out of the world and those who are looked down upon, especially because of what you believe but even before that. As far as a way of life, they would have looked down upon us, truly. Because as a whole we're not the major leaders, the big leaders of the world. We're not ahead of major corporations and on and on it goes, or exceedingly wealthy in life because people are lifted up in pride by those things and that's what they trust in.

But for us God calls us from whatever background, whatever we have, and He begins to make something of us that is so unique. He's changing us. He's changing how you think. That's going to dumbfound the world in time and bring them to shame when they come to understand why you have lived the way you have and to come to see what you know and what you chose to live by in this age. Because, basically, especially at this particular time of a transition that's coming, they're going to live in a totally new age where there is only one truth, one way of life taught. There will be no confusion of other religions. The truth about those things is going to be made exceedingly well known, and more powerfully than what we can recognize.

Because there are people who have lived in every period of time in the past 6,000 years, so history is not going to be screwed up like it is today. There is going to be absolute proof because they know what was happening in the world, who did what as far as leaders and nations were concerned. A lot of the garbage that's written in history sometimes, that's written by people who want to put a particular slant on it or people who have tried to wipe out various ideas.

Just like, I think of Egypt. They're still trying to figure out who did what and why and when they ruled, and all that's lost. Because when people were conquered at different times some would come along and totally wipe out everything about them. Everything! Everything that was documented about them. So to unearth a little smidgeon here and there they think, "Oh, they found out..." There is so much they just don't know, they don't understand. Well, there's coming a time when they will.

God has called us and called people through 6,000 years, and when they're all resurrected in their time, or for those who live on into this new age, they're going to be in awe of what God has done to you right here, the lessons you have learned. They're going to want to catch up with you, especially particularly talking about those who live on into that age who are in the Church. They're going to look to you and look up to you. And those who know you and want to learn, they're going to want to catch up and they're going to know they never fully can.

It's like those who have gone through the Apostasy. You can learn about it, but you don't know what it was like; the experience is unique. Everyone who's experienced something in their particular time God has been able to mold and fashion something in their thinking, in their knowing that is unique to them. That's how God molds and fashions us because we're not all fit into the same place in the Temple. We're all unique to our time, to our calling, to how God is working with us to His purpose. So it is in that example. Awesome what God is doing and how He's doing it.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, meaning put to shame, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty. What are mighty? Well, the things that people in the world think are mighty, you know. Turn on the news, what do they think is mighty? Well, some things they think are mighty depends on what station you're watching. Other things they think are pretty. Anyway, sick world.

Verse 28—and base things of the world and things which are despised God has chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. Everything about the ways of this world are wrong. There is nothing, nothing to be saved. There is nothing worth saving. There is no economic system, no system at all in how people have done these things throughout 6,000 that is going to continue. There is no government - no government. Not even Ancient Israel, not even their government, because this is so unique and so perfect, what God is bringing, because it has nothing to do with the reign of mankind. It has to do with the reign of God Almighty, His Son who is a King of kings over this earth. When it comes to religion, when it comes to doctrine, when it comes to the economy of the world, when it comes to government, everything is being changed.

...and the things which are not, to bring to nought things which are (verse 29) so that no flesh should glory in His presence. So again, no one can be lifted up by what they did, by how important they thought they were, because in this world today people think they're important. They don't think God's important. They don't esteem God and His purpose and His plan in their life. And if they do, it's not God; it's their concept of what God is like that man has created through time and things that they have been taught that don't come from God. God is not like that. They have to relearn everything, just like we have to do.

So nothing is worth saving. That's an incredible thing to understand. Nothing will be saved. Everything will be made new, beautiful, right, just before God.

So again, **so that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Joshua;** of God. We are blessed because of His plan and purpose to be in, to live in the Body of Christ, to be in the Body of Christ, to dwell in Christ, to dwell in God through the power of the holy spirit that's in us. That's incredible to understand. **...who became for us the wisdom of God.** The Word of God. The wisdom of God. That's what it is, the mind of God in the flesh. **...and righteousness,** this word "righteousness." He became righteousness for us that we can be accounted as righteous. And not only that, but we're going into this particular sermon to understand that we're to become righteous. It's not a matter of just being accounted as righteous. We are to become, we are to grow in, if you will (that's a better way of expressing it) because we can never in this flesh be righteous save for what God accounts us as because of living by faith, but we are to grow in it. We're to become stronger and stronger in living right before God, which means to be in agreement with Him, striving to live by what He's given us, which means to live righteously. We are to strive to do that with all of our being though we realize we fall flat on our face and have to be forgiven so often of sin. So there is that struggle, but we're to grow in it.

...the wisdom of God, because of Christ, his life, our life, being blessed to live in him in the Body of Christ, in the Church of God, and righteousness, and sanctification... We're given the blessing of sanctification through him, and redemption, you know, released from payment because of him, because he paid the price, that according... This is beautiful when you consider this season of the year - Passover! He did it all! Everything! The more you understand, the more you grasp of these things, and I mean really see it deep down inside of you, the more awesome this becomes of God's plan and how literally everything, everything has been built upon His Son. Everything! Everything has been built upon and based around His Son and how He's doing what He's doing.

Because what is this about? It's about Elohim. It's about the God Family. That's why a creation began. That's why God created a spirit realm from the very beginning, and then created spirit life within that realm, and then a physical realm, a universe, and then physical life within that universe. Awesome! All because of Elohim. Christ is the focus of it all. He's what it is all built upon. Incredible!

The Son of God. Think you understand that? You don't yet. You're growing in it, and then there is so much more. Some of that you can't grasp and understand until you're in the God Family, truly. But the more you grow and the more you learn the more you'll always become more and more inspired. Because this is something you grow in year by year by year, to understand Joshua the Christ, His life and what it means and that relationship between him and his Father that is so incredibly unique and powerful.

Verse 31—that according as it is written: He who glories, let him glory in God. Why be raised up in these stupid false things about "I'm important!" "My job is important." Whatever it is. Well, it only is if it fits within the framework of God's purpose and plan of life. Otherwise it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. The hill of beans are more important; they can feed somebody. Incredible how human beings can be. We can get so lifted up with self importance, thinking our ideas, the way we see it. No, not unless you agree with God. And then, if you do, it'll fit within the framework of what God gives and it'll be beautiful and it will have understanding, and it will have soundness of mind. But otherwise, it's just selfish garbage.

People get lifted up by self? It's just selfish garbage. The more we can see that the freer we become, truly, and the more we truly glorify God. The more you'll truly glorify God and thank Him for everything you see and understand. Everything.

That's why I've made these comments, the more you understand you're in God's hands the more content, the happier in life you'll be because then you won't have the worries and the concerns of various things that so often hurt human beings and cause the drama, drama, drama, drama, drama of life. If you're in God's hands and you have that peace, the more you can hold on to that. Because you're still going to have some drama to varying levels until you're in a spirit life, but the more you're at peace with God and understanding that you're in God's hands you understand that's an awesomely powerful and beautiful thing to have and to live.

So we should understand, we are to understand, this entire process of how God's righteousness is to work in our lives. Through God's Son, our Passover, we're able to first become forgiven of sin, accounted as righteous, and then have this process of transformation to then work in us. It's a process. But all of this only continues to work in us as we seek to live what God has revealed as His righteousness.

So there's a lot said there and I wanted to make sure I read that. There's a lot said there.

But all this only continues to work in us as we seek to live what God has revealed as His righteousness. That's a desire to become at one with Him, to realize, to know, to believe that everything about Him, His judgments, His righteousness, that's the way I want to think. That's what we have to come to more deeply and grow in.

Therefore, we're to grow in righteousness. We can't just be accounted as righteous, just have our sins forgiven and then to say we believe and be given the ability to believe. That's not enough. Change has to take place! It's a transformation in the mind, but it has to be manifest, it has to become real because we choose to live by it, righteousness - agreement with God.

Therefore, we're to grow in righteousness in how we live our lives. We need to see that deeply and believe that. So transformation of our minds to become more at one with God, to become like God in thinking is developed in us as we choose to participate in this process. And we, as a whole, we do indeed, but we grow in that ability to understand that.

Again, as we seek to respond by growing in righteousness we practice God's righteousness in our lives. "What God says, I agree with that. I choose that." That's how we have to think.

So now let's go back and look more closely at what Paul was addressing to the Romans in the midst of covering of this subject. In the past series we followed a very specific order of how God was working through Paul to teach, to show how God's righteousness was to work in our lives, how He accounted that to us. We went through much of that. Paul covered something in Romans toward the beginning of that book, however, that fits into this story as well that now we need to go back to and focus upon that because we didn't start there. We started after that, and yet this is a part of the story and why Paul was explaining what he was. So we're going back to look at some of that.

In the last series, concerning the focus of God's righteousness, we started out with what Paul was covering in Romans 8, but amazingly enough we covered some of the first portions of Romans in the series just before which was entitled *Real Freedom*. Toward the end of that series we went into an area that now needs to be repeated and considered more deeply in the context of all that has followed since we covered it then.

Romans 6. So looking at some of this once again in this focus, with this particular focus we have today. **Romans 6:1**, again, as a reminder, **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that we may receive more and more grace?** Because learning about grace and what God says

and He accounts us as righteous because we repent and because we choose to live by what we believe because of faith, there is so much more to the story.

It says, **God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin**, in other words, made free from bondage, **live any longer in it?** So if you don't live any longer in sin what does that mean? You're choosing to live right, you're wanting to live right, striving to live and grow in, if you will, righteousness.

That so many of us as were baptized into Joshua Christ were baptized unto his death? Asking that question. **Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death.** We chose that. We wanted to bury the self because it fights against God; it's an enemy to God. So we want to repent of that. When we came to baptism we wanted to bury it in the water and come up, as it says, and begin living right. That means to live righteously before God.

We're going through some of these things because the Protestant world has so screwed this stuff up, these very sound and basic things. It's like this deathbed repentance stuff, you know. Everything can be made all right; you just live how you want, you go to have a piece of bread put on your tongue every week, or whatever it is, you take a little of this wine that (I don't know if they still do it) you sip out of the same old big cup, and whatever and somehow you're just clean all over and you can go right back out and live however you want to the rest of the week. Come back and do it again; just keep coming back that one service every week. And people don't do it now, but they used to more so, come back every week and you can go away and you're just okay, without changing their life! What a horrible thing!

No, you're to learn how God teaches with what is right, and then choose to live by it, strive to live by it.

Verse 5— For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, see, going under the water, that likeness, being put to death, putting self to death. We made the choice. He made the choice so that we could live, so that we could be forgiven of sin, so that God the Father and he himself could live and dwell in us and we in them. So he chose and we have to choose, yes, this is what we want, to be put to death, the old self to be put to death. Kill it all, destroy it all because it's all selfish, and become transformed, a different mind, different thinking, a different way of living life.

...knowing this: that our old self is nailed to the pole with him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed. That means you want to destroy self. You're learning as you grow. You can't see it all at baptism, but you know there has to be a change, you make that choice, and then God continues to show you more and more, give you more understanding that selfishness is sick. It reeks. It stinks. It's so bad, because every bit of drama in life comes from selfishness. Every bit of drama, it's about self. It's not about other people. You know, some people, they talk about others and it's this drama that gets built up and they're built up and it's like it's them, it's about them,

and they're causing this and creating this. No, no, no, it's about you. It's about self, what you're getting out of it because it's perverted thinking. It's like you have to have drama to live!

I think of news today. It's a good example. To exist they have to have drama. That's what they feed off of. They love it! It's a way of life. It's everybody else that's creating this drama, "Look at this drama! Look what he said! Oh, look what he tweeted!" I'm sorry, but you know, just a tweet, the world goes nuts. A lot of the world! I'm talking about large percentages of people could go whacky over a tweet and it becomes the talk of the day. Then another tweet comes out the next day. It's just like they don't understand they're being played, played to their own selfishness because they get so wrapped up in these things and that becomes their world. You think, whew, wow!

So again **...knowing this: that our old self is nailed to the pole with him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed.** That's our objective and it isn't done the day you go under the water. That's the beginning. That's the beginning of a commitment to come up out of the water and to strive to grow in righteousness, not just to be accounted as righteous by living by faith and believing what God has given because of that, but a matter of your striving to change to indeed live right.

...so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and that from now on we should no longer be slaves to sin. This season of the year is so much about all this, isn't it? No longer slaves to sin. Because I can't help but think about drama. People are enslaved to it and it's sin. Enslaved to sin, enslaved to drama. Horrible!

For he who is dead has been freed from sin. Verse 8—Since we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. So again, that's a beginning of a process that God teaches us. We recognize that we have chosen to put the old self to death, we want to walk in newness of life, we want to live righteously, to grow in righteousness before God in how we live, and "that we shall also live with him," not just in the future but now. We're able to live with him, in him. That's what this is talking about. It's a process. We can dwell in him, he dwells in us, we're forgiven of sin, we can have that confidence that at any time, any time of day you can go before the throne of God through our High Priest, through our Passover and High Priest Joshua the Christ and God is there anxious to hear, to work with you, to bless you.

It goes on to say, **death has no more dominion (rule) over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life that he lives, he lives unto God.** What are we to do? We die? We're to live unto God. That's what this is about.

So you too should consider yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, in other words, unto the bondage of sin, freed from sin. As it says here, it goes on to say, **but alive,** in other words, **to live unto God through Joshua our Lord.** It's what it's about. It's showing the example of Christ's life and now what our example is to be, how we're to live.

Therefore (verse 12), do not let sin reign (rule) in your mortal body. Well, what's that all about? Selfishness. Don't let it have control. Don't let it control you. You're responsible for your own life.

You know, it's a unique thing about selfishness. It's this thing of always justifying or palming off the blame onto someone else and people not, especially in this age we live in today, people not accepting personal responsibility in their life. That's a giant problem today in today's world of modern technology. Own your own choices! People can't even grasp the phrase, what it means to own your own choices, to be responsible for your own actions. Not blaming someone else. Not pointing the finger at someone else, or whatever it is in life. You can't live life like that. Just start with self. You can't change anything else. You have to learn how to work with it, to deal with it, whatever it might be in life. This is the only thing you can change; it's the only thing you can work to change. Incredible.

Therefore, do not let sin reign (rule) in your mortal body, that you should obey it and its lusts. Selfishness. It's lusts. It's desires. "Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life"; that's what this is about. Selfishness. So it's not to rule in our life. Instead, you're to take control. It's your responsibility. It's my responsibility to strive to live what? Righteously before God.

So going on here in **verse 13** it says, **Neither should you yield**, and it's a word that means "to present" **your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.** So we're to strive to live what's righteous. So again, we're to get rid of unrighteousness. That's why it goes on to say, **but yield (present) yourselves unto God.** If we're in a process and we strive to present our life to God there is a certain way we're going to live, and if we're not living that way then, well, we're doing our own thing. And sadly, every year from Feast to Feast there are people who make choices that aren't good and they don't stay with us, and so we get whittled down in size. Unless it's God's purpose to add more to it then we stay that way because God does the calling. The Church is the size exactly what God gives. It can be no more whatsoever unless God gives more.

So God has a purpose. He's done different things at different times and we've seen that especially since the Apostasy. Incredible what we've gone through and how much the Church got whittled down after that point in time. Because God didn't intend that a large Church continue on doing a great work all the way up to the coming of Christ because there is that proclivity then to take it to self and God's going to make certain that no one can ever say, "Look at what I did." No, it's what God did. The few who are there they were able to be a part and to share in that with God, what God is doing. God raises us up, not we ourselves.

So we're exceedingly blessed more than we can grasp.

So you're **not to present your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield (present) yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead...** It's talking about what Christ did. He lived a perfect life in the sense of how he lived. He lived righteously. He didn't have any sin. That's why he's able to become our Passover and then resurrected from the dead,

his life for all time God's, in the Family of God. We're to follow that example and that process in our life. Death, the watery grave, coming up and walking in newness of life, presenting our lives to God. That's what it's symbolic of, pictures.

So, **you're to present your members as instruments**, and this word here, it means a lot more than just "instruments." It's means like weapons or arms, like in battle, because we're still in this physical body when we come up out of that watery grave. He wasn't. He lived perfectly before. He lived righteously before, but we haven't and we don't and we can't until we're changed completely. But how it's accounted to us and the change that takes place, it takes place from the moment we're baptized, have hands layed upon us, until we die or we're changed. We're to be growing in righteousness, living God's way of life.

It says here that **you yield (present) yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments (weapons, arms) of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you.** It's not to have rule over you. It's what it's saying here. If we live by selfishness, it does, it controls us. We're not to let selfishness control us. People who make wrong choices and wrong decisions against God they become weaker and weaker and cutting themselves off from the flow of Gods' spirit and the truth that God gave to them, it just grows and grows unless they come to repentance and a conviction, "I want to live what is right before God and start practicing what is right."

It's like this example of tithing. If someone cheats on that, if someone robs God, it's a great example because it goes through everything in our life about sin, any kind of sin. But that one there we should be able to see far more easily. To make a choice of not to do it, this, it begins to control us. Your selfishness controls you. Why? Because you wanted something else. You wanted that for something else, that which is God's. It's amazing how perverted and how sick the human mind can be or how it can become when it begins to be cut off from God because of selfishness and letting self control self. That's not in control of ourselves, we're just yielding to selfishness.

This battle of fighting against self, these arms, these weapons, to present your members as instruments, weapons? That means to fight for this, to fight to do what is right before God.

...as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you. It's not to have dominion, rule over us, **for you are not subject to the law, but subject to grace**, or under grace. Again, this thing about—we've gone through it already—Sarah and Abraham and trying to fulfill the promise of God by their own righteousness. No, that's tantamount to a selfishness with God out of the picture and lack of understanding. So God brings us to understanding that no, we have the blessing of God in our life, and the only way you can live what is righteous is by God's help, the help of His holy spirit.

To me that's such an incredible thing to think about, the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. In the wilderness for forty years, and then after that the judges, then the kings that reigned and ruled, and in all of that they're an example of how you cannot obey God though you've been

given God's law. Moses was given it to give to them and they had it. No other nation had been given that, but they were given it as a nation and they couldn't live by it. Why? They didn't have God's holy spirit. You can't do it on your own.

So how blessed are we that God blesses us with a relationship with Him, that we can dwell in Him and His Son and they in us, and because of that then to be inspired, to be motivated, to be able to stay in the truth and to make choices and decisions then that's what I want. And if you want that God blesses you to have it and He blesses you to grow in that unity and choice of oneness with Him. You don't want to be cut off from Him. You don't want to be separated from Him. You don't want to have drama in your life. You don't want to live in disobedience to God and to dishonor God and to lie to God or to lie and live a lying life toward others, around others. You want to live what is true and right before God.

Now, that's a battle and so that's why it's talking about here, yield your life, your instruments, what it said here "members as instruments of righteousness." Your thinking, your actions, your whatever it is, the way you walk, the way you dress, the way you live, the way you talk, yield them to living what is really right before God, righteousness.

Verse 15—What then? Shall we sin because we are not under (subject to) the law, but under (subject to) grace? Well, we've already gone through some of this in that other series to understand what it's talking about here. God forgives us of sin, yes, but that doesn't mean we're to continue in it. We're accounted as righteous—that's what we're talking about in this series here—we're accounted as righteous, God does, because of repentance and believing the truth and living by it, by faith, but then we're to change and we're to grow in righteousness. That's the next step. So we're not to stop at the matter of just receiving grace from God, we're to change.

You know what is really even more beautiful to see and understand? If you understand what grace is all about, it's receiving God's mercy, it's recognizing a relationship with God. God says He wants that with us now. Now is the time for an ability to fellowship with God and He gives us that opportunity. So He starts to give us of His love, because before that He couldn't give that to us, because that means a lot. To receive of God's love means a calling, the ability to see and know the truth. So He puts that in your mind and gives you the ability to see, and as you choose then He just gives you grace.

That's why it speaks about in various places, and Paul does especially, about more and more grace. You grow in grace. It becomes greater the more you see that. You receive forgiveness of sin—awesome—you receive strength and power of His holy spirit on a continuing basis, you receive favor of God in your life in various things you go through. He's molding and fashioning your life. You can be content and at peace knowing that, having a confidence, a boldness in that, that God is dealing with you, He loves you, He wants you to succeed and become a part of His Family. He's given you that opportunity, not your neighbors, not the city, not the state, not the nation, but a few, and you're blessed to participate in that.

We begin to see that and we should be in awe of such a thing, but if we grasp that grace we're not to be on the selfish receiving side of it either. Because to live righteously means you begin living that grace toward others. If God is forgiving to you, you had better be forgiving toward others. Because if you're not you haven't learned diddly squat about grace and you're not appreciative of the grace of God. If we're appreciative and thankful that we've been forgiven of sin shouldn't we be willing to forgive others of their shortcomings? And why? Because we see ourselves and we see how ugly our selfishness is and we hope and pray that everyone else that ever knows us or knows us well forgives us, has compassion upon us, gives us a little space for growth and being human and being stupid at times.

We're all stupid at times. Every time you sin you're what? Stupid! Every time we do something stupid, which is sin, you know, it's a shame. Who isn't guilty of that? Everybody's got to hold up their hand. Who has been stupid? I had to put my hand up. Yeah. How often? Every day? If we're truthful and if we can really see it, yeah. Because this can't be, this is not perfected yet and it can't stay perfected until you're spirit and God always then dwelling in you in fullness and you in Him. But we have this battle because of stupid carnality we have and stupid choices we make.

So shouldn't we want to be forgiving toward others? Give them compassion? Not be so harsh in judgment? God isn't harsh to us in judgment. He's just. He's righteous and we're to strive to live by that as well. So again, incredible this process we go through.

So again, **What then? Shall we sin because we are not under (subject to) the law, again... God forbid!**

Do you not know that to whom you yield (present) yourselves servants, as far as your thinking, and here it's a matter, it says, **if you present yourselves servants**, which means a bondservant, a bond slave, **to obey, you are the one's servant whom you obey**. So it goes on to explain here what this means: **whether it is sin unto death...** So if you're just going to live selfishly and be bound to that, in bondage to it, if you choose bondage like the Israelites, "Oh, it's so much nicer back there in Egypt. We had it so much easier." What's wrong with you? Don't you, can't you begin to see what it means to get away from that and work for yourselves and build for yourselves and be freed from that? But human nature, it's an incredible thing. It wants to gravitate back to doing whatever it wants to do and not having anyone else tell them what to do because, "I want what I want and don't get in my way. Not you either, God!" That's how we are as human beings. We can't logically think that out, but that's how people are.

So again here, **whether it's sin unto death**, in other words leading to, **or of obedience unto**, or leading to **righteousness**? So how do you live righteously? You obey. You obey what God says. You look to His way of life and you realize that's what I want to live because I want to be obedient to God, to that way, because that's the right way. There is nothing else; that's what's right and that's how I want to live. The laws? The last six commandments? That's the way I want to live toward others. I want to be in harmony with that in spirit, not just in action. That's just a small

portion of it because every bit of the actions come from our mind and how we think. That is what has to change. So we go through a large, a long process, continual battle.

Then it goes on to say in **verse 17—But give thanks to God that although you were the servants (slaves) of sin...** We were in bondage. Do we grasp and understand what it means to be freed from that? Freed from sin, freed from bondage. It means freed from your own selfishness. God has to help us to even see what selfishness is. What an amazing thing, God has to show us what we're like because we don't really grasp it. We grow in understanding lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We can't see it in the beginning. We see some of the most basic of physical things: Seventh day Sabbath - "Sun sets in the west; I can see that. I can live by that. I can make my changes, my choices by something I see on a very physical plane so I want to from sundown to sundown obey the Sabbath." "I see a certain amount of money coming in. Yes, I want to tithe 10% of that. I see that." We make certain choices. "Yes, I'm not going to work on the seventh day so I have to make some choices in my life and changing when I work and when I don't work." So we see some very physical things then that are manifest, but they all start in the mind. Everything that's manifest in our life physically, and when it comes to sin, it all started in the mind.

Eventually, in the Church, we get to this. In the last few years we've gotten to this more than any time in God's Church since I've been in it, and I believe for all time because of the maturing process and because of all that God's pouring out upon us in understanding and preparing for His Kingdom to be on the earth, that the Church that does exist at that point in time is going to be at a place that is awesome in understanding and knowledge and understanding.

That's why things have been given to us. That's why God raised up Mr. Armstrong to do a great work, to begin giving truth back, but we couldn't handle it all at that point in time. We had to grow in it. It was a very, in the beginning, much of it, a very physical process growing into a spiritual one over time because those things, we don't change quickly.

We benefit from what God did through him. We are here because of what God did through him. If God hadn't done those things through him and if he hadn't been faithful like he had and done the things and responded we wouldn't be here today.

All through time there have been different ones whom God has worked with that has been part of a process. We wouldn't be here today if the apostles didn't do what they did in writing things out that are in this book, if they hadn't been willing to live some of the things they did. Some of the things that Paul was willing to live and then write and then send out to the various Churches, incredible what took place. So it goes on through time.

So God is building. It's a building process. We're here because of what everyone else has done and lived in response to God's calling over the past 6,000 years. Now we're at the apex, we're at the height and getting ready to be launched into a far greater level, if you will, once God's Kingdom is established on this earth. We haven't seen anything yet.

We've had this blessing to be able to grow in these things and to draw closer to God and learn more about this process of conquering self and what it means to understand the spirit of a matter. It's one thing to start obeying physically. Don't commit adultery: So people quit fornicating, committing adultery. That's a very physical thing, but it starts in the mind. To quit stealing from their tithes, it's a matter of thinking, of it being a horrifying thing to think of stealing or robbing from God. And on and on it goes, physical things. But when you start understanding why the mind thinks it does and can do these things, it's a spirit thing. It's a spirit. It's a mind. It's an attitude of thinking toward God, of why we would think a certain way toward God and why we'd be appalled and never think a certain way. All because we want to be at one with God. Beautiful when we see it more and more.

Verse 17—Giving thanks to God that although you were servants (slaves) to sin but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered to you, or where unto you were delivered. So we were brought to this point, especially when we were called.

Now, **verse 18—That having been made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.** So not only does God account us as righteous because of living by faith, but we're to strive to live by it ourselves. It's not just being accounted that and taking that in a wrong way from God, because it doesn't work that way. We have to start living what is right because it all affects what you think anyway. It's a matter of a response.

See, that's the thing that transforms. That's the transforming process, the changing in your mind, in your spirit, in the spirit essence of your mind, are those choices you're making. As you make those right choices then the mind is able to be transformed as God working in your mind to help you to think differently. If we see that it's a beautiful thing.

So again, "That having been made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness."

There is no other way to live, though we do, and when we do we have to repent, when we choose something that's not righteous, we don't live right before God, then we're blessed and He accounts that to us as righteousness, though we're not, but we are to strive to live by it. That's why this sermon is entitled *Growing in Righteousness*, because it's all part of a system here of change in our life and we have to see the entire picture. That's why God has taken us through this series to bring us to this Passover season (to me, in a very unique way), being given more, building upon more, being able to see more if we can see it, asking God for help to be able to see it and to thank Him for it.

Verse 19—I speak after the manner of men, or speaking of in human terms, because of the weakness of your flesh. For as you have yielded (presented) your members as servants (slaves) to uncleanness, because that's what it is until we start changing our thinking and our choices, that we want to obey God. ...and of lawlessness to more lawlessness, so now... Because that's the way we were before God called us. Now make the change. Run away from sin. That's why it says flee these things. Flee fornication. Flee. Flee wrong thinking. Realize how much it hurts life. So those are choices. You have to cry out to God for help in that.

So, **yield your members as servants (slaves) to righteousness unto holiness.** Isn't that what God said? "Become holy, for I am holy." Well, this is how you do it. You believe God; you follow what God has given. Because of that He blesses you, because you believe that His Passover, our Passover died for us so that we could be forgiven of sin so that He and His Son could dwell in us. We believe that and so that when we do sin and we do go before God and say, "I want that Passover in my life. I pray you forgive me of my sins," and He counts that to you for righteousness and He forgives you and He continues to have a relationship with you because of your choices. Then the more we learn from that the more we understand we have to fight to obey, to live by righteousness. We want to live the way God has given us. That's the next step, striving to become holy, "Become holy for I am holy." That's what God says. Another way of saying it, "Grow in righteousness. Become righteous." Because that's what you're doing.

That means all your actions, all your thinking, all that comes out of your mouth we should strive that it be right with God. You don't want to be wrong before God in what you say or do or think.

Verse 20—For when you were the servants of sin, you were, it's not the word "free from," **you were not a slave to righteousness.** So, obviously here, **when you were the servants to sin you were not a slave to righteousness.** In other words, it's talking about now we are a servant of or slave to righteousness. That's what we should want to be. Bring it on! That's the thinking I want, and it has more to do with the word "servant" than "slave."

So again here, very awkward translation here when it says, "You were free from righteousness." Well, it's kind of awkward, and I guess if you understand it, you see it, that's one thing, but literally saying here, "You were not a slave (servant) to righteousness." It's talking about a servant here. Some translations, I think King James, does say "a slave." This adds to the meaning of this. The Old King James sometimes is really messed up, and sometimes it's one of the most accurate that there is. Paradox here a little bit. No, that's not the right word. Contradiction of terms. No. Oxymoron. That's what I'm looking for, oxymoron.

Okay, **verse 20** says, **For when you were slaves of sin you were free...** Okay "slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness." Okay. **For when you were slaves of sin you were not a slave to righteousness.** It has to do with servant here. I think that's in the scripture there in the Greek. But anyway, I'm going to have to go back and check that.

Verse 21—What fruit did you have in those things whereof you are now ashamed? Indeed, the end of those things is death. So it's just painting a picture here of where sin leads, of what it is, the destructiveness there, and if you let it happen, especially once you receive the truth, that kind of a choice, what horrible thing. It just leads in death. We have to strive to live righteous, not just be accounted as righteous by God because we believe that we're able to be forgiven of sin.

Verse 22—But now being made free from sin, in other words, delivered from bondage, and now become the servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness. So it's just saying the way of

life you live, what's produced, it should be obvious it agrees with God. It's right thinking. It's right words that come out of our mouth. It's right speaking about other people. It's right actions toward other people. On and on it goes.

So you should **have your fruit unto holiness**. "Become holy for God is holy," live righteously because God is righteous, **and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death**. That's the end. So it's a choice. That's why I think of so many people have gone back after their minds have been opened up. You choose death? That's why it's such an incredible thing when God gave the Israelites the law and He says, "This day I have set before you life and death; choose life." It should be an obvious thing! And how does that come about? Through this way of life, through choosing these things.

I think of so many people who have turned away from the truth. But people can't think soundly. They don't think they're choosing death. They just become deceived in their thinking.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Joshua the Christ, our Lord. It's a gift, everything God has given to us. How blessed are we to receive these things? How deeply do we see them?

Next, we're going to focus upon the structure of God's Church, for it's through this that God leads us to a deeper, to greater understanding of how a new creation works in us and it's about this creation of becoming Elohim. That's what God is doing, developing Elohim in our life. Again, we have to make choices as to whether we want to live what is righteous before God. Are we really striving to?

Because there are some times in our life we don't strive like we should to live righteous, to be righteous in our actions and what comes out of our mouth so often across the lips and teeth and out the mouth, this air that comes out of, down through the mouth, and we pronounce certain things and we say certain things about people to people, whatever it might be, and it comes from something in the mind that's spirit, spirit essence in the mind. God says, "I'll transform that. I'll change that. I'll work with you. I'll mold and fashion you." But we have to make the choices and the choices have to be with choosing what is right, and God is right. So it's a matter of continually doing that and fighting that fight, choosing what is right indeed.

Let's turn over to **Ephesians 4:1—I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord**, or bound of the Lord as it means here, **implore you to walk in a worthy manner of the vocation**. Now, sometimes Paul talks in these terms because literally he was. He was bound. He was serving God. He was sent to the gentiles, but there came a time when he wasn't able to go to them literally except by what was written. He uses some of this expression sometimes to show this is what he wants. He's thankful for that. "I'm bound to God." It's not just a matter of being a prisoner but it's this desire that has to do with the likeness of something that can happen on a physical plane that he recognizes on a spiritual plane and he's thankful for it.

That's what we want, to become bound more fully to God. We don't want to be loosed from that in any way. When we do it's because of our own choices. Who wants to be freed from any of that? That's not free. That's death. You know, to go out and have a nicer place to stay, to go out and buy a different car, a nicer car, to rob God in the process, you know, okay, that's what you want? That's what's more important to you? That's a choice. Because that's exactly what people do or have done in times past. That's exactly what God says, "You do that? You rob Me. You don't understand what I've given to you. You don't appreciate, you don't grasp it at all. You don't grasp what's truly important."

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, or bound of the Lord, implore you that you walk in a worthy manner. We're not worthy, but we're to walk in a worthy manner. What does that mean? To obey God. To want to reflect the life of God in our life and how we live and how we think and how we talk. ...**that you walk in a worthy manner of the vocation**, and it literally means, it's the word for "calling." It says here that **you walk in a worthy manner of the calling wherewith you were called**. God did the calling so walk in a worthy manner of that calling. So again, a different way of speaking here. Paul did that a lot, and it's coming to grasp what he's saying in spirit.

So, "walk in a worthy manner of the calling with which you were called." I think, what an awesome blessing to be called by God in the first place, and if we grasp that, what we've been given, then we should want to respond by walking worthy, in a worthy way of that. How do you do that? By loving God, by loving God's way of life, by not deceiving self and living ever how you want to live, you know, going out here and getting drunk whenever you want to, going out here and doing other things, watching pornography, whatever it might be, brambling and blabbing about other people and talking about other people and tearing people down. That's not of God. God doesn't tear people down. He isn't harsh on people, you know, finding fault with people. God doesn't do that.

So He says, "Walk in a worthy manner." Does that reflect God if we do those things? Robbing God of tithes? Cheating on our second tithe? I mean, what kind of game are we playing to not obey God? So again here, making it very clear here we're to walk in a worthy manner, to strive to. Even though we can't do it perfectly that's how we should strive to walk. Because why? Well, that reflects a thankfulness to God as well, that we grasp what we've been given, we're thankful for what we've been given. We want to respond right before God. We don't want to dishonor God.

Sometimes that just blows my mind, how even carnally, physically an individual can rob God, and if we start multiplying that then in every facet of our life and how we talk and how we think about others, in how we treat others? You know, do we treat others with kindness, with patience? I think of how patient God is with us.

As human beings sometimes we're very controlling. We do it in different ways. We want to control things around us because we want it to be our way. We want others to do things the way we think it should be done, or treat us in the way we think we should be treated, or just to live

life like we think it should be lived. That's why we judge people. They should be doing this and that. And you think, God doesn't do that with us. He tells us Sabbath by Sabbath, holy day to holy day, how we're to live and then we have to make the choices. But man, it takes time and we grow in that and in some ways we do it so poorly. But God has a lot of patience with us. That's grace. Do we have a lot of patience with others? Sometimes we don't. Sometimes we become impatient with one another even in the Body of Christ, let alone in the world. In the world we should strive to think right and we all fail in this from time to time, and when we do we have to repent of it.

The world is a fast paced selfish world. I have to fight that when people walk through a mall and I'm walking toward them. Because inevitably if there is a group of people they're all beside each other talking, laughing it up, doing whatever they're doing, and you had better get out of their way because it's their area, their space, and don't get in their space. Because they don't acknowledge you; you're like you're not really there. That's how it is sometimes. It's like, "I'm coming through and you need to recognize I'm coming through, and our group is coming through." And so what happens? Somebody has to give. Somebody has to move over.

Sometimes I don't. If there are four or five I just sometimes just plant my feet there and do what you're going to do. If you're going to run me over fine. But look, I'm one person coming this way, you're four or five coming this way, do you think it would be just a little bit right, a little bit good if one of you kind of scoot over just a teeny, teeny bit and give way? How many of you have ever experienced that? And those of you who haven't, you're in for a treat if you start looking for it, because it's out there. That's the world we live in. You have to be careful.

You have to be careful driving down the road anymore, the freeway, because human nature, people are becoming more and more selfish. You have to be careful. Because, you think it's one thing if it happens in a mall or on a street or a sidewalk - it's another thing when it happens on a highway because it's life and death out there. I mean, things can happen quickly.

I see sometimes semi-drivers doing things. I say semi, but people do it driving a car or a pick-up, but a semi, you can't stop like you can a car. If I'm not mistaken, if it's loaded down it takes ten times longer to stop that then it does a car. I think it's ten times the distance and so forth as it does a car at the same speed because of the momentum and the power, the force that's at work there and the braking power that doesn't exist like it does in a car and its weight and its momentum.

So I see some of them sometimes driving the way they do and there are so many out there anymore. There is such a demand now for truckers compared to what it was at one time because things are good so there are more goods being transported and because of that there is more demand for, desire to train people to get them out there on the highway and some of them I don't think they're training all that well.

Is it 85 that one man? We know of a man that's 85 years old out there driving a semi. He shouldn't be driving a car, probably, from knowledge and health that he has, but he's out there driving a semi. Let me off the road whenever he's coming through. Seriously! I mean, there gets a point of time in life when you really don't belong behind something that destructive. It's powerful. When I get to seventy I promise you I'll never—that's coming up in May—I'll never drive a semi. I probably shouldn't be driving a car. But I'm just telling you.

It's a powerful thing. And if a person, especially if you have diabetes or something like that, different things that could happen if people are getting to a place where they could have a black out? You get to a point in life when your life is getting to a certain point where you have to be careful of such things. It's hard to give up such things sometimes in life, it really is. If a person is used to a certain amount of money coming in it's hard to give up on some of that.

Now, I marvel that a person can put in a forty hour week driving across the United States like that at that particular point in time, but it's not smart because there is a lot of power to destroy there. And sadly, these kinds of things happen on a regular basis in the world around us.

Why on earth did I go in that direction? But again, it's how we choose to live our lives and how we think toward others, how we act toward others, what comes out of here, comes out in various members, different actions. The mouth is the biggest one. James talks about this; what a fire that thing there can cause. It talks about it doesn't take much.

I think of Smokey the Bear things on TV because it only takes one small, little match to destroy a forest. One. Then it uses that example; the mouth can destroy so much, so little a member can do so much destruction. I've seen so much destruction in God's Church because of that thing there, truly. The Apostasy, because of that thing there. But it wasn't just that, it started in the mind, and then it just came out that, you know. It uses the example of a rudder. It's so small compared to the size of a ship and what it navigates, and it uses that example there.

So again there, incredible the human mind and how destructive it can be when we live by selfishness. So it's talking about some of these things "you have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life," "wages of sin..." and so forth.

So walk worthy, in a worthy manner of the vocation (the calling) where with you were called. **Verse 2—with all lowliness**, means humility of mind, **with all lowliness of mind**, humility of mind, **and meekness**, word here for gentleness, **with longsuffering**. So it's talking about how we should live and this example we should have in our life. If we want to walk in a worthy manner of our calling this is how we're going to strive to live, not with haughtiness and pride. Just that one alone, that we should do it, be a member of the Body of Christ and strive to live it with humility of mind.

I have known of so many people through time, and the more responsibility that so many have been given through time, so often that becomes the greatest battle. Pride. Importance of self.

Importance of how self thinks. I've seen it within the ministry of God's Church since I've been in God's Church. Human beings tend to be that way. I think of different times, you know, when human beings are given authority, given power, the tendency is to misuse the power and the responsibility. Why? Because it goes to the head. It goes to selfishness. It lifts with pride.

So everybody that ever goes through such a thing in life had best deal with that matter of pride and haughtiness, because it's the opposite of humility. The authority is there, but if the attitude of mind and how it's used really determines it's right or its effectiveness, its truth in life.

It's gotten a lot better, but like TSA. They strive now to do a better job in how they treat people, how they work with people. There was a time when it started out that it didn't as much as sometimes you could tell certain ones, certain people every once in a while you'd run across one it was going to their head and they're going to be nasty about what they tell you to do and how they tell you to do it. Why? Because the person is lifted up with authority. They're going to tell you. "Don't you know," you know, "you're supposed to take your shoes off and put them in the bin!" And maybe it was our first time to go through an airport, an older woman, you know, with a cane. You see these things. "Don't you know you're supposed to take your shoes off? Put them in this bin! I've been telling everybody in this line to do this! Do this!" I mean, I've seen people do things like this in the airport. They get mad and they start hollering.

Now, they're doing much better than they used to because they started getting a bad reputation, the whole bunch of them. The ones who were doing a good job were getting a bad reputation because of some individuals that didn't know how to control this little member.

Anyway, I think of border crossings when we used to go into Canada, or come back, wondering if I'm going to get back in. You get a hold of some people sometimes and they're so nasty, you know, and if you don't respond just right to them with the respect or the attention they think they deserve.

I remember one time I was going across, and I could sit here probably for half an hour telling you about border crossings, but I won't do that to you. But I think of one time going across and they said, "How long are you going to be staying here." I said, "A couple of days." He says, "How long are you going to be staying here?" I said, "Just a couple of days." He said, "How long are you going to be staying here? Two? Three? Four days?" I said, "Well, a couple of days, uh, 2, uh, blah, blah, blah..." Two days. A couple to me is two, two days. I didn't say it that way. But you know it kind of flusters you. It's like, "Where is this coming from?"

I have to stop here on this one, but the only time I had a real good one one time was at the Feast in Niagara Falls. We're going across and I had a whole bunch of people in the vehicle and this border fellow he really took this one well. I was coming across from one side of the Niagara Falls area, across that bridge over where you can see the falls, to the other side, to the U.S. side, and the border crossing fellow said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Over there." He said, "Where are you coming from?" "Back there." I wasn't thinking because everybody was in the car. You know,

obviously I just left here and I'm going over there. He started laughing. He said, "Go on." So sometimes you just you don't think about what you're doing, but some people would become offended like that.

Because I've had occasion where because they didn't get the kind of answer they thought said, "Pull up over there! Pull over there by those orange cones." Man, what did I do? I'm going to get strip searched. It's just about that bad, too. Anyway, I pulled over to another area that I saw some cones, and it wasn't the right ones. It was over toward a gift shop that you kind of have as you're going in. He meant these cones over here where they send people who are bad, who have to have their car searched. The Harrell's were with us that time. So they started going through all of our luggage out the back of the vehicle there and until they finally came to some of the Bibles in the Harrell's luggage, wasn't it? Then they finally started changing their attitude. But it was like, "We have these bad people over here and we're going to search through your luggage. We're going to find something." Anyway, I'm sorry.

But the whole point being is that people who are given authority so often misuse it. I remember times in the job, different jobs that people would have in the Church. I remember one time when Detroit was coming together again after the Apostasy and some people got offended because they got into a fight about, basically, who's going to be responsible or in charge of who brings the cookies. Well, let me stop and think about that. I'm probably going to have to go pray about that one. I'm sorry, I'm just being facetious. Why get so bent out of shape? It's because, "It was my job and "so-and-so" is going to bring cookies and whose job is it? Who's responsible?" It's like they got mad at each other. You think, of all things on earth, you know, I'd just rather not have cookies than to have that drama and that friction.

You think things like that haven't happened at times in God's Church? I could sit here for several Sabbaths in a row. I could start writing things down. Laura and I could sit together and start thinking about different things that have happened and I could just sit here and ramble off one thing after another constantly of misuse of authority, of things going to people's heads and that's in God's Church with people who have access to God's holy spirit.

We're not to be lifted up with haughtiness and pride over who we are or what our jobs are. It's to be of humility of spirit and that's what this is talking about. So if we're going to walk in a worthy manner of the calling God has given to us, to have a fellowship with Him we're to do it with lowliness of mind or humility of mind in all lowliness, not being lifted up by it in self importance.

I've known of people who have gotten a big head about giving a prayer. You think, it's a prayer. You have a responsibility in what you say before the congregation, but don't let it go to your head that somehow it's time for you to wax eloquent because I've heard of people give sermonettes in prayers in God's Church. It's not time for you to put on a show.

But we've gone through those things in times past. I'm going back in time of being a minister and seeing these kinds of things in God's Church. These things should never be, you know. On the

contrary, we ought to have a little bit of fear. Not just carnal human fear of being, “I’m not used to doing this and I’d rather not do it in the first place,” type of fear, but fear because it’s a responsibility before God. I hope you understand what I mean.

Because there was a time when I would far rather get up and lead songs than to give a prayer. I really would in God’s Church in the beginning. I was more comfortable in leading songs. Didn’t sing all that well but you know, they had to pick someone to get up there and do it that knew how to wave their arms in a proper time with 3/4ths time and 4/4 time, you know, whatever it was. I could do that so I got up there. Just do it. Go up there and lead the songs. So I was more comfortable in singing because everybody else is up singing too. But when you’re praying you’re the only one speaking and so that did something in my mind. I thought, I’m not so nuts about this.

So we go through different things of growth and we should do it in a humble spirit. Because we’re not important, none of us, in the sense of being lifted up and thinking “Look at me.” I have known too many people in God’s Church who look down upon others. It sickens me whenever anyone has that kind of pride that begins to enter in, and when I see it, and I hope and I look at and hope you get a hold of this soon, because if you don’t it’s going to be a big trial for you. Because it still exists in God’s Church. Okay? You have to fight it. Any of you in certain situations like that, you will have to address it and experience it because it will happen. It’ll be a pull on you. You can’t help it because that’s just normal, human nature. But the more you see it and the more you hate it the less it’s going to be a part of you. The more you hate something that’s ugly the more you will never do it. You’ll never want it to be a part of your life. But it’s coming to understand this, isn’t it?

So there’s a manner in which we are to walk and live. It is a matter of righteousness and growing in it, but we should want to reflect what’s right. We should want to live in a manner that’s honoring God. That’s what it’s talking about here, **Walk in lowliness of mind**, or humility of mind, **and meekness** (gentleness), **with longsuffering**, longsuffering toward others. Sometimes we’re not so longsuffering.

...**forbearing one another in love**, or bearing with one another in love is what the word means here, “bearing with one another in love,” because there is another translation of this I think is more appropriate. It’s basically tolerance, having a tolerance. But that can be taken in a negative way, to be tolerant of others. It’s like, “I’m better, but I’m going to be tolerant.” No, that’s not the use of the word. It has to do with this matter of allowing—maybe this is it—allowing for the differences in others.

Allow for people to be different because we’re not all the same. We’re not supposed to be the same. We’re not all being molded and fashioned for the same thing in the Body either, in the family, in God’s Temple. We’re not all being molded and fashioned for the same thing. We’re to allow for the differences in one another. An actuality, as you grow in maturity of mind, you begin to appreciate those differences in different ones, in different people, and something that’s different from the way you are and the way you think and begin to appreciate certain differences

there that God is working in them. Look at that, that's what God is working with, some of these differences that He's molding and fashioning and making better in this individual in preparing him for that which is going to be better than what you have been molded for in the same area because you're not being molded in it. You can't do it. You can't do the same things.

Because God doesn't mold and fashion the same things in every one of us and so He works with us in different ways within the Body, gives us those things we need so that we can do better in a particular place that God's going to place us. Someone else is not being prepared for the same thing. So we have to allow for those differences within the Body. You know why? Because God knows what He's doing! He sees something... He doesn't just see it. The reason we're called in many cases is because of what He's going to do with us and in us to place us into different places with the Body. It's His building. He does the work of placing us in those things.

Sometimes if we're not careful we can find ourselves judging God and working against God because God is doing certain things in different ones. So we have to be careful.

...with longsuffering, forbearing with one another in love. How often do you pray for that, to ask God to help you to love one another more? I do. To love God's people more and more, to grow in that? That's what we should do. The more you think that way and the more you want that and the more you grow in that the better the fellowship is and the attitude of mind toward one another, the more you're thankful for and appreciate one another, truly, and the less likely you are going to be then to be harsh in action or speech or cutting or catty or whatever it might be toward someone else. So allow for the differences.

It's not just like, but it's similar to in a physical way, learning to appreciate differences. I love different cultures, different things that people have grown up with, different thinking. You learn to appreciate. It's like different foods. I don't like all of them, but I like to try different things. Some things I don't like when it comes to food. People? You better learn differently there. But different things as far as different things in creation? Well, to appreciate the different things.

I think of the Midwest, as sometimes people have joked about these kinds of things, and like a farmer, whatever, it's steak and eggs, or whatever. It's just all they eat, steak, eggs, and potatoes. Corn! Never try anything different. It used to be that way more than it is today because now you have so many chains with so many different kinds of foods that are available you can try different things. But some people wouldn't try different kinds of foods because they just want their whatever - eggs, potatoes, and meat. Well, life is not like that. God has given such variety. I thoroughly enjoy trying different kinds of foods and if I like something then I enjoy going back again and trying something that I liked that's unique.

Different kinds of wine. Different kinds of beer. There is such variety in the world and we can appreciate the differences. Something one might like someone else may not. Fine. That's good. That's a beautiful thing.

But how much more important is that when it comes to people, to appreciate the differences? I think of today and today's world. People don't appreciate the differences. They really, in many cases, hate them. Different nationalities, people just hate because they're a different nationality, a different color of skin. Think, how short sighted, how stupid can you be? I think of the atrocities that have happened through time and how people have been treated, some of the things that happened in this country. It's happened all around the world, but sometimes ever who's in power, ever who is greater and abusive towards others then and how badly, then, others have been torn down, ridiculed. In some cases people try to keep them down.

It hasn't been that long ago when people in the south couldn't go to the same toilet, couldn't eat in the same restaurant. It hasn't been that long ago! "Oh, you can't eat in this restaurant. There's one down the street you can go to." You can't go to this toilet. You can't use these toilets. There are some shows, movies that have been out recently that have reminded me of some of those things that used to be not that long ago in the past. You don't know what it's like to have lived in some of those conditions unless you've lived in them.

I think what a horrible thing that human beings can treat each other like that in the world. How much worse in God's Church? That's why I love the fact that in God's Church you know what we learn? We learn to appreciate the differences. We learn to embrace the differences. We learn to love the differences. What a beautiful thing. It's not that way in the world.

And why? Pride. "Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life." People have to feel better and higher about themselves and keep others down and be able to speak evil of others. What a perversion. What a satanic perversion.

Well, couple more verses here. One more at least. All of this, **verse 3** then, **endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace**. Beautiful! "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit," to live righteously before God. We're all a part of God's creation...all a part of God's creation, and all created to one day have opportunity—that's God's intent anyway—to be a part of His Family. Awesome!

So we have to endeavor. It means you have to work at this. You have to work for this. To live righteously you have to think about it, you have to work at it, and you have to be on guard against the sin, the unrighteousness. "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit." This is in the Church. Through time this hasn't been done well. So it couldn't be done in Israel. The potential is to be able to have this within the Church, but only to those who make the right choices, only to those who hold fast, only to those who make the right choices and respond to the calling God's given because many have been called and few have been chosen because of their choices—that's the rest of the story—because of their wrong choices. Because they haven't fully embraced what God gave to them, to hold on to it with all of their being, with all of their might and striving to live a righteous life with a mind in agreement and unity with God and the thinking of God.

So this is work. This verse here, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit” takes work. It takes effort. It takes thought. Thought means change in this case, and change in thinking means change in actions. How we think toward one another is how we then are going to treat one another. We change in that as time goes on.

“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond...” It’s a bond. It’s like this bonding glue. You put it together and you can’t pull it apart. “...bound together in peace.” That’s a beautiful, beautiful verse if you understand it, the peace of God. Where there is peace there is no drama.