

This will be the last part, *Part 4*, of the current series entitled *Growing in Righteousness*.

Toward the end of *Part 3* we just started covering verses in Ephesians 5, and we're going to look at what the first couple of verses said and then we'll continue on from where we left off.

Ephesians 5:1—Therefore, be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love—that means we're to walk in righteousness—just as Christ also loved us and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. I love verses like this because you have to know the whole story. You have to know what it's talking about. It's driving home the point of how he loved us. He loved us with a sacrificing kind of love, and that's how He's telling us that we're to love others. We have to sacrifice.

This carnal human nature is selfish and we have to fight against selfishness in order to love others, because what's automatic is we just love ourselves. That's just automatic. That's what selfishness is, a love of self, pampering self, taking care of self, wanting self to feel good, whatever it might be. Anything that interferes with that? Selfishness. Generally, it involves how we treat others, how we talk about others, think about others, etcetera, etcetera. It comes back to this thing of a battle that we have of a need to sacrifice. What we have to sacrifice is this, is our way, is our selfishness. The point is driven home.

That's why I love the example of when it talks of, when it speaks of Christ saying, in essence, he's leaving us a new commandment. The first part of it is not new at all, it's old. And candidly, sadly, so many in times past in God's Church never understood what it was saying there, never understood the fullness of the statement. To some it was puzzling because it was like, well, how could this be a new commandment, to love one another, because it's throughout the Old Testament to love one another? It makes it very plain. It speaks of then the need to sacrifice. That's what he was getting ready to do when he talked about some of those things on Passover night. He's passing that along to the disciples, to the Church that was going to begin in 31 AD there. Again, it's a matter of sacrifice.

...and has given us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. And candidly, that's the way it is in our lives too. That which is pleasing to God, His desire is to create Elohim. His desire is for His Family. When we respond in a right way by doing what it says here, by living what it says here, "to be followers of God," the word has to do with being imitators - striving to follow that same way, to imitate, to strive to live by that same way that comes from God that He instructs us to live. The example of that then is given through Christ, through Joshua. That's why it goes on to talk about this then, "and walk in love," in God's love, "just as Christ also loved us."

So it's this awesome story of how we're to relate to, treat other people, and it's a matter of living in righteousness. It's a matter of striving to live by God's law. The first four commandments having to do with a relationship with God, the last six a relationship with one another. That's what righteousness is, when you live that way. God desires that we live that way. We don't do it perfectly. That's what this whole series and other series have been about. It's a process of understanding the full circle, if you will, of what God has given to us about the subject of righteousness. We are not righteous. He attributes it to us because of His righteousness. We have to see His righteousness and then have a desire to live that way of life, to be that

way in our thinking. Then God attributes that to us because of our belief, because of our believing Him, how we can be forgiven of the sin, because we're not righteous, and because we believe in Joshua as our Passover and we believe the truths that God has given to us and we strive to live by those things He attributes that to us, counts that to us as righteousness so that He can live in us, because that's the only way we can change; it's by His spirit, by His power, by Him and His Son dwelling in us. If we cut off the flow of that spirit He doesn't live in us and then we're nothing but selfish then. He doesn't want us to live selfishly.

So it's a beautiful picture here. All of these different series of sermons we've been going through to go this full circle, to come back to the reality, yes, but though we are not righteous we'd better strive to become righteous. That's the goal. That's what we're to strive to do, because when we're not, we're sinning, and when we sin, again, we have to go back to the very basics of repentance, and then that desire that God dwell in us, and cry out that He will, and then continue to fight, wanting to fight.

Then on down in **verse 6** it says, **Let no one deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath...** Again, man's choice of words because that's all he understands, because of certain things that are said. But again, it's the whole story. If you understand how God works with us, how God works with mankind it's about judgment. It's about judgment and God determines when to execute judgment for disobedience. The first great time, obviously, was at the flood. We have that judgment - "Judgment now is upon the House of God," as we're told in scripture, you know, in the New Testament. So we understand that we're under judgment on a continual basis because we have to change, we're to overcome, we're to become something new. But as far as the world is concerned, well, there are times that God is going to or has executed judgment on the world. We're getting ready for the maximum of that that's ever been executed on the earth, far greater than the flood.

...because of these things the wrath of God, or the execution of God's judgment, if you will, if you understand what that means, **is coming upon the children of disobedience,** or unbelief. **Therefore, do not take part with them. For you were once in darkness, but now in the LORD you are light.** So again, that's how we are light, we're able to have light, because of being in God and God in us. **Walk as children of light.** What does that mean? Well, we'd better live this way of life. We'd better strive to live righteously by God's law, by God's ways.

...for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, righteousness... So it's good because it's from God. Everything that's good comes from God, and if we strive to live by that good way then that's what righteousness is. **...and truth, proving what is acceptable to the LORD.** So again, there are things we can't know, as was talked about in the last sermon here, there are things we can't know until we live it, until we practice it. That's how you prove God's way, you live it, you strive to live by it, whatever it is we're striving to change and overcome. As you strive to live that way, asking God for help, well, that's how you prove His way is good, His way brings peace. It doesn't bring chaos. It doesn't bring drama. That's why we can be rest assured whenever there's drama there is some sin. Somewhere there's sin, there really is, because drama is the opposite of peace. God's way, living God's way produces peace.

Now, we are around drama in the world because it's not of God, and so we're going to have a lot of drama come our way, but we're not ourselves to engage in it. We're to strive to keep out of it, to keep away from it, not to drag it into our lives to where it begins to control us like it does others. Yet that's happened in God's Church where people get involved in drama in their lives. They're not at peace.

Now, we've come a long, long way in that, as I mentioned during this holy day season. We've come a long way as God's Church where there is far less drama today than there was a year ago or two years ago, especially if you go back five and ten years ago. It's awesome! To me it's exciting to see what God is doing because when you step back and you look the changes for those things that are right and just and good they come from God. They come from nowhere else. They come from God and His Son and they're made possible by their life, by their spirit that dwells in us. Because we can't make those kinds of changes of and by ourselves as human beings. It's impossible! It requires God's spirit.

So that means as people are striving to indeed prove God's way, putting those things into practice, listening to things, they're hearing and making the changes - just like the series we had about drama and coming to a stark realization, yeah, it's an ugly thing. Drama is ugly. I hate it. I don't like hearing it, but I have to deal with it in life, sometimes into the Church. We address it, we talk about it, we decide and determine when to address it and when to talk about it or whatever it might be. God leads and guides and directs us in that process so that we can change more.

This matter of changing and being transformed doesn't stop. It's an ongoing process until it's complete, until it's finished, until the point where God says, "Now I know you." Then it still continues on, because if you're alive after that point in time, if you're not dead right at that moment, which we aren't, you know, we're still living, whatever it might be, just like some who are sealed of the 144,000, that process has to continue in their lives. It doesn't stop. God continues to mold and fashion more in His people until it can't be molded anymore. When is that? Well, when you do die or when you're changed. It's finished, it's complete. Now it's a matter of spirit life that follows.

It goes on to say, **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness...** So we're learning more and more. We're becoming more and more convicted as a Church, more and more committed, in that respect, to run away from sin, to fight against sin, to want to get it out of our lives, to indeed live in a righteous way, more righteous than ever before. **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.** I love this because it's showing one way, to prove God's way, to seek to prove God's way by doing it, by living it, and then when it comes to things that are of the darkness, it says, of this world, reprove those, expose them. That's what the word means in the Greek language. Expose them, reprove them, see where they're wrong, fight against them, reject them. That's what this is all about.

Verse 12—For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. That's what we have to come to see. We have to see how ugly sin is, that it should be a shame even to speak of those things, let alone to be involved in things of darkness.

"For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." There is nothing done in secret before God. God knows. If only we could always be convicted, if all people could be convicted, if the world could become convicted, and in time God's going to help them to become convicted of those truths. He knows everything that's going on in the human mind. He put that spirit essence there. Only God and His Son are able to communicate with it, to know what is in it, because it's of His holy spirit.

The angelic realm has no access to that. They can't do that. God, only God does. Only God can. Now, a spirit world can detect attitudes. They know attitudes right away because generally they come out of us as human beings really quick, really quickly after an incident. They know what's going on but they can't read

the thinking in the mind. They don't know what's going on there. That's where the battle is. That's where we have to fight. The more we learn that you have to get into the mind and know the intent, learn the intent so that you can fight against where it starts because it doesn't start in the actual physical acts.

Like through the Old Testament when you look at certain things about the law, all they could see it as, the Israelites and the world, when they see certain things about laws it's a matter of do's and don'ts. It's a matter of one's ability. It's a matter of not speaking or doing things on a physical plane. But when it comes to God's Church, God's people, it's a matter of the spirit. It's a matter of the mind, the spirit, the intent. Awesome, to understand those things!

Therefore, he says, Awake, you who sleep; and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

Verse 15—See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools... We have to be careful how we walk in this way of life. How do I express some of this? So often we just get caught up in routines and we do things through routine, which isn't all that good because it's through routine, if we're not careful, that we get caught in things where we're not really on guard against things that we should be on guard against in how we think and what we're doing and so forth. We always have to be on guard constantly. We have to ask God for help to be on guard.

You know, day by day we really should be asking God for help to be on guard, to be watching spiritually, because by nature we don't do that. We get into routines, repetition of things in our life, a letting down in our life. A little bit of slumbering in our life, if we're not careful, a little bit of pulling back. A little bit of letting down because well, you know what, for a human being that's easier, just to not have to deal with and tackle certain things in life. It's just a matter of learning, you know, maybe coasting or it's maybe easier to sleep. A whole Church did that. It was easier to sleep than to be on guard and fight. Sad.

But it says, **See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time**, you know, using time wisely, and not getting caught up in those ruts of human nature, of selfishness. ...**because the days**, especially this period of time we live in now, **are evil**. This world is sick. It truly is. You don't have to look very far.

I cringe sometimes when I see certain things of technology happening out here, and you hear a little bit more of something that people, or whether it be in government or military or science and things they're doing. If God didn't intervene and stop this it would just continue to go in a very, very bad way and we'd ending up destroying our self by some other means rather than by war, truly. The human mind is a sick, sick thing.

Verse 17—Therefore, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the LORD is. Well, what is God's will? That we grow spiritually, that we grow in righteousness, that we be on guard, that we be watchful, that we look to Him and cry out to Him and His Son to strengthen us, to save us from what we are.

And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit. I love this example, what it's saying here. It's just using a physical example of carnal human nature. So much of this world people go out and get drunk. Now, whether it's drunk on alcohol or drunk on drugs or whatever it is, or of that mind, you know, and not in control of the mind. But, you know, it's very much a part of society anymore. It's hideous what's running through this country, the kind of drugs that are out there and the

things that people are doing. It blows the mind. It truly does. They're blowing their minds, literally, destroying their thinking. So it uses this example, "Don't be drunk." In this example it uses wine, but today it's a whole lot more out there, all kinds of things, you know. It's just a tendency of even in a party life or it's an escapism, to not have to deal with reality.

But it says, "be filled with the spirit," because you can have too much wine, you can have too much of certain things, obviously. There are some things we shouldn't have at all, but wine is okay. Alcohol is okay if it's used wisely in moderation. But it shows the example here you can have too much and become drunk, but not so with God's spirit. In other words, you can't have too much of God's spirit, so we cry out for God's spirit because it's His will. His Son died so that we could have access to His spirit, so we could have His life live in us and we in Him.

Then on down to the next chapter, **Ephesians 6:10—Finally, my brethren, be strong in the LORD.** How awesome and beautiful is that? It's about being in God. That's how we're able to be strong. To be strong and encouraged in life, in God's way of life, we have to be in God, we have to be repenting of sin, wanting this way of life, and crying out for holy spirit and the blessing of dwelling in God and God in us. So, **be strong in the LORD and in the power of His might,** in the holy spirit.

Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles (strategies) of the devil. We have a lot of battles in this world. The world is bad enough that battles against us because we choose not to go that way, to live that way, so we have to battle the thinking of things we see on TV. People have to battle what they hear on TV. You have to battle perhaps at times not to take sides in this world. We have to make choices and decisions and to say, in essence, to grow in wisdom in some of those things, that there are some things that are foolish and unsound and there are some things in a carnal, physical world that are rather sound. It doesn't mean we have to be behind those things. It's just looking at it in a carnal way.

I think of things that have happened in the Old Testament. Very carnal, very physical nations that fought against each other and the things that they did, and there were some times within those things that there was quite a bit of wisdom used by different ones, especially those who looked to God for wisdom, whether they be led by God's spirit or not in those particular instances, because they all weren't.

Again here, it's a matter that today there is not much soundness out there. So we have to discern, we make choices and decisions, but you have to be careful you're not taking sides. That's why to get into politics and start thinking in those terms is not a smart thing to do. To discuss some of that, what's going on, perhaps to see some things that, you know, "That might be a smart thing," "It may not be a smart thing," that's one thing, but to get to a point where we begin to promote certain thinking or certain things that some are doing just isn't a good thing to do because the reality is it isn't good. It isn't God's way. But sometimes in a carnal physical world there are things that carnal people do that in reality in dealing with carnal situations sometimes it's about all they can do. It's sad because it doesn't give the right answers. It doesn't give the right results.

So I feel sorry for this world. I feel sorry for leaders in this world because they think their way is best and they don't understand. There is great confusion, great chaos, and people can't come to agreement. Sad. That's why we become more and more convicted only God can straighten up this horrible, sick mess. Only God can.

There are many other things, if we're not careful, thinking that comes to us through shows and so forth. That doesn't mean you just, in order to deal with it you just chuck the TV. "That's my answer." Now, if you choose to do that, that's fine. No problem with that. But to do that to feel as though that somehow by not having anything like that that "I'm better," it doesn't resolve the situation. Sometimes you can take yourself totally out of the world to a point where you're not dealing with things in a way that you can grow in greater wisdom. We have to make choices and decisions. We have to learn how to discern and to be able to see the good and the evil or the positive or the negative of certain things. That's why Christ said in a prayer we can't be taken out of the world, not to take them out of the world. Can't be done. They're in the world. His people, His Church, it's in the world. It can't be separated from it. That's our learning. That's our area where we learn. That's how we learn things - because of that.

I don't even know if I should use this example. Sometimes parents can so try to protect children, to keep them away from the world to where they have no interaction with anyone in the world. It's not a wise thing. It's not a wise thing because then they are not able to learn how to deal with matters of human nature and life and at some point they have to learn to do that. Whether it be now or even in the Millennium they have to know how to interact, they have to know how to deal with others, how to work with others, how to deal with problems and situations. This carnal physical life is meant that we have problems and bad situations that occur and so that we can learn how to work with some of those things, to be able to discern certain things. We can't be put in a cage back here somewhere or a room that's totally remote from everything in the world. So we learn through those things. Soundness of mind, what a gift.

Verse 12— For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...

Some of the greatest foe we wrestle against is right here in us. Then there is this world, the world itself because it's out there and we have to fight against that, it's way, and to realize who's behind all that, a great spirit being who is very powerful. No one in God's Church is a match for that being. That's why it's so important, the scripture, "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world," because it's about God. Only God can give us the power and the strength and the mind we need to deal with such things, and the more we yield to God the more that being will flee from us. That's what it talks about in James.

He doesn't like the mind of God. He doesn't like the thinking of God. He doesn't like it when individuals choose God and choose God's way and have God's spirit flowing through them, powerfully so. He doesn't like that. He doesn't like to be around that. He'd like to attack it, coming at it in some other different ways out here in the world - maybe through family, maybe through the job or some other ways to disrupt your life, but as far as you're concerned he has no power over you whatsoever if you're fighting the fight, yielding to God's spirit.

"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood..." Like in this physical, carnal world, when I see that I think of war, fighting. I saw an advertisement, I believe it was yesterday, about the military and about we need—I can't think about how it was stated—something about people who are fighters, or whatever, and they show people going around with machine guns, big ones, bombs going off in different areas, and we need people. You think, what a horrible thing the young mind gets captured by that and thinks that this is a thing of glamor, that this is a thing that you want to do in a world like this, you know, to go off to some part of the world and learn how to kill other people.

Now, that's the world we live in and I understand that, and because it's a physical, carnal world out of necessity those things exist - in a physical, carnal world, but not with God's people and not with God's

Church and not with the teachings we have. We understand that. That's not our world. We're not a part of that world, and yet I feel for young people who have that planted in their minds and think that, yeah, it's a glamorous thing, it's a good thing, and they go off and do a tour, do a couple tours, do three tours, come back, and if they come back "whole" what a blessing. But they never come back totally whole. It does things to the mind when you kill other human beings in war. It does something to the human mind. Sometimes the more that people see, especially amongst their own who are killed, it does things that are with people for the rest of their physical life. Sad.

Thank God He's leading the world away from that, because it's been around for 6,000 years now. It's just that the means to kill each other is so great today it's hideous because of technology.

But we don't fight that way. Ours is spiritual. It's in the mind. It's in how we think and realizing that the real powers are those on a spirit plane. **...against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**

Therefore, take unto yourselves the whole armor of God. It's a matter of looking to God for your strength in all that that means, and so it breaks these things down and talks about them, **that you may be able to withstand in the time of evil.** Well, we're in that time and anybody who's ever been called into God's Church has been in that time, in the time of evil. Because it's not going to be a time that is good, compared to evil that's in the world, until a new world is established. **...that you may be able to withstand in the time of evil, and having done all, to stand firm. Therefore stand, having girded your waist with truth.**

That's why I hit on this so often. That is your strength! All the truths that God has given to you, more than 21, because of where we are in time. There is a purpose and reason why God brought us up to a particular time, restored 21 truths in God's Church, and then had us move forward through the most difficult time God's people have ever gone through - an Apostasy on a spiritual plane, spiritual war in a way that has never happened to God's Church before - and then to go through that and go into another time, finally. Because God, then, is preparing for His Son to return and there's a certain point, if you will, a certain level that God is bringing that Body to before His Son returns. Our strength, indeed very powerfully so, is the truth He's given to us. It's the conviction of those things.

Those things give you strength. That's why it's so good from time to time to think about different ones of those and to be reminded, not just the fact that you have read them at some time or you've known them or you say, "Yeah, I believe them." That's wonderful! But to understand how wonderful those truths are, that they are your strength, that no one else has them! No one else in the scattered Church has them! They would come the closest of anyone of having truth because of what they learned, those who held on to portions of it anyway, to whatever degree they could of what God gave through Mr. Armstrong to the Church during Philadelphia.

That's why it's so important to understand why we've been given more because of where we are in time. We've gone through a lot more and we have to come out of, in a spiritual plane, a lot more. I hope we understand that. To be whittled down to size like we are? Not in the tens of thousands. There is a reason why God is doing this. To be able then to stand tall and to stand firm and to know this is God's Church! How do you know that? It's that truth, the truth that God has given. And you think about those things, you think, "This is incredible!"

I think of what's coming up for Pentecost, some things we're going to talk about, some things that God has added to even at this Pentecost, of things we haven't known. Just a little bit more. He just continues to build a little bit more all the time to give us better understanding, more excitement for what He's doing and how He's doing it and what He reveals to us and what He gives to us. Truth. What a powerful thing to have so much and to know why because there is no one to this point in time who has had as much.

Everyone has had to go through different things. You are unique because of what God is constructing and building within you: Some who are going to be a part of 144,000, the majority who are going to continue on in a new age, and what God is molding and fashioning is powerful and it's beautiful. There are opportunities that you really can't grasp yet until they come your way, whether it be in the 144,000 or whether it be in a new age in the Church that continues on. This is not a small thing that God is doing at the end of an age.

Therefore, stand, having girded your waist with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness. We have to be living right more and more and more, growing in it more and more and more. For those who haven't been fighting that fight and having a desire to live righteously, who tolerate or allow sin, God is getting rid of it.

...and your feet shod with the preparation, in other words, prepared for of the good news of peace, to walk in that way, in the way of peace. When I read this I can't help think about what God gave us about drama, again, and about peace. We've discussed both in different sermons, that peace is the opposite of drama. God forfeited peace a long, long time ago in His kingdom because of the angelic realm. He knew what was going to happen when He created the angelic realm. He knew what was going to take place. He knew what was going to take place because of the one He created to be the most powerful, to be the greatest amongst them all, even amongst the archangels. God knew what would take place in time. They had their choices but even just because with time, apart from His holy spirit, to know what a being and other beings would do over a period of time at some point because of free moral agency. It's just the way it is.

That's why I think of Mr. Armstrong talking about God, knowing the only thing at that time (with the understanding we had), to truly be trusted in all of life, relied upon in all of life (and I wish I could think of the exact words of how he said it), but basically the answer is God, only Himself. That's why Elohim because that is absolute. When we are united with God's spirit for all time, of the same mind, with the holy spirit dwelling within us for all time, it's absolute, the outcome. Always peace, always for all time.

God in His great plan determined that there would be a long period of time where there would not be peace, and then a long period of time in human life, for 6,000 years where there wouldn't be peace, but man would fight war after war after war and families would fight families for 6,000 years.

...and your feet shod with the preparation of the good news of peace. It's good news. Peace, it's coming. We have to loathe the opposite of peace, the way of selfishness that produces drama.

...above all, take the shield of faith with which you are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. What an awesome thing to so believe and have a desire and a mind to be in unity with God. That means to be in unity and agreement with all the truth that God has ever given to us, to understand that, that we want to be of the same mind. It's the mind of God! The truth of God is the mind of God. It's His way. It's His purpose. It's His plan. To want to be of the same thinking, of the same mind, what an awesome

thing that that is so strong and so powerful that one desires then, because we're given the ability to believe it, to live by it (which is a matter of righteousness), but to live by that, that anything that's thrown our way we're going to come through it. We're going to come through it. That's absolute! When you rely upon, yield to God and you want this way and you're willing to fight for it?

That's why I talk about it so often. You have to be willing to fight for this way of life. It doesn't just happen by going to services or going through the routine of paying tithes or going to God's holy days. That doesn't get it. That doesn't do it. Just going through the routine of those things is not what it's all about. It's about living it day by day by day, wanting it, wanting that same thinking that comes from God.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. It's strong. It's powerful. It's like a sword, the truth. It's another way of talking about the truth, the word of God. ...**praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit...** That means we don't want to get cut off from God's spirit. If we pray it better be in the spirit. It better be because some of the first things we do in our prayer is to ask for forgiveness of our sins, that we're seeing and understanding, "I have sin in my life. I want to continually be refined, molded, and fashioned and get rid of it all." Get rid of anything in this thinking up here that is not in unity and oneness with God.

...**always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, for the purpose of being watchful.** It's what it's about, "in order to accomplish," **with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.** It's an attitude of mind for everyone in the Body, a desire to realize what a special gathering, God's people who have His spirit that dwells within them. There is nothing more beautiful in life than to have that in this carnal, physical world, in carnal human life, than God's presence dwelling in one another. That's why fellowship is so beautiful, wonderful when it's done the right way.

1 Timothy 6:6—But godliness with contentment, a word for "sufficiency" here, is great gain. I'll just read this: **For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we will carry nothing out.** Kind of like the sermon about life is temporary, we are temporary, and understanding those things. Sadly, a lot of that doesn't start hitting us until we get to about this point in life, when we get older. Then it's like the light bulb starts to go on even more so. It gets a little brighter as other things are getting dimmer. We're physical human beings and when we're younger we just don't think in the same ways. We're not able to. There's a process that's a beautiful process of life that God leads us through.

So again, "godliness with contentment (sufficiency)." It's about learning the value of God's way of life, of valuing the ability to live this way of life regardless of the physical things around us in life. In other words, what's greater? What's more important?

Again, **For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we will carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, we should be content with these things.** So no matter what we go through in life it's sometimes very difficult for us as human beings to grasp and comprehend if we have this way of life, if we have the truth, how rich are we? I mean, really, how incredibly rich (blessed), are we? But we see seventy years, eighty years, sixty years, whatever it might be, as such a long, long time. And it's not. You wonder where it goes. It goes by quickly. You don't think that until you get closer to that point in time.

So if we're so blessed we have physical life, what is our greatest desire? What is it? Is it that which is physical in the world around us or do we really grasp that as a means to an end as a part of God's purpose to learn what we need to learn, to get where we really should want to get? Elohim. In His Family.

...and having food and clothing, we should be content with these. But so often as human beings we're not, so often as human beings. It doesn't mean you can't have more or you can't do more, but when you're pressed against the wall and those things become an issue, they become an issue, what choices do people make? Too often people make the wrong choices.

But those who will be rich, or want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmless desires. So again, Timothy is just addressing something here that we should be able to glean more out of, indeed dealing with different ones in the Church at that particular time and just telling them basically, "Where are your priorities?" Because some people's priorities weren't what they should be.

Sometimes that happens in the environment of God's Church as well. It depends on what our motives are, what do we really want the most? What is it we want the most? Well, it should be God, it should be the Family of God, it should be God's way of life, because that's the only thing we're taking with us when it's all said and done. When this comes to an end, the carnal body, the only thing that's left is what's in your mind. That's all that's left. That's everything. It's everything when combined with God's spirit, when combined with the transformation of thinking so that God can change that into something different - spirit, spirit life for all time.

It puts this into perspective. It helps to put things into perspective. What really matters? What's really important? That's why drama is so disgusting, because it's not important. It only distracts from what is important.

Verse 9—But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmless desires which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some strayed from faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. You see, this goes back a long, long way when put in its proper perspective - back to a being called Lucifer. It's what he did. It's what leads people away from God, a desire for something different, what they value as being more important. With physical, carnal human beings it's amazing what we consider to be more important than God.

Verse 11—But you, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness... Follow after it. You have to fight for that to follow after it. You have to work. It doesn't just happen. It's a matter of the thinking. Do we want to do right or do we want to continue to fool around with this world? ...**follow after righteousness, godliness**, because that's God. God is righteous. ...**faith, love...** That's God. It tells what righteousness is really all about, in essence. It is, it's a matter of how one lives life as far as God's love is concerned. It's outgoing. It's sacrificing. It's giving.

...**patience...** Because that's a part of love. That's a part of living right, being patient. Every one of us have periods of time of impatience. I experienced some of that this morning. It just is amazing how often it pops up, little things, because we're inconvenienced or because something didn't go our way. I missed a corner this morning, had to go out of the way. Oh, it took me a whole, probably, two minutes. But just little things like that you have to fight against this. Thinking, "Big deal! Just go down to the corner, turn around, and come on back. Don't let it stress you out any. What's the point?" But we're human beings and that's why those battles are always there before us. We have to think that way, too, because you have to spot them. You have to know when they happen. You can't just ignore them and let them go by in your life. You

have to be on guard against them and say, “You know what? Was that really worth it? Is that what’s really important?”

That just ripples through your life if you can see it over and over day by day because you’re going to experience it within the next 24 hours. You’re going to experience impatience, being impatient within the next 24 hours. Somewhere you’re just not going to be able to help it as a human being. If you can spot it, if you can spot the beginnings of it in here what a blessing, because only in that can you begin to deal with it and fight against it and ask God for help. Think, “Well, maybe you do, but I don’t see me having that kind of impatience, being impatient about anything.”

...**meeekness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith.** It’s a fight. “Fight the good fight of faith.” This way of life doesn’t just happen. Sometimes that’s my greatest cry, in some respects, to those who are younger in the faith. If you want this way of life you’ve got to fight for it. If you’re not fighting, if you don’t know you’re fighting, then something is lacking. You’ve got to know you’re fighting. If you’re going through life, through routine, you’re not going to be aware that you’re fighting, because you’re not fighting. I hope that makes sense. You’ve got to know that you’re fighting. If you don’t know that you’re fighting then you’re a mess because you’re not. Something is wrong.

...**lay hold on**, take hold of, in other words, **eternal life**, because that’s what’s valuable. That’s what this is all about. It’s saying here, look at where the real value of life is. We as carnal human beings put it in temporary things right here and now, the inconvenience. That’s why we become impatient, because something was inconvenient, it didn’t work out exactly like “I” wanted it to, you know, it didn’t go perfectly. We’re a mess! Human nature is a mess, it really is, and you have to be on guard against it all the time.

...**take hold of eternal life...** God is telling us how. ...**where unto you have been called.** That’s what we’ve been called to, to make the change, take hold of it, and **professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give you charge in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Joshua who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession** (profession). There are different times in our life it’s going to be evident whether or not we’re fighting what we need to be fighting and whether our life witnesses a good profession of our calling.

Verse 14—that you keep commandment without spot, blameless... God’s commandments, God’s ways, **blameless until the appearing of our Lord Joshua the Christ, which He will show (manifest) in His time, who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in the light which no one can approach, whom no man has seen nor can see.** It’s spirit. God is spirit. Everything about God. ...**to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.** A lot is said there. Last few verses, they’re a sermon in itself.

2 Timothy 2:19—Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The LORD knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. It’s the way it should be. If we’re God’s and we belong to God, we gave our life to God, then we’d better depart day by day from sin because that’s a daily thing. You have to fight, you have to repent on a daily basis of sin, of wrong thinking, of wrong attitudes and spirit that you see inside that don’t agree with God, that conflict with God’s spirit.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor, in other words, of great value, and some to dishonor, or without honor, as it is. If a person, therefore, cleanse them self from these, of those things of dishonor, that bring dishonor, of things of shame, they shall be a vessel unto honor... What a beautiful thing that God is saying here. The choice is ours. When God calls us the choice is up to us of how we respond to God. So in a great house, in God's house, the choice is ours. That's the point that's being driven home here. We have to make the choices and that determines the outcome. God has called us to become vessels to honor. That's what He's called us to and we make choices along the way.

I could go off and talk about things that happened after the Apostasy and before. Every individual given of God's spirit had the opportunity to be vessels of honor. Somewhere along the line individuals made wrong choices and because of certain environments around them they were drawn to them and fulfilled another part of God's purpose, an entire Church that fell asleep. The choice was ours. We're to blame, not God, but God knew what would bring us to that point in time and so He pulled back, because of spirit, because of our attitude, teaching us a great lesson, what it's like to come to a point where in the mind we begin to feel, "Well, I have enough. I know a lot. God's way, 21 truths, this is awesome." But we don't think that. We can't think it through that way and we don't realize the power of an attitude that begins to creep into people's lives of letting down, of beginning to coast, and not realizing you have to be on guard and fight this way of life every day of your life and never to be content with the truth you think you have to this point in time because it'll never be enough.

If a person, therefore, cleansed them self from these they shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified...

That means set apart for holy use and purpose. So again, the choice is ours of whether or not we're sanctified. God already determined to set us apart, and He did at baptism and the impregnation of His holy spirit in the mind, and He wants us to succeed. But we have to go through a lot of testing and a lot of trials to determine what kind of choices is this mind going to make? Because that's going to determine the outcome. Awesome!

...sanctified and meet for the Masters use, in other words, when it comes to God, only by yielding to this way of life, by serving God, by fighting the fight we are called to fight, can God use us, can God change and mold and fashion our thinking in our mind, that we can in time fulfill a purpose that He has for us - to be changed into Elohim.

...and meet for the Master's use. See it's not just now, it's for the future. God's purpose and God's plan for His family in the future hasn't even begun to be revealed to us yet. It's so far beyond we can't even begin to grasp. Even if God began to give us a little bit here and there we don't see much of it, period, yet, because it isn't time for it. When it becomes time for it then God begins to reveal things. When it becomes time for the next phase, for the next portion then God begins to reveal what's there and what's ahead.

Even what's going to happen the next 1,100 years, we don't know a whole lot. He gives us a little bit more as we go along and throughout the Millennium more and more is going to be given. There's going to be so much being given toward the end, the last 200 or so years before the great resurrection. It's going to be busy. This earth is going to be busy, busy, busy. Awesome!

Verse 22—Also flee youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness. That needs to ring in our minds. Youthful lusts. Well, those who are youthful have to be on guard, have to fight. Those who are old have to be on

guard and fight. Youthful lusts. You know, even when you get older your mind still thinks you can do certain things and the reality is you just can't. When I go out walking, I don't jog anymore because my knees won't take it. My hips won't take it either. But I sure don't want them to wear away, have to get them replaced, become mechanical. But we do sometimes. Sometimes we have to have certain things done, have to have replacement of certain things in our body. We live in an age where we can do that.

But what an incredible thing to recognize the phases of life we go through and to realize here when we read something like this saying, "Well, I'm a certain age so what does this mean, 'Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness?'" Well, the reality is the mind is still the same mind depending on how it's changed and grown spiritually, but the reality is there are things that are within us that are just the way we are as human beings, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Those are the things we have to battle. Those are the things that control the human mind, as a whole. That's where the battle is.

It says here, again **...but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace**. You have to think about those things day in and day out. When a little bit of calamity, drama comes your way, you have to think about, "Now, how much of this am I going to bring into my life," and then build upon it. You want to build upon peace or do you want to build upon drama? Which one? Because one or the other is going to exist and you have to decide which one's going to win out.

Hebrews 12. Ah, there is so much here we can go through. **Hebrews 12:4**. This fight, this fight against carnal human nature. This fight against sin. Because to live righteously, to want to live what is right before God you have to fight. You have to fight against self. You have to fight against your own carnal human nature.

Verse 4—You have not resisted unto blood striving against sin. Christ did to live God's way of life, to give the ultimate sacrifice for mankind. He lived a perfect life in the sense of righteousness, living right before God, living God's way right in his thinking, having a mind that we can't even comprehend making choices all along the way in those things.

It says, **You have not resisted unto blood striving against sin**. So it brings us right down to the very end of his life when he knew. You know, somebody can tell you something is going to happen to you or you're going to experience certain things, you're going to have certain things happen, and I guess maybe one thing I could think of here that would be an example is there are people who have gone into battles knowing they're going to die. They've known they were going to die. That's what they believed.

I think of those who were south of Dunkirk, south of there when the British were deeply involved in a war and there were three hundred and some thousand in that particular area and there was a group, and I can't remember the exact number, whether it was, 4,000 or 7,000 stationed south of them, and Winston Churchill at one point in time had to make a decision of what they were going to do. The Germans were coming. This is before the United States even got involved in the war. Mindboggling, the things that have happened in history.

Winston Churchill had to make some choices and decisions here. Here the Germans are coming and he knows they're going to kill over three hundred and some thousand people gathered in that region because they had brought them up against there. This is where they had an armada of boats and everything else that they were gathering together, but time wasn't on their side so he had to make a choice, "How are we going to make certain that the Germans, before we get this taken care of, to go over there to rescue them,

to bring them back, what can we do?" There was an option on the table. I don't remember if it was four to seven thousand, something like that, south of there, soldiers that they were going to send up to attack the Germans, to come in from another side. They felt that if they did that that might be the only thing that might give them enough time so that the Germans would have to pour more people down here to fight against them, knowing full well they were sacrificing their lives.

Winston Churchill knew that this was a sacrifice. There were people who were enraged against him for making such a choice, to know that you're going to send that many thousand people into a battle, to know that they're going to die. Basically, his comeback was, "I have to make a decision between three hundred and some thousand soldiers and a few thousand over here. Sad, horrible to have to make such a decision, but he made the decision and it gave them enough time.

Think, what incredible choices to have to make in a situation like that, yet some of those people going into that battle knew what they were going up against. Can you imagine? But it wasn't as real, because even on a physical, carnal, human plane though you know you're going to fight that there is still that thinking in your mind that somehow you might be able to come through this, somehow whatever. It's just not as real. But in Christ's mind when he knew what was going to happen to him because of what was written in the Old Testament, about how he was going to have flesh ripped off his body, that it would be so bad they wouldn't even be able to recognize him. To know the kind of beating he was going to take and to know when it was all said and done his blood was going to spill out on the earth because he's going to fulfill the Passover?

Now, we can't comprehend that kind of thinking, that kind of a mind, that it was so real to him before he entered into it that when he was praying to His Father about it he perspired and droplets of blood came through the perspiration. That's how much he was battling because it was that real in his mind. He didn't want to go through that. He didn't want to have to experience that. But his choice was that he was going to no matter what. His choice was he was going to fulfill what he had to fulfill and he asked his Father (and it was said for us more than anything else), "If there is any other way, take this cup from me." Awesome. Perhaps fully he felt that way as a human being—possibly so—but that mind was so strong in the sense of the Word made flesh that the determination was there, nevertheless, he was going to do it, going to fulfill it. If that's God's will he's going to do it and he did.

We can't comprehend that. That's why it uses this example here in Hebrews that "you have not resisted unto blood striving against sin." Who of us knowing that this could mean the difference between God's way of life and continuing on, or not, what choice is there? Well, it takes help from God, the mind of God to continue to move forward. Just like things we go through and have gone through for a long time now. Ever since I've been in God's Church there are times when that is raised to a point.

I think of the Apostasy. In the mind, that was the greatest of battles I've ever fought...far greater than anything that's happened since then. Now, there have been some tough things since that time, but that truly was the height of it all where I had to address certain things in thinking. There is nothing else. If this is God's Church, God's going to have to show us what is true because there is no way you can know except that God gives it to you. None of us have the ability to know what is true. What direction do you go? I can't know unless God shows it. That's all there is, and so the reliance and dependence had to be on God, totally.

Here it was with Christ to go through what he went through. That's what he did. That's what he lived. We have to make those kinds of choices in our lives, but none of us have gone this far. None of us have had to

go this far at all as to what our High Priest had to go through, our Passover. That's why this is such an incredible example.

...you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, but we had better strive against sin. We are to fight against it! That's why, again, I cry out so often to young people, young in the faith - and old in the faith, too - fight and don't quit fighting! Because you're not going to receive what God is offering to you except that you fight. No one can make that choice but you. It doesn't just happen. You've got to fight for it. That means on a daily basis.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as to children: My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD. All things aren't going to go smoothly in life and you're going to make mistakes and you're going to do some things at times, because we're human beings, that God's going to personally see to it that we're corrected, by whatever means it takes because He wants us to succeed. He's called us to succeed! We need chastening from time to time. It's just the way we are.

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him. This word "rebuked" is the word "to reprove, to expose, to convict." That's what it means in the Greek, that same word that we read about earlier here, "but rather reprove them," the things that are wrong. It's that word "to expose, to convict." To become convicted is the end result and so that's why it's in the Greek language like that, because all these things are a part of what it's all about. So to expose sin is a part of the conviction that has to take place in the mind that this is wrong, to hopefully bring to that point, but and then to reprove, to be reprovved personally, each one of us.

It's all a part of a process, a part of being reprovved, a part of wanting to get rid of what's wrong. The reality is there are times that God exposes things. He exposes things in our life. There are things you can't see, there are things I can't see yet, so we grow. At different points in time God shows us things about our nature that it's like, "Ugh, there I go again, more," and we see something deeper than we could see before of the spirit. The deeper you can go into the mind and see the intent and the attitudes there the more repulsive it should become if we're responding properly. But that's a way of life with us. We should want that, to have the ugliness, the things that we'd like to gag on. Because you have to come to the point where you gag at how ugly something is. You have to hate it enough to get rid of it, to fight against it. That's the part of the process here of what it's talking about.

It's saying here, telling us when God shows you something don't give up, don't quit. Fight! Fight, cry out more to God for help to fight against it.

It says, **don't despise the chastening of the LORD, nor faint,** it's like giving up. Don't faint, don't be shocked by it. You ought to know your nature is carnal. We've been around enough to know this is a carnal human nature and if God shows you something else deeper inside your thinking then thank God because you can't address it or change it until He shows it to you. So God has to expose certain things, which is a form of chastening from time to time, obviously, and that's what it's discussing here.

So when He shows certain things to us that are ugly thank God for it, and candidly, cry out, "Help me to see it even more deeply how ugly and sick it is," because in that process you can come to loathe it and hate it more because you're learning to love what God gives to you that's right, righteous, and you want to latch on to that. So there is that contrast that has to be there in making right choices. I hope that all makes sense because that's the process we go through.

It says, **don't faint when you are rebuked by Him**, when He's exposed certain things and you're reprov'd. Instead respond to that and fight against it and want to expose it and see it and change and become convicted, convicted of how ugly it is.

That's why I've made comments so many times that you have to hate, loathe the sin before you quit. That's why I use the simple example of smoking. You've got to get to that point in time even on a very physical, simple thing like that of physical life. It's hard because it shows the power that can be there on a carnal body, a physical body, and you have to come to a point where you hate it so much, where you see how it's obnoxious to others; it's not love to others.

Just like when we were checking in the other day up here. We want to come into the motel to check in and so there's some workers out there that work here that are out there smoking away. And what's it do? It fills the air. It stinks to me. I hate the smell of smoke. I'd far rather be around a campfire. Wood doesn't smell the same way. It's amazing how tobacco, the more you're away from it the more obnoxious and stinking it is.

My point is you as an individual, if you're going to overcome something like that, you have to come to where you hate it, where you come to realize this is not good, this is not love toward a brother, this is not love toward others, you know. That's why even in a carnal, physical world they're learning to outlaw it in places like a restaurant, where it used to be all the time. I remember one time we went to a Chinese restaurant in Toledo, and we went in there with a group of ten people, I think it was, and we asked for a non-smoking table. They took us over to a big round table for ten people and the guy put a non-smoking sign there. We couldn't smoke there but all around us they could smoke. So we got our non-smoking table. They fulfilled the letter of the law. What a sick world.

But now they've finally come to a point where they realize, you're really to be in a good environment and so forth, and because it does hurt people, and I've, candidly, seen too many people who have been sick and even died because of smoking in their life. I was in a hospital room in Australia, when my appendix burst, five other people in that big room there. They had curtains that they'd pull shut at times and whatever, but when they'd open them up we could all communicate for those who could communicate. I was in a room with individuals who had operations in their larynx area, in their voice box area, in the top part, all because of smoking. Every one of them.

You think what a horrible thing to go through in life to come to that point. Not everybody gets by with it. Some get lung cancer and die. I've known of people in the Church who have had lung cancer and died, people who get emphysema and die. It's just an example of something so small on a physical plane. You've got to loathe it and hate it and to love what God says about caring about others, to have that more meaningful, more powerful in your thinking than the other is. You've got to hate certain things that you might allow yourself to do in physical life.

Some by the crap you might watch on the internet, by the things you might place in your mind because you give it avenue to watch certain things that are there, because it's plentiful today in this world. You hit a button, you put in a certain word and things pop up all over the internet. You can destroy your mind because of it. I know there are people out there who do this in the environment of God's church, okay? You have to come to a point where you so hate such a thing and to understand how horrifyingly ugly this is

because of what it does in your mind and your thinking toward other people, and even your ability for right fellowship in God's Church and right thinking. That's the kind of world, sick, perverted world we live in.

You have to hate those things before you'll stop. So whatever sin it is you have, talking about others in a wrong way, living drama because some reason or other you've learned in life that you flourish with drama. That's a horrible one! Some minds, some people, that's their life. It's like these *As The World Churns* stories, you know, people get wrapped up in them. It's like you can watch it twenty years later and it's the same stuff going on, the same people, literally. That's the way people's lives sometimes become. It's a repetition of certain things and it's like "I live on drama." What a horrible thing. The whole world does. We're to live on peace. Happiness, joy, contentment of mind, right thinking toward others is peace from God. So you've got to learn to hate the other to quit it, to cry out to God to get away from it.

Just like I mentioned a while ago, the little things of impatience, things I try to fight against when I fall flat on my face, whether it be a male thing, a thing of old age? No, it's been with me all my life. It's not old age. So whatever it is that causes any moment of impatience in thinking I don't want in my life. I loathe it. It's ugly. Perhaps some of my heritage? I don't know what it is. But I've got to fight it because it's wrong.

You have to come to the point where you hate certain things like that in your life and only in that, by loving what is right, holding on to it, crying out to God for help to hold on to it, to love it more and more and to loathe the evil can you change and become convicted of what is right in the mind through the power of God's spirit, thankfully. That's what it's about.

For whom the LORD loves He chastens. He loves us. When you see something in your life that you couldn't see before, whatever that might be, thank God! Know that He loves you. What kind of a parent won't correct their children? If they don't correct them where is the love? People get so busy in this world today, "Oh, it's too inconvenient to have to correct. I get home late and been out working all day and I don't want to have to deal with this, so just kind of give them this, give them that, you know, don't be so hard on them. They've had a hard day, too."

People don't follow through with responsibilities they have in life even with their own children. Well, thank God He does. Thank God He loves us to where He'll deal with us because He wants us to change, He wants us to succeed, He wants us to become a part of His family. That's what it's talking about here.

For whom the LORD loves He chastens (corrects and disciplines), and scourges... the word "chastises." It's from a word that means "whip." So in a spiritual way sometimes it feels really bad, you know, it hurts. It has to hurt! You have to come to a point where certain things hurt and you just, because you see the damage of the thinking that can be there when we don't think right. The more you loathe that the more you're going to fight against it, the more you're going to be on guard against it, candidly.

If you endure chastening God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which we are all partakers, then are you illegitimate and not sons. Moreover... So it's just a part of life. It's a part of our lives. We have to be chastened. We have to receive correction. We have to be told what our nature is otherwise we won't see it for the reality it is. I've known a lot of people, candidly, in God's Church through time who just quit because their comments, "I'm just tired of going to services and hearing about how bad I am. I'm tired of hearing about it." Well, then you're definitely in the wrong place because that's what we have to address. This is bad. What's good in it is the mind, God's mind, the presence of God's spirit. That's the good. The more we

choose that and want that and begin to live that more and more in our lives the more the bad disappears. It's a beautiful process.

Moreover, we have had physical fathers who corrected us, and we gave them respect. Should we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? To love God. To be thankful to God that He so works with us, molds and fashions us, is patient. I marvel at God's patience with self. Every one of us should, to marvel at that kind of love, to have such patience. We're a mess, but thankfully we're changing and growing through time and through God's spirit. Awesome!

Verse 10—For they indeed chastened (disciplined) us for a time as it seemed best to them, but He for our profit. Physical parents, carnal human beings, we don't always know as parents what's best and how to best do something, and we learn. By the time we're through we've learned a lot more that we could have done differently, obviously, by that time. How do you learn to be a parent? Well, you learn it through experience. Even if you had something written, it's not everything. Everybody is different. So it's amazing what we go through in human life. As a whole people have learned or strive to do what seemed best to them at the time, but it makes it clear here that God does it for our profit so that we can be benefited in powerful ways for change, **that we might be partakers of His holiness.** That's the purpose. He wants us to be in His Family.

Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyful, but painful. It should hurt. If there is no hurt then we're not going to be able to see it objectively, we're not going to see it for what it is. **...nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.** Why? Because if we receive it properly, we thank God for it, we respond properly because we become more deeply convicted of the wrong and we want to live the right, then that produces a fruit, there's a fruit there. It brings peace because we start living right, because we start practicing it more in our life. You're able to be on guard in certain things and catch them more quickly to change or to address an attitude when you see, "This is a wrong attitude. This is wrong thinking. What's my real intent?" and nip it in the bud more quickly.

...nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby. In other words it's up to us what we exercise, what we put into practice, how we really respond to God. No one else can make those choices for us.

Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet. So there are times we go through various things in life. Sometimes it's harder than others. Sometimes it can cause a person to be down. It can cause a person to think, "Will I ever be able to combat," you know, "conquer this?" Well, we're told, yes, we can conquer it because Christ conquered. Overcome is the word. It's the same word in the Greek language. To overcome means to conquer. It's about a battle. Overcome, it'd be better if they put in there the word "conquer" because it's about battling and fighting.

So there are times, it says here, we have to come to that point where we feel broken inside because of something that's evil and bad, or whatever it is. There are different phases of your life you're going to go through some of that, where you're going to see things sometimes that are worse and hit you harder - and good! God just says, "Lift up those hands." In other words, it's better to be of a spirit where we have been humbled so much before God. He says that attitude and mind, hold up those hands instead to God. Thank God. Cry out to God for help. **Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet.** That's what the answer is. Just make straight paths, God's paths, the right

way for your feet. Just change! Just strive to walk what is right. Quit what's wrong. That's the simplicity of the answer.

...make straight paths for your feet, unless that which is lame becomes turned out of the way, but instead, let it be healed. I love that verse. It says, "That which is lame becomes turned out of the way." So again here, we don't want to come to a point in time where we're turned out of the way, where we aren't able to continue to go forward, where we allow sin to win.

...but instead, let it be healed. It's about this mind being healed. It's about God.

Pursue peace with everyone. That's a job. That's work! To get rid of all drama and to pursue peace takes work and it takes thinking as to what is in the mind. **...with everyone, and holiness,** that means right living, **without which no one will see the LORD: looking diligently lest anyone fail of the grace of God.** Again, this looking diligently is about being on guard, watching diligently in your life. Don't just get into routines in your life. No, day by day pray to God and ask for the help to fight. Ask Him to help you to keep focused, to be able to see the things that need to be changed because if you don't do those things they're not going to happen.

...looking diligently lest anyone fail of the grace of God, and lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and thereby many become defiled, because that's happened in times past in God's Church. **Unless there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for a single portion of a meal sold his birthright.** We think, "How stupid that was!" But spiritually that's what people do. The things they'll give up, to lose God, to have something else. Horrible.

For you know how that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, although he inquired of it, the blessing, not repentance. Some read this and think he was wanting to repent he felt so bad. No, it wasn't. He wanted the blessing. He wanted what God was going to give but he didn't want to have to do what was required in order to be blessed by God. Sometimes people don't want to suffer for their sins. Well, you're going to have to suffer. God will forgive, but sometimes we're going to suffer because of stupid mistakes, because of dumb things that are done. Doesn't mean that the suffering is taken away.

Let's turn over to James. I don't want to spend too much time on this. There is so much here. **James 3:10—Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, such things should not be.** It goes on and discusses some of this and yet that's the way we are as human beings. Sometimes things come out of our mouth where we pray to God and a little bit later we're thinking something or saying something to someone in a manner, in a way we really shouldn't. We're a mess as human beings and we just need God's help to change and to constantly be on guard against wrong course of action in some of those things. It goes on to talk about different kind of conversation.

But dropping on down to **verse 16—For where envying and self-seeking exist is confusion and every evil thing. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure -** so that which comes from God. There's such a distinction between things that come from God and things that are of our carnal human nature, and we should be able to see those things. But we really can't without God's help, God's spirit, because they're of the spirit in the mind, of intent.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable... That's what it produces. It'll produce peace, but the mind has to be right; the thinking has to be right in order for peace to be produced. ...**gentle and willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.** Just truthful, striving to be truthful.

And the fruit of righteousness, something we all want, should want with all of our being, the fruit. Because there is that which righteousness, right living, proving God's way produces in life. **And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of those who make peace.** That's a powerful statement. It doesn't just happen; you have to work at it to produce it, for it to happen, truly.

I want to back up here to James 2. So much of this, what we've been covering in this series and right here in these verses in James 3 (and I didn't read it all, something you can do on your own), again, so much of it is summed up in this previous chapter of Chapter 2 because it sums up a lot of what's been covered in the different series we've gone through that's brought us to this point in time.

James 2:20—But do you want to know, O foolish (word meaning "senseless"), **foolish one, that faith without works is dead?** You know, I marvel at the world and what the world of traditional Christianity teaches. Because basically what they try to tell in some cases is that, well, they try to make this distinction in a perverted way about faith and works and you just live by faith, you don't have to have works in your life. Well, when they're talking to you who believes in the Sabbath and the holy days and things like that, those are your works and they're basically saying you're not saved by doing that, you're not saved by works. It doesn't matter what day you keep because blah, blah, blah and some of the stupidity of some of that that goes with it. But they don't understand, they can't see and perceive that because of their faith, what they believe, they're doing it.

They go to church on Sunday. They observe Christmas, Easter, whatever it might be, and they don't realize they're speaking with forked tongue, that they're contradicting the very things that they're trying to accuse God's people of and trying to get people to see something in a perverted or distorted way or even people who follow them. Because the reality is you can't have one without the other. They go hand in hand.

It says, **Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works when he'd offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** Well, first of all, he was accounted righteous because he believed God and he did, he was going to do something then because of what he believed. God accounted that to him for righteousness but because of what he did shows that there was works involved. He's living by what he believed. They go together. They go hand in hand.

Verse 22—Do you see how that faith was working together with his works, and then by works his faith was made perfect? It's a beautiful thing. It's like this full circle of understanding righteousness, of understanding how God works in our life, understanding we're not and understanding because God has given us the ability to believe the truth and we choose to live by it, and because of that choice we live by faith, God attributes that to us as righteousness. He forgives us of our sins because we're living that way, because we believe in Joshua our Passover and all the other things having to do with the process of repentance in our life anyway, and so the works follow.

We live by faith, by what we believe. We go to the holy days. We attend Sabbath services. We tithe, we do the things and other things in our life then, all striving to live by what is right, righteousness, God's laws,

and that's what God wants us to do. Faith with works. We don't do it perfectly. We have to be able to repent and be forgiven of sin and God accounts it to us as righteousness because of faith, but we're supposed to be living right as well. They go hand in hand.

And the scripture was fulfilled which says: Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. You see, or in other words it's saying here, You should see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. So you can't have one without the other, and that's the whole point of the whole story all the way through. It's putting everything together in a complete picture of something that God gives to us.

I'm talking to you about things that the world of traditional Christianity just doesn't even begin to grasp. They have it all upside down. And sadly, many in God's Church in times past have not grasped all this.

Verse 25—Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way? She acted upon what she believed - which is faith. But it also involved works. She did what she did because of what she believed and that's the way we live our lives.

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. Well, this is an incredibly beautiful picture to go full circle, to see these things about righteousness and how God attributes that to us, but also to see that we are to work. We are to live what is righteous. So if we're living by faith we'll be practicing living what is right, working to be righteous in our actions.