

We are now continuing in the series *Division Vs. Unity*, with this being *Part 2*, the final one of this series.

We began in *Part 1* with the story of the swarms that God brought upon Egypt. It was in this plague of the swarms that when God brought those upon Egypt that He began to reveal more about His plan and purpose that was to serve as a physical type of what is going to be fulfilled and what is being fulfilled on a spiritual plane in the Church.

The error that I wanted to bring up that I'd mentioned before I began here, misspoke on something. I'm not sure what version I was looking at, but I made a comment about the swarms, the flies, and how one translation had it right at least about swarms and not of flies. But I think I mentioned King James and then the New King James had it right. Well, they didn't. At least it uses "swarms of flies" but the "flies" are no part of it.

Some believe that there were other kinds of flying creatures as well. Some believe it was a matter of beetles and different things, different types that cause different problems. Flies, they may give you a bite and a sting and be annoying, but some are a lot more destructive, and it seems that whatever this was also caused a certain amount of destruction.

So, anyway, whatever it was, most of them have it improper. It's just swarms, and can be several types of little creatures that fly in the air. So, now that that's behind me we'll continue on.

Let's turn over to Exodus 8 where we started all this and take a look at this again. It's quite a pivotal verse, in that respect that's going to be brought up in a new series that comes along next week, if all goes well. But again here, there is so much here to be built upon and that's what we're doing.

**Exodus 8:22** it says, **In that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, so that no swarms will be there; in order that you may know that I am the Eternal in the midst of the land.** So again, it's a matter of God revealing here to Israel, in that respect, because it sure wasn't going to show it to Egypt. There are things they wouldn't admit until toward the very end. Then even at that point it wasn't a matter of really admitting that God was the Eternal that was freeing Israel.

But anyway, something that the Israelites were to begin to perceive in a unique manner as far as the fact that He was God and His word was true and what He was accomplishing was something far beyond that which was ever able to be seen or understood on a physical plane, and so, it enhanced that relationship in the sense of a physical one toward looking toward Moses and Aaron, a matter of order that God wanted to establish.

This was a big part of a beginning of a change here. I can't help to think as we go through this, to think about the process of being called and how God begins to work with us to separate us, to make a distinction, a difference in our lives from that of the world around us. It's an awesome thing when we grasp it and understand it. Just to see this on a physical plane, we are in awe of it, should be in awe of it, how God was able to separate one region where it continued to receive these plagues, but in the area where the Israelites were, totally protected them.

Again, these things are encouraging as we think about things that are going to happen in the near future here at whatever point they begin, that God will give us a protection. Not that we're not going to have some suffering in some of the things along the way but when it's all said and done there is going to have to be that which is a protection to take people into a new age, those who are placing God first, looking to God for deliverance, and living that right life as much as within them of a right heart toward God that we talked about in the series about David.

He went on to say, **I will make/put a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow will be this sign.** God has blessed us all along the way. He has blessed, I think, as an example, PKG all along the way. I think of different signs, of things that God has done, that He's given to us in very powerful ways to set us apart, to help us to recognize the uniqueness.

And when I mention PKG, I'm talking about the fact that He lets us see, has let us see there's a great distinction between that of the scattering and what He's blessed us to see and grasp and understand. That we've understood and grasped that there is an Apostasy, that there was an Apostasy, and all the things that begin to make sense then after that about an era of a Church that was spewed out of God's mouth, an ability to recognize the things that Christ said about "all the stones of the temple are going to be cast down." The entirety of the Church is going to be spewed out of His mouth.

All those things that we have to spiritually come to acknowledge, that we were guilty of the Apostasy, of being a part of, of tolerating and putting up with various things in our life in the sense of becoming spiritually weak and lethargic over a period of time.

We learned a lot from that. That's why I've mentioned to the Church that my great concern right now is that we not get back into that kind of a spirit because it's an easy one to slip back into or to slip into because most of you have never had that in your life in the sense of recognizing it for what it is, to understand the dangers, to understand the beginning of that process. It's a very ugly thing to begin to be lukewarm and not to diligently, zealously desire to have a close relationship with God, and if we don't maintain that and keep that up we begin to slowly begin to drift.

Now, not being able to have fellowship with one another in different congregations for nearly a year in some cases, and more in some areas, but around that period of time, is a very

dangerous state for God's people. If we recognize that then we'll fight the battle. If not, we will drift.

Some are drifting. Some are letting down. I know that. And so, we have to understand that in our lives, how dangerous that is, especially at this time of all times. Anyway, so much to be learned from these kinds of things, to understand what God has given us. But those things that God gave to us in the sense of truth that He's revealed to a Body, a people, to be able to understand where we are and why we're here, what value can be placed upon that?

There is no value. I mean, what is it? You can't place a value on it. It's without value in the sense it's so far beyond anything that anyone else has ever been given, so much more than anyone else has ever been given, so much more beyond what Philadelphia was ever given, that we should be excited and treasure that and understand that, how blessed we are to see what we see. Because there are a lot of people out there who are just in the dark. They're blind. They're asleep and they don't know it. They're still trying to maintain, still trying to hold on to something that they've had in their past. There is no vision, no true vision about where everything is going, what is happening in their life. They don't grasp.

When you're asleep, you don't know you're asleep. You know, you may roll over once or twice and have a bit of a moment of clarity, then you go right back to sleep until you are up. In this case, God has to do that, to wake us up. Many of us have experienced that.

So again, what an awesome thing that God has blessed us with different signs along the way. Because those are, spiritually for us, a type of sign that gives encouragement, as it was here on different plagues that came along from this point on that God made a difference, a distinction between them and Egypt and they saw that. Awesome on a physical plane.

Far more awesome on a spiritual plane! That's what we need to grab hold of and treasure and be so deeply thankful for because God knows our gratitude or lack of it. So, do we thank God regularly for what we have, for what He's given to us to make a distinction not only with the world in an original calling but also with that which is asleep because of an Apostasy? Because how blessed are we? And if we treasure that and recognize how unique, small we are, of what we've been given, incredible, truly.

So, again here, King James uses this "put a division" and some versions use the word "distinction." But as I mentioned before, this also has to do with the thought of "redeeming," which becomes more and more important as we go along here, this process of redeeming, of buying us, of purchasing us and making a distinction in that process of how He does it. And so, we'll go into some of that later on.

But even here this word would also bring in the importance of keeping Israel from suffering and so forth and a desire to intervene for them. That's God's desire for us. But then we have response to that, of how we're going to perceive that and use that in our lives.

We're given warnings about how we respond to God redeeming us from this world, meaning that God and Christ have paid much to redeem us, truly, to separate us, to make a difference between us and the world, has given us so much to be able to be a part of that. Then that process that takes place up here, of our minds then even being transformed to think differently, to be different from the world around us, the power of God at work in our lives. Because that's the only thing that can produce something like that. Again, exceedingly blessed.

But in this process of being redeemed from the world, of being called out of the world and redeemed by the price they have paid for us, the cost to them - because God gave up much from the very beginning when He allowed for sin to exist in an angelic realm and to allow sin to exist in human life, because He created us to have sin in our lives, to be created physical so that we would have this nature, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

That is so awesome to understand that process, that on a spiritual plane it requires that in beings that have temporary life that can die and never live again or be resurrected to live for a time to be given that ability to see it.

But what an incredible thing to be able to be in bodies like this to where we have that spirit essence in the mind but we have total freedom of choice to have lust of the flesh, to live by that (because that's what we do), and then when God comes along and works with that spirit by His holy spirit to begin to see another way, a different way, a different way than the way of mankind, the way of Satan. Because that's what it's about. It's about the way of Satan, which is opposite of God's.

Mankind's way is opposite of God's. It's the way of selfishness, which is opposite of God. That's why human nature is such an ugly, ugly thing. We should be able to see that in ourselves; to not want that, to want to be rid of it, to look to the time when we're no longer thinking like that, where we no longer have anything like that come into our minds. We make choices along the way.

That's what this is about. So much of this is about recognizing what they have given to redeem us from the world, to separate us from the world, what Christ did, that season we're rapidly approaching, Passover season and the Days of Unleavened Bread and how blessed we are to be a part of that, and to recognize there is no other way to become a part of God's Family. That's an awesome thing to see.

But though God begins to call us and redeem us and make a distinction, a difference in us, the difference that's going to be made is by choice on our part, what we choose. We have to make choices all along the way as to whether or not we want that and whether or not we're going to yield to that process.

And so, it boils down to choices that we have to make, to the degree we value what God has sacrificed for us, what God and Christ have worked to accomplish in us.

**2 Corinthians 5:17—Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.** Now, not fully created yet but meaning here there is a beginning and we understand that then by other scriptures, it's the beginning of a new creation. God reveals to us that that takes time, that it doesn't just happen in a week or two weeks after baptism, that it takes a lot of time of choices and trial along the way, of being tested and tried along the way.

We go through that process doing what? Making choices all along the way as God refines us, tries us and tests us, where we are forced into having to make various decisions in our lives, where we have to evaluate what our conviction is, where we're able to come to see what is the level or lack of the level of our conviction toward God.

We're able to measure those things and God gives us that ability if indeed we have that desire to have a heart like David, someone after God's own heart, someone who wants to serve God and put God first because that requires massive change in our life.

It's a matter of responding to the redeeming, the making of a distinction and a difference in our lives. We want that to be different from the world, to be different than the way we were before. We don't want to be that way anymore, sick human beings, in the sense of understanding the selfishness of human life.

So again here, **therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. Old things have passed away.** It's like that moment of baptism. We go down in this watery grave. We made a choice and we have told God, we have made a covenant with God, that we belong to Him. He is number one in life. His way is first in our life. And so, we're tried from that point on. We go through various things to develop that, to work to mold and fashion and create that within our lives. But that's the choice that we had to make. That never stops—incredible—until it's finished, until it's completed, until God's work is completed in us.

“Old things have passed away.” Or it's the beginning of that when that choice is made. We don't want self anymore. We don't want what's around us. We want what God has shown to us. What an awesome thing, to come to a point of baptism where we don't want the way of this world, we don't want to be counted in with this world. We want to have a relationship with God and Christ and we're learning to love what He's given to us, in the sense of the truth, and to recognize this is the time, this is the day of salvation for us - when we're called, when we're given that opportunity to make such a choice.

Because the world hasn't been given that choice. No one else around us. No other relatives or people at work or whatever have been given that opportunity to make such a choice. But we have it. And so, we have to decide. So many who have gone before have been called and not even come to that point. Then there are many who have been called who come into the Church, who are baptized, and they don't continue making the choices along the way because something interferes.

“Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life” begins to raise in value above placing God first. That’s as simple as that. Incredible!

**Look, all things have become new.** As far as our motive, as far as our desires, as far as what we want, it’s becoming new. We want God’s way, and that’s new! We’ve never seen it. We’ve never known that. We begin to learn things and God begins to reveal more and more to us along the way, things that we haven’t grasped. New! Always that growth and development within us. Awesome, that process.

**All things have become,** or in the truer respect, **are becoming new.** Something new taking place within us. The more the mind changes, the transformation of the mind, the newer, the truer we’re becoming.

**Now, all things are of God.** In other words, what it’s talking about here, basically, are all things that are of God. Okay? **Now, all things are of God.** In other words, what we’ve chosen, what we want, what we’re receiving, this new creation, all of that is of God because there is no other way to have it. It comes from God and He gives us this opportunity by separating us, by making a distinction in our lives, giving us that opportunity if we so choose it. Because we decide, “I want that distinction in my life as well, and I don’t want to be with the world. I don’t want to be the same as I was before.”

We have to make choices about that, of whether we want to yield to that process. Because we have to choose to be separated, to be different, to be distinct, something different. We can’t blend in with it at all, can’t be a part of it, in that sense. We have to live in it, yes, but we can’t live its ways. That has to change.

**Now, all things are of God, who has reconciled...** It’s a compound word (I love it), “to change accordingly or according to.” It’s about change, to change accordingly, according to what God has shown us, placed before us, by His truth, by His word, by His separation, by His redeeming us. We have a choice to change according to what God has given to us, all things that come from God.

**Who has reconciled us to Himself,** changed us according to that process, unto Himself, as it goes on to say, **through Joshua the Christ.** There is no other way to be reconciled. There is no other way. It’s according to this way, in other words. **...to Himself through Joshua the Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.**

What a beautiful thing! I think of the disciples and what they went through and what they were beginning to be given on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D., and their lives totally changed. Now, all of a sudden, they could understand things that they didn’t really grasp before. They heard what Christ told them. They remembered the things Christ told them, but it didn’t have life and power yet because they didn’t have the holy spirit until that moment! They were being drawn by God and able to see things to a point, but not like they did on the Day of Pentecost. Now they could see it!

It's like when our minds are opened up to various things, a new truth or whatever along the way or the first time when we're called and we see things and we know it's true. Here they were, they knew it was true and they preached what God was giving to them. I think of the things that Peter had to say, deeply inspired, moved, and motivated by God's holy spirit.

We have "the ministry of reconciliation." God has given us that. Because without that we can't change, we can't grow, we can't hear the word that He gives to us in the first place without God being in the world through His Church, through His ministry. He raises up different ones to go out and to teach what is true, to work with them, and then we're blessed to be able to hear those things and then we have the ability to change accordingly. It's a beautiful thing.

God established a Church, an organization, as it talks about in Ephesians, the process there, the order of things and so forth that He's given to lead us, to guide us, direct. That's why I mention about the Sabbath because fellowship is an incredible part of this process because this is our area and arena of being tried and tested as to how we think even more so about one another. We have that opportunity more so because of fellowship. And how are we responding to that and how are we thinking about our spiritual brothers and sisters in the Body, and what is our effort put into that in the sense of maintaining those close relationships and being able to be there, if we're able to, on the Sabbath?

That's why I ache somewhat inside, candidly, for the Church right now. Because this is a difficult time, a trying time. It'd be like what I know would happen if I died. I know that that would be a hideous, horrible trial on God's Church! It's one thing to be separated a little bit for three years and to still be able to have certain communication, it's another thing to be separated for good. Does God have the power to raise up someone? Absolutely. But what we're living in right now, I hope you understand it wouldn't be the same right now at this point.

So, anyway, if we understand that then that hopefully will help us to grasp and comprehend more fully what we have and what it is to have what God gives to us so that we can be taught every Sabbath, so that we can be taught every Holy Day and have the opportunity through an awesome process here of modern technology.

I think about how when we first got started. In different areas we tried to communicate with, we had these little machines made up and I remember some came out of Canada, where you could hook into this device on your telephone and call four other people, or three other people, whatever it was on the system. You could only have so many on that one or it'd become too weak and that way everybody could listen in at the same time. Back then the bills were a little higher. You know, you had to pay different kind of phone bills than you did today. Now you have kind of a flat rate. Back then you had to pay by the time, so often by how long you were on there, being long distance, if it was long distance.

I think of how far we've come since that time to now, to be able to have a video to be able to be out there. And how long is that going to last? Well, when this is taken away hopefully we grasp and understand what we do have and work to maintain what we have, to recognize the

dangers in that as well. But I think we'll be a little more motivated when it comes to the point of something that causes this to go out because that's going to be a horrifying time. Should create a lot more motivation in our lives, that which we're able to more clearly see and be motivated by. But we have to be on guard and watch in the meantime.

So again, "the ministry of reconciliation." Something to value so deeply. What can you say?

**That is, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.** That's what the message is all about. That's where it begins, this process of being able to be redeemed from the world, this process of being able to be reconciled to God.

Because sin separates us from God. God will not be around sin. He will not dwell in sin. That's the primary reason for the sacrifice of Joshua, to pay that penalty in our stead so that we can be reconciled to God, so that God can dwell in us. It wasn't just to die to get rid of sin. To get rid of sin is for the purpose of God and Christ dwelling in us and we dwelling in them on a spiritual plane, that which we're able to have in the mind. Awesome!

**That is that God was in Christ...** God was in Christ! Powerful! The Word of God made flesh, the power that was there. **...was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.** So, we're so blessed to understand God's plan in the Holy Days and all the things that are in this season of the year that we're moving into as far as Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread and the entire process of salvation that follows that.

Now, the modern definition of "reconciliation," I thought it'd be good to take a look at this. It's unique how things change sometimes in word usage. Etymology. Words, and even the use of words, changes a lot over time. I think of the King James version and even the words that were used back there, a lot of changes have taken place in the words themselves, hence the need for far better translations. Because there were some things that were closer to the use of those words back then than what they are now. But anyway, things change, and like in the world we're living in right now, some of these change very rapidly.

But this modern usage of the word "reconciliation" has encompassed more now, in this respect, the purpose and the process of what this word is all about.

Reconcile. Just going to read this. There are different ones in there as well, but we know the ones that apply to what we're looking at. "Cause to co-exist in harmony." That's what it's about.

God is blessing us with the process of reconciliation, with the process of being redeemed from the world, of being separated from the world so that this can take place in us in our minds, and causing us then, God's purpose, this thing of division versus unity, God separates us, divides us in the sense of what the world is like and what we're to live by as far as His way of life is concerned, a great division there.

I think of the verses that talk about this difference, this chasm that's between us and the world. Then I think of even the scattered Church. There is a chasm there that's so deep and so far, when you talk about Lazarus, that parable. This even applies even more for us now at this time and what's taken place because of all the truth that God has given to us above and beyond.

So again, "cause to co-exist in harmony," and so with God, which means with one another in the Body because that has to exist in harmony, unity. That's what God's way produces. His way of separating us, His way of working in our lives, of redeeming us, is a part of a process of bringing us into unity with Him, with His word. Beautiful.

And so, we learn to co-exist; fellowship is about co-existing in harmony, unity, and oneness, first of all with God, and if we're doing that then we're going to learn that within the Body when it comes to judgment and living the way of life and everything else.

"Make or show to be compatible." Again, this thing "to unify."

"Make (as in one account) consistent with another." So, when you're talking about, in this matter of accounting, it applies to us as well in the sense of understanding what it means in our lives.

"To make consistent with another, especially by allowing transactions begun but not yet completed." So, unique in the sense of how it's used for accounting. But if we understand that for ourselves and the fact that we're paid for with a price and how we respond to that and how we live by that, and again here, what must take place to make us right, to make agreement in the numbers, in our lives, if you will.

"If you reconcile two beliefs, facts, or demands," again, more of the definition here, it's just talking about some of this, the usage of it, "that seem to be opposed or completely different, you find a way in which they can both be true or both be successful." In other words, "to resolve, to reconcile differences."

When it comes to God's way, we know what that means. God must come first. That's the only way that it's going to happen. So again, this process of reconciliation is at work in our lives.

**Verse 20—Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ.** I love this because it's just like the word that we understand in the sense of ambassadors. We're living, as it were, in many different nations, different places in the world, but we are ambassadors of a new country, if you will, a new kingdom, a new nation, and so we are to reflect something totally different as far as how we live. We're to be good citizens wherever we live, as far as citizenship is concerned in those nations, but what we reflect above and beyond that should be very powerful in our lives, what we're living.

Because it has to stand out as being different. That means we're responding by making a difference, a distinction in our lives from how others may choose to live or do choose to live in

this world around us. That should be clear to people, that they don't necessarily like or agree with, obviously, what we believe, but they like the result.

I think of the Feast of Tabernacles so often and how people respond to that, how restaurants or places, at a hotel or whatever and they talk about us. Oftentimes when we go to make agreements, different things with others, they talk about how much they like this group, how much they love this group, and even religiously, as different religious groups they have in, because they're not all the same, and they see that. They see that we're different.

We may see problems that we have that pop up once in a while, but they're minor compared to what they're dealing with. They can't see those things then that we might deal with because ours are so different because we're going through a refining process, seeking to become different. They don't even see those things or are not aware of those things, but they're very aware when they have different groups in there.

I think of some of the things they used to say down in Big Sandy. To them, some of the people around there, it was like, "Yeah, they keep the Feast of Booze alright." To them it was "booze" because liquor stores, you know, people didn't buy stuff ahead of time somewhere and bring it on in. They went out locally and bought different things.

Because here you come into an area, you have 11, 10, I mean 12, 13, 14 thousand people coming into an area and, all of a sudden, they're getting ready for the Feast of Booths and fellowship. They don't understand that, that we're not alcoholics, drunkard, or whatever, and what we take, you know, that we're very cognizant of how we participate in those kinds of things. But they don't grasp that. They just see, "Man, when they come in the stores are bare," liquor stores, talking about, primarily wines and stuff like that. But even some mixed drinks and stuff like that on occasion. But we drink in moderation. We strive to do things in a moderate way, not in the way the world does. Again, that distinction, that difference.

**We are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us.** So again, the world doesn't really pay attention to that, but one day they will. See, that's something that God knows that He wants us to know and understand is one day everyone who is in God's Kingdom, first and foremost that's resurrected, who knew them, will understand. "Yep. I just didn't see it. I didn't understand. I didn't see it all but now I know what you were doing. And I think of my response to that, totally carnal, and sometimes, in that sense, against, and making that clear."

So, people who respond to God at that time, they're going to glorify, it says they're going to glorify God in that day when they're able to see and grasp and understand what you went through, what you did in an age like this compared to what they have at that time. It's an awesome thing, a beautiful thing.

It goes on to say, **We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.** That's a choice. Be reconciled. That means we have to yield to being reconciled to God. I think of all the people who have gone by the wayside in the Church for 2,000 years. I haven't known them all but I

would say we've known probably a few thousand by name over time in different Church areas and so forth, have met different ones at different times who are no longer a part, no longer with us.

Then when we had PKG we've had hundreds of people come and go, just since PKG. Incredible, to understand that. Choices. Choices. Choices. The mind opened up to see various things and then at some point whatever was the cause, jealousies, envying, lust, different things came in the way and people chose something else rather than holding fast to what God had given. Those all go back to what we really value and whether or not we have a heart like David's, a heart that is seeking God's heart, His ways, to love Him, to respond to Him properly.

It says, **We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.** It's constant choices. **For He made him who knew no sin...** What it says here in the New King James is not right, where it says, "to be sin for us." That is a lie! He was not made sin for us! That's not even a proper translation because it says, **He made him who knew no sin,** as it were, **that we might become the righteousness of God in him.**

So again, he didn't know sin. He had no sin in him. He paid the penalty for sin by his death, but he never had sin in him. So, why quote something like this, "to be sin for us"? He paid for sin for us but there was no sin in him ever, even as the previous verse makes very clear, "He made him who knew no sin." Again, the following verses, they're not even a part of scripture, in that respect.

He had to have no sin in order to become "the righteousness of God," in that respect, "through him to God."

The King James says, "For He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." So, it says it a little bit differently there, just kind of turns it around a little bit. Again, although it's worded in a different order it's wrong as well.

The context of all this has been spoken of, about this process of reconciliation. That's what it's about. It has made this word about reconciliation (this one here that's used), six times in the previous three verses. It's about the context. It's about the context of reconciliation. That's what is being revealed to us in these verses. If you go back through the previous verses here, and again here, the previous three verses it talks about reconciliation. That is what the context is.

Christ was made to be a reconciliation for us, not sin for us. Big difference if we understand what it's saying. He paid the price. It's what it's about. Context.

Going on then in **2 Corinthians 6:1**—**We then, as workers together,** in other words, with him. It's a choice to respond to God's calling, to respond to things about fellowship and how we think toward one another, how we respond to what God tells us how we're to live toward one another, and obviously within the world.

**We then, as workers together, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.** So again here, all of us, ministry, brethren, we're all one, and God has separated us to make these choices and to want to work together in the sense of what is being fulfilled within us. That work never stops until we're done and most of that work is right in self. Self is what you can work to change. You can't work to change others; you have to work to change self. Unless you're given a responsibility to be a part of helping that process.

**(For he says, In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation have I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time.)** When someone is called, that's when that time comes to that person. It's when God chooses. It's when God decides. Then that person has to decide whether or not they're going to respond.

**(...in the accepted time, and look, now is the day of salvation.)** For those being spoken to here in Corinth, that was their time. It wasn't a hundred-year period. It was right then and there. They have to make choices then.

**We give no offence in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience and tribulations and needs and distresses.** It goes on and shows here especially in the beginning of this period of time, and candidly, as far as living in this physical world, it was very difficult for several hundred years, and the Church has gone through much to be where it is today.

We're very blessed today because God established a nation and some other nations in a part of a process through the great wealth that God gave and technology through time and favor and help, that on a physical plane was the best that man could achieve. God allowed that. The best that you can achieve on a physical plane. But it's so far from what God is offering and so we have to experience that as well, that with this, so-called as we do, democracy, which doesn't work. Mankind has failed in everything. Mankind has failed in everything he's put his hand to. He has not succeeded.

That's what God is showing the true witness of 6,000 years to be, is that mankind's way doesn't work. It just doesn't work because it's based on carnality, human nature, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life," selfishness, what "I" want, what "I" believe is true, what "I" think is best.

It's why I loathe the kind of news we have today where it's like just write a book and you're going to be an expert, you're an expert and you're going to be brought on, "What do you think about this?" or asking someone else out there, different ones out there, "What do you think?" And so, people get on nowadays and they're all over the place.

Then they ask different ones to come on, people who tend, as a whole, to think like they do no matter whose side it might be on. "And what is your view of all this that's taking place?" It's like, what do you care? Where does the authority come from for such a view? I don't care who you are! What authority do you have that you know, what power do you have that you know

what is best at this time? The reality is none of them do. No one knows because none of it is of God. God's not in it.

God's in His family, in His Kingdom, working, but not in the world. That's what mankind has to come to see. That's why mankind is going to have to come to suffer so much and be brought down to it's knees. There is such haughtiness even now.

What was it? One individual, I think it was a senator (might have been a representative but I think it was a senator) in one state (this morning I watched a little bit of the news there), and he was making a comment about how less people in their state died in WWII than have died now with COVID in their state. That's probably true in all states by now.

You think, we don't recognize what we're going through. It's like, "We're going through this and it's just a passing thing. We're going to work to make it work. We're going to come through this. Our economy is going to flourish. All we've got to do is print up some more money, and everybody agreed that we should print up some more money." I don't know who's going to buy it all, the treasuries and hold all this stuff when so many are dumping it already. It's like, "We can do this," and it's just like doing it blindly, and "We can do this!"

A lot of countries have tried that, in Argentina and different ones, and it doesn't work, Germany before WWII. It just doesn't work. Somewhere there has to be something backing it all and we don't have it. It's like, "Give people money and pass laws so that no one can be evicted because they can't pay their rent, they can't pay, make payments, they can't do 'this,' they can't do 'that,'" so, no one can really get rid of anyone to get someone else who might be able to. And so, where are the answers?

Yet they won't humble themselves. People aren't really interested at all. We're putting different advertisements out there. We've cut things down now to a fourth of what we were doing for a while because we were pumping quite a bit into it. And reason being? Because nobody cares. People just don't care. What a horrible thing.

One of the most responsive areas right now has been Brazil. Why? Well, what they've been going through for quite a while now. Horrible! They have a more of a desire to read something, to grab a hold of something because they have nothing and they know that. There are people out here that are looking for something. There is no hope in a lot of people's lives. It's getting there. But that has to grow so much more to where people come to that point, they're asking: Where is the hope? People aren't there.

This nation isn't even remotely close to that spirit yet. So, what do we have to go through to get there?

It's why we don't know. God hasn't shown us. For whatever reasons we're not being shown a thing right now. He's shown us that we have to be on guard and watch and keep moving forward and He's going to bring it all together. But when it happens, the timing of it, we're going to be surprised, we're going to be shocked.

There have been a couple of times that we've had some incidences, especially of watching this past week and things going on and you think...? We're still we're in that process of change, things are still kind of volatile, because you don't know when we're at a point where we're weak, at a weak state, vulnerable, in other words, more than we might be a few months down the road here. And so, we watch.

There have been a couple of times the internet has gone out and TV went out and thought, "Oh, man." You know, I can't help it. I think, "EMP somewhere?" Electromagnetic pulse? I mean, that's the thinking. It's like, could we be there? It's going to happen some day! Incredible.

So again here, going on, **But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses...** We do in the Church as well. We go through different things in our life. He's talking about different things that the ministry has gone through and how we are to live as well. This is what we go through.

If we can grasp that then on a plane of Paul speaking to the Church of Corinth and realize this is the Church, these are the kinds of decisions and choices we have to make, and so, we have to have much patience waiting. We wait. We look to God.

We desire to be on guard and realize at this time we know it's close. But how close? We don't know that. We see rumblings of things of different countries right now trying to form an alliance - between Japan, Australia, and India because of China, and things that Japan is saying more now because of the South China Sea. Both sides are getting a little more belligerent. One of these days, you know, just on a physical plane, heads are going to clash, in that respect. They're going to crash into each other totally. So, that's the kind of world we live in.

**...in stripes, in needs, as it says, in distresses, in stripes.** Those distresses, in some ways, we're in that right now. I mean we're in times of distress. It's a hard time for a lot of people. It's a hard time for God's Church. It's a difficult time.

Distresses means stress and how we deal with those things, and wondering, not knowing. But we have the truth. Awesome. The comfort, the peace of mind that the world doesn't have. How blessed are we?

**...in stripes...** Whatever it is we go through in time and people in the Church have gone through a lot. So, what is it that we're not willing to go through? Well, there shouldn't be anything. There shouldn't be one thing that we're not willing to go through if we have to. Do we want to go through some of these things? No. But we do.

**...in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings.** Some of these should just be a part of our life, indeed, and moved and motivated. When it mentions fastings, it behooves us when we recognize the greater danger, to be fasting more, to be drawing closer to God. So important.

...**by/through purity**. A word that has more to do with the meaning of being cleansed as a result of being sanctified. So, our desire is to be cleansed, to be changed, to always be on guard, to always be wanting that in our life **through knowledge** that God gives to us, understanding, **through longsuffering**, willing to suffer long, **through kindness**. How we should be, how we should respond. That's something we all have to work on because we can all grow in that. We can all grow in how we're kind to one another. Truly.

...**through the holy spirit**. Because that's how it's done. Because you can't do it on your own, otherwise, it's not what it should be, not genuine, not the conviction. Conviction comes through the power of God's spirit because of this being transformed. And when you're convicted of something?

It's like how many would think to work on the Sabbath day? Well, generally we become convicted of that very early on because we know what that means. Most of us are convicted that we're going to take the Passover. Hopefully, all of us are convicted. Convicted about the importance of taking Passover.

Hopefully, most of us are convicted about obedience to tithing and giving offerings to God. But still even there, there are battles that people have to fight after all that's been said in the last three years or so. Because those try us, those test us. They just do because that's what regulates so much of life around us in a physical, carnal world.

What's an amazing thing is if we don't do that right we can't have God's help. You think, what a paradox. What a horrible thing not to grasp and put together properly, to realize that you're bringing curses into your life rather than blessings. You can't be blessed, but you want to be blessed, but you can't be blessed if you're not doing what you should do.

But again, all these things come through conviction of thinking until they're absolute in your mind. That means to be at one with God. When the conviction comes it's not a matter of just doing do's and don'ts. So much of our lives begin by do's and don'ts and making choices and trying ourselves to do a certain thing a certain way, Sabbath, Holy Days, tithing, until it becomes a part of you and you know what it's about, when you are convicted of its importance, and the last thing in your mind would ever be to go against that in your conviction.

Again, that conviction of spirit, that determination of spirit is God's spirit. If it's yours you're going to lose it. If it's just you, you will lose that because it's not true conviction. I hope you understand what I'm saying here. It's a matter of conviction of God's word because you have been tried in it and now it's your mind. It's your mind. It's your thinking. You know what you will do and what you won't do.

Now, sometimes we think we know until we come to that point, because we may not be convicted that's what we want. So again, there's a growth process there. Well, I won't get into that.

**...through the holy spirit, through sincere**, in other words, **genuine love**, love that comes from God. It has to come from God. God is the source. We can't do it on our own. **...through the word of truth**. Beautiful. "Through the word of truth." The more truth we have, the more conviction we can have, the stronger we can become. How blessed are we?

**...through the word of truth, through the power of God**. So, in that respect I can't help but think of what Herbert Armstrong used to talk about. He said, it's like this mindset of your desire to do it with all of your being, that you're putting everything into it as though you're doing it yourself always knowing it's God who does it. He's made it possible, but you've got to throw yourself into it. You've got to work at it.

**...through the power of God, through the armor of righteousness**. So, we want that armor that we read about, that we're totally clothed in it, totally prepared, in other words, for battle, always in a state of preparedness, readiness, on guard. Not falling asleep spiritually. Not letting down spiritually. Because this is the time that's dangerous. It's a time that's exceedingly dangerous. By not being able to be together regularly and then you're dependent upon other things, if you're not careful, you can begin to change your focus and begin to be pulled away by something else. It's very easy.

It's not hard, it's easy to be pulled away.

If we recognize that danger then that will draw us closer to God because we're dropping to our knees because we know we need God, we need His help every day of our life. It's just like fasting should teach us that without food it doesn't take too long and after a while you're yearning for food. You know you need it. You know your body needs it. You're getting hangry! Things are not going well. You know, your body doesn't feel good, maybe your joints are starting to hurt. I don't know about you but I hurt. Some people starting to feel a little nauseous, you know.

Without God's holy spirit on a regular basis and being fed every day of our lives, being close to God, that's what we are on a spiritual plane. That's why that's so important! Because it teaches. A physical aspect should teach (for us), the spiritual aspect of it. We need that which is spiritual coming from God every day.

So, would we dream of fasting for two weeks? Would we? Meaning that, would you dream of not eating for two weeks? Physically fasting? So, if we recognize that spiritually, what it means to our life, that we've got to have that, being without God for two weeks—in other words, praying—not praying for two weeks? Russian Roulette spiritually. Keep trying it. Of course, in there, there are only six in the chamber. Anyway, you don't make it two weeks. Sorry.

We've got to draw close to God, stay close to God, fight this fight. Choices.

**...through the power of God**, as it says here, **through the righteousness, through the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left**. To be totally prepared to move right or

left. That's why we talk about things like that, ready to move left when we're told to move left, turn to the right, whatever, and we do it.

**...through honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report. As deceivers, and yet true.** It doesn't matter what the world says about us. Doesn't matter what the world throws at us. Doesn't matter what they say. We understand that they can't help it. But we know what's true and we can have that always in us if we're staying close to God.

**Verse 9—as unknown, and yet well known.** The world doesn't know us. But what an awesome thing to understand, the Great Almighty God of the universe who sustains it all, created it all, had the power to give that to be able to be brought into existence. What other words can be spoken? To understand He knows us. To have that confidence, that boldness, that surety in our minds to know that we're God's. We're God's people. He's given us everything that we have in our minds.

So few in 6,000 years have had the opportunity to have such a relationship. Sometimes we just don't grasp the depth—because it's hard in this human body. You can only do it spiritually—to really grasp that depth of what God has given, that thankfulness to know, to be able to value what we've been given. That's why we have to stay so close to God to be able to value it, to be able to be thankful. Because if we're not, we're not going to be thankful, we're not going to value what we need to value.

**...as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live.** Our life is God's. We know even on a physical plane this body is running out. It continues on as long as God wants that in our life, desires that, gives that to us. For what purpose? To create what's in the mind. Once it's created, if life goes on continuing past that, then so be it, there's a purpose in that, in what He's doing. If not, so be it.

“...and behold, we live.” We recognize that even if it stops as far as physical life is concerned, we continue on. We're in God's hands. We're going to be resurrected.

**...as corrected, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.** Total opposites here in the sense of some of the things that are here. And we go through this, we experience things in our life to such a depth that to grasp it, again, is on a spiritual plane.

**...as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.** We go through a lot in this life, we truly do. But yet able to rejoice before God on a continuing basis.

**...as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. O Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You have not restricted,** in other words, held back or constricted. You are not constricted, in other words, held back by us. That's what Paul was telling the Corinthians. **...but you are restricted by your own affections,** meaning by your own feelings or how you feel toward us. That's what he was saying to them at that time.

Those things can happen in life as well, that sometimes people are held back. Not because of what God has not offered them. Because God has offered us everything. We do it to ourselves. We do it to ourselves. We're held back by how we think, by how we think towards this world around us, and how much we value it as to how much we truly value God.

**Now in return/exchange for the same, (I speak as to children), you should also be open.**

**Verse 14—Do not be unequally yoked together,** a word that means “bound together,” or “united together,” **with unbelievers.**

I think how this has been so misused in the Church in times past. People would apply it to things in business and stuff. You couldn't be in business with someone in the world. You couldn't marry someone who was in the world, and all this stupidity of lack of growth and development spiritually in our lives.

And I'm sorry, but at that time we didn't know any better, when you go back in time. It was a growing process. But without knowledge, we're stupid. You know, that's just the reality of it. As we grow in knowledge then we become smarter, we become wiser. But without it we're still back here and fumbling around and not sure what we're doing.

Then as God continues to work with us we grow and we become sharper spiritually, mentally, because it's based in the truth and we learn to get rid of the things that interfere, I don't care what they are, that have happened in the Church.

Just look at the Church, different hang ups that people have had. Birthdays! I mean, we couldn't help it at the time because we didn't know. That's where we were. But to think that a parent couldn't have a birthday cake for their child, to be able to blow out two candles or three candles or four, that that was sin somehow? You can't have a birthday party?

We didn't understand the balance and the soundness of mind of what we could do and couldn't do in some of those things. We were doing it on our own ability to understand things on a physical plane, not a spiritual one. Which is important and needful in the beginning of a process, that we're willing to do that, but there comes a time for maturity.

A child has to continue to grow, and if they cease to at some point, that's where they are. But they continue to grow and to mature. That's what we have to have on a spiritual plane. It's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful process.

Different things, whether it has to do with that, because you know, I think about what mother is it, and father, but especially a mother, she remembers well. She thinks back about the time and the child that's growing. Some of you in here, becoming quite obvious! Anyway, a child growing, developing, and ready to be born into the world. Awesome process of human life. That a mother shouldn't remember that? Or the child shouldn't be encouraged to remember that and the relationship that's there between parent and child? We just didn't have balance in some things. That's the way life is in growing within the Church.

This thing of “being unequally yoked together,” I’ve still encountered at times different ones who say no one should marry someone outside of the Church. I know more people probably who have been married outside of the Body of Christ who have had good, successful, more scripturally meaningful relationships in marriage than those who have been in the Church! Because so many have gone by the wayside now that’s a pretty easy one to say.

Yet there are people who have held on to that idea, things that they’ve heard, and misunderstand what God is saying about scripture and about relationships. God has blessed us with the ability to have awesome, beautiful relationships. Just physical in the world there are people who have decent marriages, good, in that respect, as far as a worldly standard, good marriages. How they treat each other, how they think toward each other, who remain loyal and faithful to each other throughout their marriage.

But as time went on in the Church, if you want to just talk about the Church, we’ve known so many. It didn’t matter whether you went to Ambassador College or not, doesn’t matter whether you were in whatever, and just because it was in the Church didn’t mean you were going to have a good marriage. It’s what you live. It’s the relationships you develop because of your conviction toward God as to what you’re going to have.

When it comes to this matter of if they be pleased to dwell, it applies in all situations. What an awesome thing if people can have some of these things that they work through with someone in the truth and someone who doesn’t have those things as a part of what they believe in their life at this point in their life, and that they can have and live in unity and harmony on a physical plane. Beautiful thing when people are able to do those things and people are able to do that.

What interferes with that is when people begin to work in this area of division, divisiveness toward each other. They become divisive toward each other in many beliefs. Because that will be a great divide right there, or other factors of their life generally having to do with jealousies and envying and different trials that come up and disagreement and how to resolve those things. On and on it goes.

I could spend hours and hours and hours talking about marital relationships but it all comes down to in life how you live toward each other, how you think toward each other, how you treat each other that determines a physical marriage in life. If you’re able to have one where you’re able to share spiritual things, then that should even be a deeper thing, more convicting than ever.

I hope that I made it abundantly clear and if people were just able to look at the fruit of those things in people’s lives they would learn much. Because God calls people out of all kinds of situations to learn from those situations. Some work well, exceedingly well. Some don’t work worth a flip. But neither do they necessarily then, just because two are supposedly baptized in the Church; that doesn’t create in itself a happy marriage.

When it says, “don’t be unequally yoked together,” that scripture does not apply to that kind of stupidity at all. It only does if the other person insists that “This is how certain things are going to take place in our life that don’t have to do with your Church. We’re not going to tithe.” Oh, yeah? Well, then you have a choice to make of a distinction, separation, because it’s not going to work. Because you’re going to let them know, “Oh, no. I tithe. You knew that before we ever came together.” If they didn’t, then that’s your fault, if you didn’t tell them.

So anyway, I’m just talking about things that happen in people’s lives. So, sometimes we have to make a distinction then as to what we’re going to do, how we’re going to do it. But people can live together in a beautiful way.

I can’t help it because I’ve seen this so abused and misused, this verse here, “Do not be unequally yoked together with others.” I’ve known of people who felt that they couldn’t go into business with anyone in the world or whatever. It’s business. You treat it as business. Candidly, I’ve known of some really big problems of people who have been the Church who had business together, and some have left because of that. So again, it’s all about each one of us and our relationship with God and how we live toward God.

**Do not be unequally yoked together**, bound together or united together **with unbelievers**. It’s in what they’re doing or living. So, if you got yourself into a situation, as an example, you went together in some kind of work together, as long as everything is set out and so forth, and everyone is agreeable to those things, then things work just like in the world. It doesn’t matter. Business is business. You have to treat it as business. Sometimes people begin to think differently when it comes to the Church. Ah, I don’t want to get into those things. Again, I could be in this for hours.

But again here, what it’s talking about when it says, “Don’t be unequally be yoked together with unbelievers,” it’s about in how they’re living and what they’re doing. That may be in a business. Because if they’re not right business practices? I have had to make choices in my times past about certain practices that I was basically not told straight on but knew exactly what they were wanting me to do, and I wouldn’t do it. You have to make choices, “Not going to do it. It’s not right.” So, you have to make a stand. Either they’re going to keep you on or they’re not. They kept me on so, hey, it worked. But sometimes it doesn’t.

**Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers**, in what they’re doing or living, in other words. That’s what the context is all about. **For what fellowship has righteousness have with lawlessness?** So, it’s about what you’re living. And so, in anything as people come together in life or in situations in life, we make a distinction in the way of life to be led, to be lived. We’re not, just because of being around someone else, which has taken many people out of the Church, sometimes people begin to adopt or lean toward a greater liberality, liberalism in their life toward different ideas. That’s where the danger comes in.

I think of Israel and their being told not to mix with other nations. Men were not to mix with other women of other nations. Now, there were a lot of people of other nations who came in

with Israel. But that was misunderstood in the Church in times past as well. It wasn't about the fact that they were something special in that regard, totally. Now, there was only in the sense of what God had given to them as a people to live and they were supposed to live that way of life. But if others wanted to come along?

There were gentiles who came along who are noted in scriptures, frankly, in the lineage of Christ...or Christ is in that lineage of different ones who have had different relationships. Think of Rahab. Incredible. Different ones who are noted in a very powerful way. So, it wasn't about that. What they were warned about was the relationship of what they did because of their gods!

That's what Solomon did. Toward the end of his life (we've read that; we've gone through that), everything that God had given to him, so richly blessed. Scriptures that are here that we can read and be inspired by because they come from God. Just as much as ministers in the past who are inspired by God, who gave powerful sermons, you could listen to them today as a whole, and you would know and see the truth that's in them, obviously. But at some point, if they begin to veer to a certain direction, to bring something else in that's not true, not right, everything changes.

That's what God was warning against. It was about their gods. That's what Solomon did. He began to make allowances for the worship of other gods. What a hideous thing and that's what God was warning against. It's about their gods. Now, if people wanted to come in and be a part of Israel, do you know they were allowed to become a part of Israel in the sense of with the people and in marriage and so forth? They were welcomed if that's the way of life they wanted to follow and be a part of. There are people who left Egypt who were not Israelite that came out as well. So, those in themselves are evidence and should show us wisdom in how God really works.

I think of races and how there was this concept that races shouldn't mix because one, you know, they're all different and we're all, everyone is pure in its own right and they were never to mix. I'd like to say something to that, but I'll just say, "Bull." You can put the rest in there.

I think of Moses who took a woman of Ham, descendant, married her. Aaron and Miriam both found fault with what he had done, that he'd done something wrong. God punished them for what they spoke against Moses and God never corrected him for what he did. That should scream reams to us of what is true as far as God. But it didn't and because we weren't there yet as far as the Church was concerned.

I hope you understand what I'm saying. The things that are in the past, all things become new; we never stop growing. Once we get past a point, we realize how foolish that was, that we held on to something that wasn't from God, because we just didn't know. Monday Pentecost? We just didn't know. We were a little dumb in that area because we just didn't know. Until God gives it to you, you don't know.

But once God gives it to you, you know and you see and you learn from that. You think, why couldn't you see that before? Because God didn't give it to you. Because God has to give us all truth and the balance and the soundness of mind that only comes from Him.

That's why I loathe prejudices between peoples. Loathe it with all my being. I see the division that's in this country and in other countries and how people have had to grow up and how they've had to live and things they've gone through that blow your mind! I think about women especially that surpass all those things in one respect of how they've been oppressed for nearly 6,000 years!

And if you don't understand history and things that have happened in nations and peoples and how oppressed they've been just because man was a little stronger and he bullied his way though. He was able to oppress because of his strength, because of how he was created, and he used that strength in a wrong way. That's what happened. Women were second class - less than second class many times. Just kind of like servants. Sick! Because mankind was never meant to live like that. But because of what Adam and Eve did that's what they chose, and they went that way...and a part of God's plan.

That's why I marvel of what's happened in the last hundred years, seventy years, and it's all been happening because God's bringing us closer to the return of His Son, to begin setting far more right. But the process has to begin before that. There are certain prejudices even in race that people cannot get rid of in their minds because they don't have the ability. Much of that because of what they've experienced.

I think of someone from a large city who wrote a letter to us. This is the first he's hearing about it. But my wife and I, our hearts went out to him. A black man that expressed his concern about his children growing up and how there is this thing in certain places, you grow up looking over your shoulder not knowing what to expect, especially from law enforcement or whatever it might be. Because there are prejudices. It's a part of what's instilled in human beings, in the minds of people because of what's been passed down from generation to generation.

To understand those things, to understand why those things exist, whether they be in white, black, I guess what they call yellow. I don't know what you call it. But Asian. You think, long for the day that people are made free of that kind of crap, that kind of prejudice, that kind of evil. Because it's evil to look down upon people, to misjudge people. There are people who lived in horrifying times.

I think of an individual I was in with for my three years and he was a boxer and story being growing up in a particular area where Cassius Clay grew up, if you know who Cassius Clay is. Who ran together in different places and how they were oppressed by law just because of where they were running or what they were doing. You hear some of these kinds of stories and think, how on earth? To live through things like that. Your heart has to go out to people.

The sad thing in this world is people's heart don't go out to one another as it should, to recognize suffering and oppression and what it's like, to recognize how women have been oppressed by mankind, by men. And if our heart can't go out in those kinds of things, where is God's spirit? But that's the only way it can change, God's spirit. What a beautiful thing to recognize that that's what we're working for, that's what we're desiring, that the whole world can begin to experience. Because it's the only way that's going to change. How has mankind done in making those changes?

It's like some of the thing with women right now, a certain law that I think it was just passed or proclaimed. I don't know what they're calling them now. You sign a paper, and this is what it's going to be overriding everything else that's past. Passed this one now. A woman was talking out how this is more (of a gender thing), how that this now is more oppressive to women than ever before.

I thought, what a unique perspective to realize that they've gone too far now because it's women (and men), but primarily coming from different ones who want this to be changed, to have all this gender thing or whatever changed and how people talk and so forth and how they think. If it's written in law to realize, uh-oh, that law ends up actually hurting women. I thought she did an awesome job of explaining some of those things.

The ways of mankind just fail! Now it's gone too far. I think of righteous Lot, his righteous soul vexed day by day by what he saw. How much more for us if we see these things going on around us, how much we should yearn for and desire God's Kingdom because we know that it's the only way this you-know-what is going to begin to change. Because it's like living in a toilet, except a great big one. Look forward to the day the world is dried off, cleaned up, able to get out of it.

**...dying and yet we live. ...corrected, not killed. ...sorrowful, yet rejoicing. As poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things. O Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you. Our heart is wide open.** So again here, talking about unequally yoked together.

There we are, **verse 14—Don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers**, in other words, with what they're doing or living. **For what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness?**

There is that which divides in the world, division in the world that mankind is easily able to create, that creates more divisiveness. That's where we live today, in a world that's becoming more divisive than ever before and unable to solve its problems. People can't agree. They say they're going to agree and we're going to work together, and they don't do it because they lie, because that's human nature!

People are more self-centered than ever before. The more this is happening, the more self-centered people are becoming and the more evil the world is becoming, and most of that because of the use of technology today. Sick, sick, sick, sick world. God deliver us, soon!

**And what communion does light have with darkness? None! They don't mix. You can't mix it together. And what accord/agreement does Christ have with Belial? None! Or what part does a believer have with a nonbeliever?** All in the sense of what is lived and what is believed, what you choose to live. There's a way of this world, the way of mankind, and there's God's way.

**Now, what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.** What an awesome thing to understand; where God can dwell, where God wants to dwell to change us, to mold and fashion something unique in us, a new creation, ever changing this mind and the convictions by what we live, of what we choose to live.

**As God has said, I dwell in them, and walk among them; I will be their God, and they shall be My people.** What could be more beautiful in scripture?

**Therefore, come out from among them and be separate.** So again, it goes full circle. God divides us from this world through a calling, through this redeeming process, this redemption that's offered to us, the ability to be forgiven of sin. Then we have to choose whether that's what we want and that we fight for it, that we want to be separate.

So, we're put in a situation where we're the ones that make the final choice. It's in nobody else's hands. God gives it to us to make. What are you going to do? Not only do you want it, are you willing to fight for it, are you willing to work for it every day of your life? Because that's what it takes.

**...come out from among them and be separate, says the Eternal/says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean.** That's what this has all been about. Don't become a part of that because that's being unequally yoked together. Don't live that. Don't choose what they do and how they choose to do it. Don't lust after what they desire and lust after what pulls you away from a relationship with God.

**And I will receive you...** Because if we choose that, God will let us have it. Many have chosen it. Many. **I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty Eternal.** Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

**2 Corinthians 7:1—Therefore, having these promises, beloved...** To understand this is all given because God has chosen to love us now. He's not giving that same love to others in the world around us but He's offering that to us now. What an awesome thing. We don't really grasp that, but we should strive to and strive to appreciate it and be thankful for it.

**Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse our self from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.** So, that's ever before us, and hopefully, we're doing that because we have to be out of this world to continue on, to continue to go forward.

This is a unique time for God's Church. In times past people were able to go their own way, do their own thing, become disfellowshipped, disfellowship themselves through their actions and

continue in life and then die, but not having anything to do with God until the Great White Throne.

But now it is kind of a unique time, in that respect. Not kind of, it is in the sense that we are going to be cleansed. God's Church is going to be cleansed. Those things that we have chosen to be in bondage to (because it's a choice), that pull us away from the truth, things that people flirt around with and do that are wrong (lust of the eyes, whatever that might be), cheating and lying against God, robbing from God, whatever it might be.

It's like a marriage relationship. If someone cheats, lies against God and His way of life and wants something else and does something else that they know is wrong in how they're living their life, that's a choice.

But it's like I told those two elders that time, now is the time. You don't have time. You'd better have done this now and be doing this now and fighting that fight. If you're not, you can work to deceive yourself all you want. You'll either be there, or you won't.

**Let us cleanse our self from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit perfecting...perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** A fear of turning away, a fear of falling asleep, a fear of drifting, a fear of being lukewarm, a fear of latching on to something in the world and begin raising that up in importance in your life.

So indeed, once called and made separate, a division made by God, in essence, from the knowledge and beliefs of the world, God desires that we choose Him. Natural. He sacrificed much. Christ sacrificed much to give us this opportunity. Then we have to choose to be separate, that we make a division from living the way of this world, or being in agreement with the ways of this world, and how we live.

We stand firm, stand tall in doing what is right, and others must know it. Whether it be our employers, our mate, our parents, our children, it doesn't matter who it is, those who might be closest to us in life, if they're not a part, then this needs to be clear to everybody where we are and what we're living. There can't be any deception in that.

In doing this we have to make a division, a separation, because that's a part of the process, from some people in life. Sometimes you have to do that. That's a tough part. We've all had to do that.

I remember first being called, living in a different area, working in the summer and getting baptized then early September, and then going back to college about a hundred miles away, and doing so after having been baptized, being around that same group of people, I knew I couldn't stay there. I had to separate myself and so I went to another city, to another Church area and lived.

Then after six months I was able to come back and I was set. There wasn't any thought of anything as far as relationship because it was clear what I was living and what I believed.

Anyone who was around me knew full well that I wasn't the same person anymore. And you know what? They didn't really care to be around me either. Isn't that a funny thing that happens to us? But I knew that I had to get away from that.

Sometimes we have to do drastic things in order for change to become a part of our life, things that aren't easy. But it's a choice. Sometimes we have to respond; God separates us, and we have to choose whether we want to be separated from that which will pull us away from God, that which can hurt us. Those are hard decisions to make in life and we've all had to make them.

It could be a matter of employment, of keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days. We have to stand strong. I'll never forget the first time I had to go tell an employer I'm not working on the Sabbath anymore. I'm not working on Saturday. "Well, that's okay." Anyway, at that time there it was during harvest, and rather than going on a harvest run I was working in an elevator. You almost work around the clock there, if you wanted to; if you could do it, you could do it.

Because you're putting grain in elevators and that grain has to be moved out of various quonsets or piles constantly because it has to be in a drawing condition. Because if it's wet it will ruin. There are some by moving it, it helps the process of drying. We were constantly doing these things and putting in 16-20 hours in day. That's just kind of what you had to do.

Then, so, if you go and tell someone at a time like that, "Not going to be in on Saturday." "Oh, that's okay. You can work up to late Friday night." "Uh... It's sundown to sundown." Only because they needed somebody, they needed bodies probably, in that respect, was I able to keep a job. But sometimes they're just not really happy, of what choices you make if you've been around for a long time and you tell them what you're going to do.

But you have to make a choice to separate yourself from a way, from doing something. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It always works with God because it's the right choice. He'll remember it and He'll bless you. Maybe not immediately, but you will be blessed.

I think of different things that can come along where people have to make separation. I think of this thing that used to come around I think more often than it does today within the Church, of some company someone is working with and they have a Christmas party and because of you they're not going to call it a Christmas party. It's going to be a year-end or a whatever gathering of people to acknowledge the end of the year and want to pass out whatever it might be, the ham. "Could it be a turkey?" "Oh, good idea." Then others want turkeys.

I remember one time we went to one and sure enough part way through the meal here comes, "Ho-Ho-Ho!" I won't tell you the rest of the story. But you learn that people lie, and they connive, and there are just certain environments you're just not going to be in. But it depends on the people and their integrity. And so, everybody has to make different kinds of decisions as to how they do things. Always being tried in these things as we sometimes do.

You have to make a stand as to what you're going to do in time and you separate yourself. Reality, in a company like that, it was like, "Not coming this year. Sorry." Not going to work this time. Once? Yes. But not again.

So again here, what an awesome thing to recognize this goes through our life, our entire life of God separates us, and we have to make the choice of a willingness to stand and separate ourselves at times. Sometimes we don't have to, sometimes we even have to in family, relatives or whatever it might be. We have to make a choice. It comes down to "Is this causing me to be weaker and be pulled away from God? Is it detrimental to my spiritual life? Am I sinning because of this?"

Again, these things are hard and we've all gone through these things. You have to go through this when you come into God's Church. You can't help it because you all have relatives. Well, I won't say you all have it, relatives. There might be some that don't, no relatives or whatever. So again, could go through example after example, but don't need to.

So, what an incredible process here of recognizing this time of year especially in what we're going through. I want to go to a couple of verses here though. We just read one. Then one more that we went through in I believe it was *Part 1* here as well.

But again, something to hold on to, this one in **2 Corinthians 6:17** where it says, **Therefore, come out from among them and be separate.** Something you have to continually do in the sense of measuring and evaluating things and not letting things pull you way, from what? A relationship with God. If it begins to hurt your spiritual relationship with God, that's exceedingly dangerous. There's a being out there right now who's trying to do that more than ever in our lives.

**Do not touch what is unclean,** nothing that can separate you from God. Be careful. **...and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty Eternal.** In other words, our desire should be a very deep one to continue in a relationship with God. Not just to continue but actually to become stronger in that. This is a time to strengthen that relationship, not let it become weak.

Then **Romans 8**, beautiful verses. Something we need to hold on to in what we're going to go through in time here whenever that might be, in a very powerful way, **verse 35** where it says, **Who shall separate us from the agape (the love) of Christ?** What is it? Are we so convicted in our minds that we know there is nothing? Death itself, so be it. Our life is in God's hands.

**Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword?** How convicted are we? And if we're convicted, God will bless us. God will carry us through whatever we go through, even if it's a loss of life. That's going to happen. It's going to happen to different ones we know as we go through some of the things that are ahead of us. God has the power to resurrect, period.

**As it is written, For your sake we are killed all day long.** So, we recognize it's a sacrifice. We've chosen that way of sacrifice, whatever it means. I mean, what can be more beautiful than the fact that you know your life is in God's hands? Truly! Do we want to go through hardship, peril, whatever it might be, without food, naked, whatever it might be? No. But if it's God's purpose and God's will, so be it.

**We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** Do we look at it that way? Do we receive that and recognize it that way, that that's exactly the way it is as far as the world is concerned and our living in it? Because we're not a part of it.

**Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors,** as was mentioned in *Part 1* there, meaning far above conquering. That's what this is about, overcoming, conquering **through him who loved us.**

So, what an incredible thing here once again, as this series is focused on division versus unity, we recognize man's is totally different for a different motivation, for a different purpose, and it causes divisiveness. We have to choose which one we're going to be a part of. As a whole I know that we know what our choice is.

We produce division or separation from the world yielding to God, desiring to be separated from mankind, to be separated from the way of this world. In other words, for the purpose of having unity and oneness with God. Nothing can be more beautiful than to have that mind that agrees with God in everything.