

Standing Firm for God's Kingdom

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Feast of Tabernacles Sermon

In this last Holy Day season for the year we are, obviously, observing the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. Awesome what we're blessed to picture as we picture God's plan and the completing of what He has purposed for so very long, Elohim, to become a part of God's Family.

This sermon today is entitled *Standing Firm for God's Kingdom*.

As I have focused on this subject in what we're going to cover, as I've said really throughout this Feast anyway, and generally mention at every Feast, I'm struck by how many there have been who have gone before us who began to enter this fight and turned away. Horrible. Not understanding what they're giving up, not really comprehending fully, and yet knowing enough and receiving enough that they have judgment of various things that they have to deal with at one time or another in the future.

Few of those who have been called, which is really difficult sometimes to grasp fully, but few of those who have been called have stood firm in their calling. Yet, there is no other way to enter God's Family except that we become set in our commitment, that we are determined, 100% dedicated in our minds we need help, the help of God to accomplish that, to fulfill those things, but to have that mindset that, "This is the way I believe, this is the way I feel. I am determined, I am committed. There is nothing going to get in the way." And then you pray to God for help to accomplish what you have chosen to do, what is in your heart and what is in your mind.

And so again, 100% dedicated above all other things and all other people to be in the Kingdom of God. Because that's what pulls us away from that commitment.

There are a lot of definitions associated with this matter of standing firm, and want us to first consider some of those definitions because there's a lot in there and a lot to consider about this attitude and spirit that we need to have that's set in our mind, really, that reflects that kind of desire of putting God first. Because it really boils down to that, it's a matter of putting God first and we're committed to that, convicted to that with all of our being.

So, some of the definitions, "standing firm" – "To stand fast; fully committed; set; on guard; fixed in place." Not going to move. "To hold one's ground as in battle," because this is a battle and that's the mindset, that's what has to be there. "Unwavering," unwavering no matter what the obstacle. "Refusing to change one's position."

I think of the series we went through not too long back and talking about the different tribes and some of the battles that they fought and the mindset of some who were noted above others and certain tribes that had this tenacity of standing firm. They would not flinch; they

stood their ground. Incredible. That's what they were noted for in battle, in fight. And that's what we have to be known for to succeed, to accomplish what's in front of us.

So again, "Refusing to change one's position," again, "despite the pressure from others." "To withstand; to resist and fight; will not budge." So, these things—and there's much more—reflect that kind of spirit, that kind of attitude that we want to have, that we should want to have, that we should want to embrace with all of our being.

So again, these definitions reflect that, that spirit, that attitude, of the kind of person who is convicted, who is fully committed, unwaveringly persuaded to stand firm in God's Kingdom. So, today we're going to look at some examples that we know really well, but they're awesome examples and God wants us to remember such things, to think about those things on a spiritual plane, of things that people did on a physical plane, because they're awesome.

Numbers 25:1—Now as Israel was dwelling in Acacia Grove (Shittim) ("Shittim" is the other word that's used oftentimes here in the translation.) **people began to commit fornication with the daughters of Moab.** So, I want to pause right here and mention here that there are scriptures like this throughout the Bible, of things where God gave warning to the Israelites not to mix with the other tribes and so forth of people's around them in the areas where they travelled. And some people have used that in religion, various religions do that, and in our past we were guilty of carrying that with us.

Because, candidly, a lot of the things we have experienced into Worldwide and on are matters of things that reflect our coming out of the world, and especially out of a protestant world. Because it had an incredible impact upon God's Church by the end of Thyatira in the beginning of Sardis, the printing press and all the things associated with that, the translating of Bibles, God's word into different languages and so forth. And all these things that began to grow and expand lent it's way to other ideas and beliefs and protestantism of varying degrees and groups spreading up here and there.

And so, that kind of thing really had an incredible impact on God's people because there was this new found freedom. It wasn't just something coming out of the Catholic Church, and not just something of Latin or whatever, and even if you didn't understand or know the language they would still—still to recent time—some of you lived during that period of time when they still (I don't think they are as much now), people go and listen to these things repeated in Latin. And it's like, "Let's keep this really a mystery." You can't even understand it. They acknowledge it's a mystery anyway, so much of it. Incredible.

But sadly, it was just like the trinity. God blessed Herbert Armstrong to understand that God's holy spirit was not a person, was not a being, was not a member of the God Family, but hadn't yet revealed about Christ, that he hadn't eternally existed. And it's a part of that, of coming out of that background. And God has to reveal those things a little bit at a time. Look how long we've had the name "Jesus," until finally God gave... I honestly didn't think that would be addressed until the Millennium, but God made it very clear it's to be addressed now.

So, it's an awesome thing and to understand this coming out of the world. And so, there are many analogies in that, but a lot of that is coming out of the religions of this world. But a part of that had to do with things like this. There are things taken out of the Old Testament that have been twisted and distorted because people wanted to maintain some of their own ideas and beliefs, of things they wanted to continue to do. I don't care what it might be, maybe slavery. There are people who justified that by the Old Testament and so forth. And it's like, give me a break!

Well, it was in this case too, here, of marrying people of different races or different peoples and nationalities, of different areas. And so people said, "See, God says you're not to do that." Never addressing Moses and his wife that he married. God didn't condemn Moses. And so, that should have rang out volumes to us! But it didn't. It's like totally blind to the reality and the fact of what took place. God condemned those who—his brother and sister—for finding fault with Moses rather than with Moses.

He found fault with them for criticizing and finding fault with Moses and speaking out against Moses. There's a great lesson in that as well, just like I've been talking about. You speak out against God's ministry; you're going to pay a price for it. God doesn't let that go by. It's not a small thing because it's speaking out against Him. That's how He addresses it. And so it was in that time there with Moses. Miriam and Aaron, they spoke out against Moses, God took care of it.

And so it is here. What a horrible thing to twist and distort scripture to fit what you want, what you desire. I think of one individual who left our fellowship (PKG) at one point in time because he didn't like what was being taught about the 144,000. And at that time we were given to understand that those who had gone through, been baptized by the time of the Apostasy, had the ability yet, God was working with a few yet at that point in time to become a part of the 144,000.

Well, that didn't fit him so he's going to go find a group that does believe in that. That's how you do it, go out there and find someone that you can agree with rather than it being true, because that's what you want to believe. Well, here it is as well.

So, **with the daughters of Moab**, as it talks about here. And it wasn't a condemnation... It was about their beliefs. It was about their gods. Because what happens and what happened there is that the greatest of battles in a large population like that as they begin to mingle with another people's is to give in.

Look what Solomon did because of all of his wives. He began to turn to and make way for the worship of other gods within the nation. Mindboggling! Mindboggling after everything that's been given, how that can happen in ones mind, after you've been warned don't do this, don't allow for other gods.

So, it's about other worship, about other gods and so forth. So, I just wanted to throw that out there because this has been something that still some that have some out of the past have struggled with in times past.

Then they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods. That's what follows. So, you start it with a relationship, men and women mixing. Because that's the greatest pull, that's the primary thing that has led people out of God's Church, the number one thing, like I mentioned, until recent time, then it's been more of thievery and robbery from God. But it starts out with this, being drawn. And then the next thing to follow if one is not careful is to please, and a large population doing this, led people away from Israel and the truth and the way of God.

...and the people ate of them and bowed down to their gods. After everything they'd gone through out in the wilderness, having gone through the Red Sea, having experienced the miracles of God, having experienced the ability to go out and get something six days a week off the brush and so forth, which they had to do. And if you tried to cheat and go out on the seventh day or take more so that it even lasts longer because you really just don't want to go out there every day, so I'd like to have Sunday off, so I don't have to go out and pick this stuff, so I'm going to pick twice as much. Didn't work. It rotted.

So Israel joined itself unto Baal of Peor. Mindboggling! To choose...? Even on a physical plane this is nuts, this is not too bright. But this is what they did. "They joined itself unto Baal of Peor." So, joined itself to is just like the fornication. "Joined itself to," it's reflective of spiritual adultery with God and His Truth and His way of life. That's why God wants us to understand and grasp it.

So Israel joined itself unto Baal of Peor, which is a mountain in Moab, and the anger of the Eternal was kindled against Israel. In other words, judgment had to be executed because of this, because this can't be allowed, because if it isn't addressed it's going to become far more massive and it's growing fast enough as it is.

Verse 4—So, the Eternal said to Moses, Take all the heads of the people... Now, we can read this and think stuck the heads on a pole. In scripture it tends to be more a matter of those who were the leaders of some of these things that were taking place, those who were the first to initiate it and spread it and so forth. People followed. "Well, it's okay for them, it's okay for me," type of thing. That's what happens oftentimes.

Minister starts doing something in times past and brethren begin to let down in what they're doing because they see him doing certain things they know is wrong, and so they become weaker and not really as convicted of various things, and after a while you got a whole congregation that's gone by the wayside. It's happened in times past.

...and hang them before the Eternal, out in the sun. So, "Take their life, take their bodies, hang them up out there." **...in the light of all, that the fierce anger of the Eternal may be turned away from Israel.** "That it might stop this matter of judgment. So that the people can

see it and if they will stop then because they are brought to a matter of fear, hopefully and prayerfully God will have mercy on us because the people are responding to this and changing, turning back from what they're doing wrong."

Then Moses said to the judges of Israel, Slay every one of the men who were joined unto Baal of Peor. Sounds pretty tough. "Kill them. Kill them. Everyone who did this that you know of, put them to death." This is what is right for a physical carnal nation, to do this.

So, sometimes people feel it's bad, what we do in the ministry sometimes when it's a matter of disfellowshipment or someone being separated from the Body, and we don't understand that is what you have to do to protect the Body. Because people can look at different examples or learn from various things. Because it's not just in one matter alone, because there'd be other areas of sin that begin to enter in.

Ministers in times past, and not of too...even in PKG who sinned, who began to sin, who began to do things they shouldn't be doing did other things as well that they shouldn't be doing because it just like a snowball, it just gets bigger and bigger as it goes down the hill. And others see this. And especially if it's a minister, they latch on to it and they start doing the same thing. We've had some incredible things take place over time here, even within PKG.

So, slay everyone of the men who were joined unto Baal of Peor. Then indeed, one of the children of Israel brought within the midst of his countrymen a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the assembly of the children of Israel. What audacity to bring her right within the camp! Not to go there, but to bring her home so that everyone could see. And here people are being put to death for this and he's still has that kind of audacity to go ahead and stand against God and against what Moses had given in the front of all the people that were able to see him. And evidently, there were plenty of people that were able to see him, to see what he did.

So, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the assembly of the children of Israel who were weeping before the tabernacle of the congregation. So, not only that but right there in that location. It wasn't like he snuck in. Because this is huge! The camp of Israel was huge, hundreds of thousands of people. He could have come in from some other direction or whatever, but oh no, pride, didn't care, going to do it, bring her right along, walk right by them.

To me, that reflects a spirit and mind of individuals who are lying to God who strive to stay in the environs of the fellowship. They're not in the fellowship but they're in the environs of the fellowship. And those things sicken me to the pit of my being, when I become aware of them. Not going to tolerate it ever in God's Church. And anyone has that kind of audacity, I have the audacity to get in front of the congregation and tell what has been done, which I've done in times past. "This will not be allowed in God's Church." Various things that I've spoken out about, things I've said here at the Feast.

Because some other people know some of these things that are being said. And I hope that some of you have the guts to stand up to such individuals when they do or say such things. But it's still not happening! Even from the ministry! I'm sorry, but that just ticks the you-know-what out of me, that we won't take a stand in God's Church. And if someone in the ministry won't take a stand and say, "Wait a minute. What you're saying is divisive. What you're saying is against the Church! Be careful what you're doing. You better change that tone and that attitude."

Isn't that what we should have the guts to do? When someone speaks out against someone else, and especially if it's the apostle of God's Church? Do we not have the ability to comprehend what's taking place when something like that happens?

I didn't intend to raise my voice and get like that, but I'll tell you what, I know how God works and there are things we need to see and understand and quit playing games. Because this is the end of it. I've said this for so long over this past year. Shape up or ship out! I'll help you ship out. I have no qualms about that. I'll show you the door, and I might even be tempted to give you a boot on the way out - poom! (Sorry). Get rid of this in the Church of God, in the environs.

We have to be clean. We have to be at one with God. We should crave that with all of our being and not going to allow anything in, or if there is something in, it's going to be put out. We are being cleansed. We must get our act together. Whatever sins we're dealing with, we'd better be fighting them, because this is it! This is the cleansing. This is the final wash. You know how it goes through different cycles? We're in the last cycle in the machine, the rinse cycle. And if everything hasn't been gotten out yet, it's going to go out with the rinse cycle.

Crying out to God's Church - repent where we need to repent. Draw closer to God. Stand up for what is right. Fight for what is right. It's a body that has to do this. We together have to do this. We cannot justify the comingling of that which is wrong, that which is sin, and that which will not repent within the Church.

So, I've become very displeased, candidly, at anyone who is ordained and doesn't stand up and put a stop to that kind of thing when they have that opportunity. Because it's something we should all be doing. You know sin, you don't speak to it as being sin and be frank and candid? Because you love them, you want them to turn around. And if we somehow justify it or think, "Well, it's okay, or we'll give them more time." Not in the Body of Christ! Not in association with the Body of Christ! That's not the place. The place is on the outside. And if an individual wants it bad enough they'll repent.

I've been so thankful there have been people who have been suspended (which is not my experience in time's past), or disfellowshipped who have repented and have come back charged up, pressing forward, fighting harder than ever. That's such an awesome, beautiful thing to see. And for me, I think sometimes they may feel a little skittish around me, wondering well, how do I think about... I love them. It's gone! It's in the past! Nothing is being held against you. Just thankful that you addressed it and you're here. We're a Body. We're a family.

And if you hold on to something? Not going to be as patient and merciful because you don't belong, especially now.

Then indeed, one of the children of Israel brought within the midst of his countrymen a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the assembly, so they could see it. Moses! ...and the assembly of the children of Israel. And generally, those who are assembled right there are the leaders. That's who were gathered there. ...**who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.** Because they hurt for what they saw was taking place within Israel.

Then, when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the assembly and took a javelin in his hand; and went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through. Some people look at something like this and say, "That is so hard, to take life." Yeah, to prevent the loss of many, many, many, many more. God deals with things in a different manner than we do so often as human beings. We can have a bleeding heart (so to speak), a willingness to give in and compromise with things that we shouldn't do. Because "Oh, give them another chance."

So, he thrust them both through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. I hope you understand what this is saying, one javelin, two people, through her belly. Right there, phoom. Right through both of them who were joined together. Sick. Sick. Sick. Incredible, Phineas standing firm, moved by what was taking place and was willing to put a stop to it.

And I think, are we not willing to put a stop to sin in the Body? "Am I willing to fight for it in my own life, in my own mind against it, and am I willing to fight for it within the Body of Christ? Because it's not just about me, it's about the Body of Christ." And so, we should stand for the Body of Christ just as Phineas was for all of Israel.

So, as it goes on to say here, it says "the plague" but, I guess you could look at it as kind of a plague. But anyway, So those being struck down from among the children of Israel was stopped. So, an end to the killing. It came to an end because of what he did. And it goes on to explain the story here: **And those who died of being struck down were twenty-four thousand.** Awesome! That's why it's written in scripture, because twenty-four thousand of the children of Israel were put to death for doing such a thing, for drawing Israel toward Baal, toward false God's, away from God Almighty. And so it was dealt with, and it started with Phineas.

Now, Moses already said to go out there and start the killing because this is what must be done. This is what God has given to be done. He knew what had to take place.

Verse 10—Now the Eternal spoke to Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel. And so, in other words, to a point saying that judgment now, that judgment can be altered because this has

addressed what needed to be addressed, in such a manner that this will be spread throughout Israel, and to see then the mercy of God to stop this, and all the lessons that can be brought into this just on a physical plane. Because that's all they could grasp.

...because he was zealous for My sake. It's about God. "Zealous for My sake." It's the way we should be, willing to stand. Not just ourselves but for the Body, for the body to be able to stand firm, a willingness to stand. This is, to me, one of the greatest of sins, if you will, because we're commanded to do it, this is one of the greatest errors within the Church of God, within the Body of Christ over Philadelphia and Laodicea and in through PKG, is the inability of individuals to stand up and speak out when someone blurts, vomits against God's people. And when someone says something that is doctrinally opposite, when someone says something that is opposite of what is being given in services... You say, "Well, that's not doctrinal."

Just like the jab, "It's not doctrinal." Actually, it is if you get it. It's not that the shot that's doctrinal, it's the government that's doctrinal, it's the manner in which God teaches us and leads and guides and directs us that is a matter of a right relationship with God. And if we aren't attached to that and seeking God's spirit to lead, guide, and direct us, and seeking unity and oneness within the Body then we're going to miss the mark.

So, that's why I don't get it sometimes. I think, you know, if there is a group of people, let's say ten people, and one has the audacity to open up their big, fat mouth to say something against something that has just been taught—because that's what I'm calling it, the big, fat mouth, because they ought to shut their mouth, they ought to shut their lips. They ought to get some braces in there and put some stuff in there to keep the teeth shut and maybe they'll think twice before opening their mouth.

I learned how to talk like that when I had my jaw broken. I had to have wires in here and rubber bands holding it together, and you have to learn to talk between your teeth there, and people have a hard time hearing you. But maybe that's what ought to be done in some cases. Think, "Okay, come over here. Sit in the chair." (Just kidding.)

Why can't one out of that group have the guts, the spirit, the attitude of mind of Phineas and say, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" If someone else has the audacity like this individual did, to walk right in front of the congregation of people, before Moses, with this woman? And someone has the audacity to open their mouth against what God is teaching the Church, what are we going to do? Do we have the strength, the mind to say, "Whoa! Wait a minute. This isn't right." I don't mean to do it in an obnoxious way, in a self-righteous way, but in a right way before God because it's right. To be able to...

You say, "Well, I got to wait and go to my brother alone." Bull! Bull! Bull! BULL! Now, if it's between the two of you and something happens and you need to go to your brother alone, that's fine. But if something happens in a group of people that's the moment! Because you know what happens if you don't say something? You have given agreement that it's okay to do that! You have agreed by your silence that this is permissible in the Church of God!

To speak up and say something, it creates a spirit of fear. “Whoa!” To be more careful of what you say. Does that make sense? (Thank you. Right on the front. That’s good.) So, incredible, how we really should respond. And if it’s someone ordained the responsibility to be on you is a hundred, a thousand times more that you speak up, that not out of friendship you keep your mouth quiet or say something smoother. There is no smoothness needed in some of this stuff. You know, when Phinehas got that spear, how do you make that smooth? Well, it just kind of maybe go through kind of the side of the individuals and maybe bleed a little bit. No, just right through the middle, kill, destroy that evil.

So again, what an awesome thing, **Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the children [of Israel], and because he was zealous for My sake.** Because he kept God in the picture. It was about God. He saw this. He detested what this individual was doing and so he was zealous toward God to uphold what was right and what should be done and to fight against that which is wrong. Not just in himself but for the people.

So, he stood up for God. He stood firm for God’s way. **...he was zealous for My sake among them—among them.** He saw a greater picture. **...so that I did not finish,** meaning “bring to an end; to complete; to fully accomplish” **My zeal.** So, the purpose of God at that point was to destroy more who were participating or allowing the participation.

Because, you see, that’s that thing of silence again. Of, “Oh, I’m embarrassed. Here are these people standing around and I shouldn’t be the one to have to deal with this. It really should be the ministry.” And then I hear about it two years later. That’s how things oftentimes go. It’s like hear about something two years later. Well, why didn’t I know about this ahead of time? Why didn’t someone... Did they go to their brother alone? Because they sure didn’t come to the ministry to follow up with it. It’s happened and some of this that’s still going on, well, why? Why? Why is it still going on?

...that I did not finish, complete, in other words, **My zeal against the children of Israel.** **Therefore, say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace.** What an awesome thing God told Moses. “This is what I’m giving to Phinehas because of what he did, My covenant, My word of peace that he’s going to be blessed with in his life and in those of his descendants.” Maybe someone here today descended from that and God’s honoring that to this day. I believe that.

I give unto him My covenant of peace, he shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. “Covenant of an everlasting priesthood.” So, what does that mean? For him, it’s set in the future in the God Family an everlasting priesthood. He’s got a place set. “Now I know you,” type of thing. Moses wasn’t the only one being worked with.

...because he was zealous for his God. We have a choice to be zealous for our God. And it doesn’t matter if it’s one person in front of us or a large group of people together and one person who does something wrong, that is the moment to address it because everyone else is part, everyone else has heard. And everyone else should really at the same time say, “Whoa!” Now, wouldn’t that be something? Ten people standing around one person says “Whoa!” That

would get you, wouldn't it? All ten at the same time? Like, "What are you doing? You have the audacity to have something come across your lips that God's apostle just told us in a sermon a week ago, and you're telling us something different?"

See, this has happened in recent time. It's happened too much. And those kinds of things need to come to a screeching halt. We have to fight those things. We can't allow them in the Body. This is an important time for God's people. God's focusing upon the finishing of a building, and He wants us to work at getting it done. We have to participate in it's construction. We have to yield ourselves to getting this job complete.

I don't want this to go on another twelve years or twenty years because we're not ready, because we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing! We have choices to make in all this. You think God will hold something back because of our response of not doing what we should be doing as a Body, as a Church? Absolutely! Longer? Absolutely!

Just like building a structure. You can build a brand-new home and you don't finish off one room, how many people do you think want to buy it? "You're selling this? Well, when is this going to be done?" "Well, might take another twelve years." "I want something right now. I want to move in right now." I want to move into Elohim right now. Please, soon! The sooner the better.

So, we have to understand if God is offering people a crown and some other, because some others turned their back on it, what an awesome blessing. And if there's the slightest thought that maybe...maybe, we don't know, but to fight for it. And really, that's what we should do anyway whether it be now or for the end of the thousand years to be resurrected and have that at that time to be in God's Family. It's still a fight that we're fighting for. And if we have added blessings along the way and a crown now, well, that's awesome!

What an awesome thing, "Even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God." This reminds me of the sermon about a heart like David's. We want that. We want that mind. Jacob, perseverance. Want to persevere and not let go. Hold on, your hip's out of place, you're hurting, you're in incredible, excruciating pain, but you're willing to keep fighting regardless of the pain. Here, Phinehas, a willingness to stand firm and fight. Incredible, this attitude. I want to have a heart and spirit like Phinehas as well! All these examples that we should want these things on a spiritual plane. We should fight for them!

...he was zealous for his God and made an atonement for the children of Israel. There are things we can do oftentimes that can have an incredible impact on the Body to help atone the Body. We don't tend to think that way, that our actions could have an effect on other people's lives to help them to repent or to stop what they're doing, to look at themselves and say, "Whoa!" "Yeah, thanks, all ten of you, whoa, because I want to put a whoa to this and I'm sorry, I should not have said that."

So, beautiful, beautiful example here of Phinehas, that kind of heart, that kind of mind, that kind of dedication, that kind of determination to stand firm for God not caring what anybody else thinks. It's not what it's about. Or not worrying about how someone else is going to receive what you have to say.

You can say, "Now, Phinehas, this is going to hurt..." Oh, not Phinehas, but whoever it was. I don't even want to say a name. "But whoever, this is going to hurt! I'll try to be gentle." So often we make decisions like that. "I don't want to say something because it's embarrassing and all these other nine people here and I don't want to be the one to stand up, because, you know, I don't want to be seen like that as being the one who, you know, maybe people will look at that and think, 'You're just self-righteous' or whatever they might think." Who gives a flip what anybody else thinks if you stand firm for God! If you do it poorly or you could have done it better you can always ask God for help to learn from that and say, "Help me to do it better if there's ever a next time." I hope you understand what I'm saying.

Daniel 3:1—Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was ninety feet (27.5 m) and was nine foot wide (2.75 m). He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then king Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the provincial governors and magistrates, of rulers, counselors, treasurers, and judges, of all the rulers and officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image which king Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

So the provincial governors and magistrates, of rulers, counselors, treasurers, and judges, of all the rulers and officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that king Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then a herald cried out, To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that king Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whosoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately in the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

The individual crying out, telling them they're going to be tossed into a fire if they don't do this. I'll read it again, **To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the golden image that king Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whosoever (whoever) does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.** Can you imagine standing there and knowing you're not going to do this? Knowing what might happen to you because you're not going to do this?

I think of things that we go through in life, and it comes a time with an employer perhaps, or whatever it might be, or different ones in a family, and you have to address certain things that

are unpleasant. But there comes that time because you know the repercussion of how they're going to react is not going to be a good one. And so, how you do and what you do, but the determination, is the mind going to stand firm, stand fast, committed to do what it knows is right before God. And so, we're put to the test.

So, at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which king Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore, at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. Large groups of people, incredible. Large group of people here at this moment in time at this dedication. And yet there were some who didn't bow down. And so, as so often is prone in politics and government and different things and people trying to get ahead, and someone comes out, "I saw three people who did not!"

They spoke and said to king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever! Okay. Verse 10—You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and that whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of the burning furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon... I hope we understand what's in their minds. "You have set over different..." Given them much, and it's like, "Look at me. I'm ready for that too." Human nature is really sick, wanting to displace someone else so you might have favor, that you are going to be promoted to whatever because you did this.

So, these individuals, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. These men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury... Can you imagine? I don't think he probably experienced, maybe never before this, really experienced people saying, "No." He's the king. He is all important. He is as a god. That's how they saw themselves so often. "And you're not going to do this?" He didn't take it well.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Now, we know these stories, but what an awesome thing when you go through and read this and think about different aspects of it and what it was like. And we can't totally understand but we try to appreciate it and then think about different things that we experience in our lives and think about maybe the hesitation to stand firm, to stand fast when someone says something to us or tells us what to... "No, not going to happen."

Verse 14—Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now, if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn... So, he saw who it was. He already had a feeling toward them, otherwise they wouldn't have been promoted to the degree

that they were. He already had this mindset toward Daniel and toward these three and so that's why they were serving in the... Because of the trust and so forth was there, he knew them well, and so he's asking them and giving them an opportunity though he was mad as all get out when he first heard it.

So, it says, **Now, if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the harp, the lyre, and the psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good!** "Everything is good." **But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.** "Have another chance to think this over. Maybe you didn't hear." **Then who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?** Well, he had already had encounter with Daniel and heard of this God, so this here, he's putting it all to the test unwittingly, unknowingly.

Verse 16. I love this response. This can be applied to so many things in our life. You just do it because it's right regardless of whether God helps you or not. If it's time to stand on your own to see what you're going to do and God pulls back to give you that opportunity and doesn't give you inspiration or help or encouragement through His holy spirit because it's up to you, what are you determined by this time in your growth and development, what are you going to do? Where is your conviction at this time? We have those kinds of things that happen in life.

So, they said **...we have no need concerning this matter to answer you.** Sometimes people are just, especially against authority like that, that would even be worse for some people. But we just do it sometimes because of people we know and have been in fellowship together, whatever, and we're not willing to take a stand.

We have no need concerning this matter to answer you. So, a matter of standing firm, standing fast, fully committed, convicted, not budging from their position one iota. **If that is the case,** if this happens... "Because we're not going to bow down." That's basically what they're saying. "And if you throw us in the furnace," **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,** knowing that God has all power. He is God. He is God! **...and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not...** So, **He has this power to deliver us,** that's what they're saying, **from your hand, but if not, if not now, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods.**

That took a lot. It's hard for us to really grasp how much that took. It really is. To do something like that. Because you know that very likely, and if God doesn't intervene - we know that God has that power - but if it's for some other purpose, so be it. If you're serving God and He chooses because He is God not to intervene for you at that moment you look to the future.

But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up. Incredible, incredible, incredible, that kind of tenacity, that kind of strength, that kind of purpose to stand up for what is true, for what is right, to be willing to speak out regardless of how you might be seen because you're putting it

all on the line. And whenever anyone does anything and if we don't speak out, what a horrifying thing, but to put it out there because we believe what God says we should do?

I marvel at this sometimes, how this is one, something that is taught over and over and over again throughout the years, throughout the Church eras, of going to a brother alone, of speaking out, of going to the ministry if they don't hear. And yet as a whole people don't take the first step. That's been my experience, that people will not do that! The vast majority in God's Church don't, have not done that in times past, and still don't do it. For shame.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heated the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. I'm not sure how you accomplish that but that's what he told them to do, and so they put the fuel accordingly in there with that, in the burning.

And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So, they were there, these primary people protecting the king, of stature, were told to take care of this. ...and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, trousers, hats, and all their garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Therefore, because the king's command was quickly, with the furnace exceedingly hot... So, he wasn't really patient about this. He wants this done now. Make it hot quickly! ...the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It was so hot that as they were taking them up there it killed them, flames got them, the heat got them. Incredible.

So those three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then king Nebuchadnezzar was alarmed; and he rose in quickly and spoke, saying to his counselors. It just gives me chills. Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? And they answered and said to the king, True, O king. Look! he answered, I see four men loose. He saw four figures loose walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like a son of God.

So, the only thing we might be able to grasp from some of this is that God allowed the one who was there, the angelic being to have a radiance about him which oftentimes happened that was brighter than what was in the fire itself. And so, that majesty, that glory that God allowed sometimes for us as human beings to see in the physical plane was, something was happening here where someone stood out more than the other three.

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came out from the midst of the fire. Then the governors, magistrates, rulers and counselors of the king gathered together, and they saw

these men on whose bodies the fire had no power. Nothing in their clothing, not even the smell of smoke, as it goes on to talk about. **And their hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.** Incredible.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His angel and delivered His servants (sent His messenger, whatever here, angel), and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have altered the king's word. You reckon? It's like, because back in those times nothing... When they spoke it was law. That's the way it was seen. Anything spoken was commanded, it had to be done, period. And here he's saying, no one did this, but what happened to these three men altered what I have said was to be done. It's changed. No one has the power to do that but the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It's basically what he's saying.

So again, as it says here, speaking of them, **Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have altered the king's word and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!** Beautiful. Awesome.

Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces and their houses shall be made a heap of ash, because there is no other God who can deliver like this. Absolute true. He saw something, he witnessed something, what could you say? So, he spoke what was true though he didn't fully believe it all.

Then the king promoted... So, the others who wanted their place? Now they're actually going to receive more. **And the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.**

Incredible stories throughout the Old Testament of things we're to learn from, of things we're to look at and see of something that they did on a physical plane in incredible ways and God's working with their life and blessing them and so forth. And then to see the spiritual part of that and how we are to live our lives and our response to various things that are not on a physical plane of the magnitude that these were, but we're to learn from them and to realize that this is the kind of mind that we're to have in the Church toward God on a spiritual plane toward the Body of Christ.

So, do we want that kind of mind, the kind of heart and mind of Phinehas, the kind of heart and mind of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that regardless of anyone else around us, no matter what it is, and we know the power of God, and regardless of whether God give us favor or help we're going to do what is right, we're going to speak what is right, we're going to let the chips fall where they may, and we're going to have the guts, if you will, the determination to do so regardless of anyone else because we don't care what others think. We care what God Almighty thinks, what God Almighty says, and we want to yield to that. We don't care what others might think around us, we just seek to do what is right.

And if we find out and think about it later that “I could have done it a little bit...” we pray to God about that to help us to do better if there is a next time. But a willingness to do it is what it’s all about, to stand firm for God. And within the Body that means to stand firm for God’s Church. That’s standing firm for God.

Hebrews 11:24. Example after example after example of things we want to emulate on a spiritual plane in our lives in every way. **By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.** So again here, had it all as far as Egypt was concerned, as far as prominence, as far as recognition, as far as being taken care of, pampered, and everything else in life, wealth that was before him. Awesome. So important a mindset.

...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. So, in other words, “I am an Israelite,” and he didn’t care, basically, what others thought. Refused to be called, refused to bear, to carry this matter of what he could have, of Pharaoh’s daughter, the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.

So, this is what was reflected in his life and by his choices, of things that he did, **choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.** You can’t help but think about it when you read something like this, the vast majority of people ever called did not do this. They preferred rather to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin. It’s not going to last. What you think you have, what you think that you want to hold on to, what you think is valuable to you, if it interferes with living God’s way of life, of standing firm for God’s truth and God’s word and God’s Church, I don’t care what it is.

And we should be dumbfounded by this. “Many have been called, and few,” few, few, few, “have been chosen,” where God says, “Now I know you.” Because the vast majority turned their back from God and went away from God for the pleasures of sin, for a short time. You realize the vast majority of those people who did that over the past 2,000 years they’re all dead. They’re all dead and they’re not going to be in the first resurrection. There may be some who won’t be later on either. That’s in God’s judgment depending on what they’ve done to the spirit in their mind where they became set in something different.

...esteeming the reproach of Christ. What’s that about? They had enough, enough knowledge of their background, of history, of things that had taken place. It’s about the Messiah that he came into knowledge of. It was revealed to him as time went along because it’s about the Messiah. He made those choices about promises that have been given as he travelled and made his choices. Went into the wilderness for forty years and there are things that he learned that he didn’t know.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ.” Having to do with Messiah, because in the old Testament especially, God brought the people He worked with to come to that point where they understood there were these promises. And the promise of the seed is the greatest - about Christ.

...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he, it says, “had respect.” ...for he looked unto, “to look away from all else as an object, is what this word signifies. He was committed, he fully set his ground in this. ...for he looked unto the reward, which has to do with the wages, the payment for work.

Now, we’re not saved by that but it’s a part of our life. We have to work to hold on to God’s way of life. We have to work to draw close to God Almighty. We have to work to fight against this nature. We have to work. We have to put thought and planning and effort into resisting things of this world. We have to work to obey God Almighty, but we look to God for His help, His holy spirit to inspire us, to bless us to be able to deal with that even more so on a spirit plane, to have the ability to follow through in mind, to combat and fight those things and look to Him for that help because we know we can’t do it of ourselves. We have to have that help, but we have to be engaged in the battle.

It’s just like the walls coming down. Walking around Jericho, they had work to do. God did it, He brought them down, but they had to be engaged in it. And then the seventh time the horns and the shouting—and God told them to be quiet until that time—and then all of a sudden that tremendous uproar and God brought the walls down. They had to be a part of it.

That’s the way of life for God’s people. We have to engage in it, but He is the one that brings it all to pass. It’s by His great power. And yet we have to work. And there’s reward in that. It’s just God’s way, benefit, blessings. We don’t do it for the sake of the reward alone. That’s not what it’s about. We want what He says we can have that He’s offering us. We want to be a part of His Family.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. Neither did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Took a stand. Whatever it is in our lives, we have to have that mindset, that willingness to take a stand. In the Church of God, to take a stand. And when something is being said that comes out of the mouth that is against what we teach not to say, “Well, probably going to have to go to my brother alone. I don’t know, should I? Should I call the ministry? That’d be a lot easier.”

Those things happen all the time rather than taking it ourselves and standing up and doing something ourselves from the very beginning. It’s easier, “That’s what they’re supposed to do. I don’t think that’s my job.”

I don’t know how many times I’ve heard that in times past over the ages through Philadelphia and on. “It’s the job of the ministry.” Yeah, and by the time we heard about it, they’re so far gone, they’re so far deep in what they’re doing they don’t turn around. It’s too late! That’s been my experience. The vast majority, by the time it gets to the minister it’s like, you mean this...

I can’t believe it, not too long ago gave a sermon and afterwards people were coming up to me and talking to me about various things. It’s like, things that were going on for two years! Why

am I in the dark? Why don't I know about any of this? What is going on? Two years later I hear? What did you do back then?

Like a deer in the headlights. Nothing. Nothing. Slap me silly; wake me up. Wake somebody up! These are not small things that I'm talking about! These are the things that define us! These are the things that determine whether God can work with us! These are the things that show whether we're following God, obeying God, seeking His way of life and loving His family. It shouldn't be any plainer. It should be incredibly plain. But it doesn't get any easier than that. You think, simple steps. But why don't we take them? Why don't we do them?

Blows my mind how often and how willing people are to talk against decisions in the Church. It's not specific doctrine. It used to be about doctrine more than anything else because it was easier for people to use the excuse of doctrine and find something they thought was wrong doctrinally to go at Herbert Armstrong or whatever. And then through time that's not what it's about. There is something else in there, something more. And then as time went on people were able to speak out more against individuals.

We all have our part. We're a part of a Body. The body should be all engaged in nourishing itself. If my leg quits pumping blood because "I'm tired of doing this," the arteries say, "I'm squeezing up because I'm sick and tired of this going through me all the time and feeding the toes who are not appreciative." (I'm sorry.) But it's like that kind of a nonsense, that kind of ridiculousness. We are a body, we nurture one another. Scriptures are really clear about that. We need each other. It talks that way in very clear terms, to edify one another in love. What does that mean? Exactly what I'm talking about.

...he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured. The Greek word means, "was steadfast." Steadfast, that's what the Greek word means. Endured, yes, but steadfast, unflinching, willing to battle, whatever it took, not wavering, not backing away.

And this is awkward translation, "as seeing Him who is invisible." That's not what it's saying. **... as he who saw what was unseen.** In other words, what we do. We look forward. It's unseen. It's hope but it's not there yet, but we believe it. We don't see it. We don't see things of the spirit realm, but we believe it. We know it. We're convicted of it.

And so, that's what it's saying about Moses here, "For he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he was steadfast as he saw what was unseen." In other words, that's what his eyes were fixed upon, God. Incredible.

By faith he kept the Passover. Awesome. God told him to do it, told him how to do it, and he did it because he believed God. "This is what we're to do as a people." Regardless what people might think about it. "Hmm, go out on the tenth day and pick out a lamb, kill it on the fourteenth day, put it's blood on the door posts? That's kind of strange. We've never done anything like that before." Human beings can tend to be that way. But by this time they had seen enough. They had enough fear within them because of all they saw happening in Egypt

that they were willing to do it at least. That's what they were motivated by. Not because they believed like Moses did. Not because they were convicted of God's way at all, because they were just carnal people, very physical.

By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. Because of that, passed over them. They were protected.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea even by dry ground. So, people try to come up with physical things of how God did this. It's almost like this thing when I first was called and the stupidity of thinking, "Well, God used evolution because he couldn't...He..." Because I didn't grasp it. God just has the power to create. But people go out and have gone through different places there and trying to prove their point, "Well, this is a high area here and it could have been..." Maybe, we don't know.

But one thing is certain, the waters spread apart, and the winds came through. And it wasn't just the winds that dried it, because that would take a long time. God was in it. But mankind has to have physical things to see and feel as well, so they felt this, and it was dry ground and they went across. And here are walls of water on both sides like... How many times have you ever done that?

Awesome things that God has done with people, really is, to bring us to where we are now on a spiritual plane. It's really quite incredible. But the physical things He's done to work with mankind to a point because it's only progressive revelation, and to live by faith later on in a magnified way. And how we live now is so incredible, what God has given to us.

They passed through the Red Sea by faith, even by dry land, which the Egyptians attempted, but were drowned. So, "They're just they did it, we're going to do it." "Yeah, but what about the water? Moses..." They didn't do that anyway.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By who's faith? By all of the Israelites that were walking around it? No, no, no, no, by the leaders, by the ones who told them this is what we're doing, Joshua. And God revealing now in very powerful ways He began to reveal to Israel through these different things that "I'm working with Joshua now. Moses is not coming. He's dead. Working with Joshua now." So, God did these various things to turn Israel to follow Him as they followed Joshua.

And so, here it talks about here they did this. Joshua, by faith, believed what God was telling him to do. So, He told them how many times to circle and each day, and then finally, the seven times on the last day. And because of that then God performed what He was going to do to give them the city.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down when encircled for seven days. Moved to stand fast in what God gave him to do.

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish. What an incredible thing! And in the lineage? Awesome! Not of the Israelites at all? And yet her prominence was so great because of what she did. God raised her up, gave her favor. Incredible lineage isn't it? **By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.**

Verse 32, goes on to say, **For what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.** So, so many stories. It's the point. So many stories of things we can glean from and learn from and to see the people of God through time and how they stood fast dedicated to God, committed to God, willingness to go through and do anything and everything that was in front of them. That's what I want. That's what we should all want. Whatever it takes, even if it's death, we're in God's hands.

It isn't this temporary life we're trying to save. It isn't this that's going to continue on. This is but for a short time. That's why it talks about they enjoyed, they were able to have, they chose the pleasure of sin for a season. And the point is that season is pretty short because after a while you start getting old, your body starts falling apart.

And you get in conversation with other older people and that's what you share, "My body is falling apart!" You know, when you're younger and you hear people getting older and they "All they talk about are all their aches and pains and the medications and the different surgeries they had, and it's like competition!" "What have you had done?" "Whooo - twice! Twice! Seven bypasses! No more arteries, but I had seven bypasses!" Anyway.

And you think, we die. That's why I think of the sermon we had about made to die, to experience evil; to live evil, because selfishness is evil, and then to die. God's plan. The world hears something like that and it's like... (?) What a beautiful picture God's given us the ability to see it all in a sense, in the sense of a great picture now of all these things He's doing and how He does it. What more could we want or ask?

I mean, what did these people know about God's plan and purpose? What did they know about the 144,000? What did they know about the various things that are going to happen in the Great White Throne? Nothing. What did they know? What did they know about the Millennium? Nothing! Silch. They believed in a Messiah. They believed in the Kingdom of God. They believed in life that would be later on. They believed God.

And I think, and look what we have and we won't speak out to someone who had a stinking, rotten audacity? This has happened too many times of recent time. To let something out of their mouth, like gas but out of the mouth. "Boy, that stinks!" That's the way we should see it! "Don't light a match!" (I'm sorry.) A shameful thing! We should be so repulsed by it. And a willingness to stand up and say, "Wait a minute." Don't be negative... I mean, don't be ugly about it. Don't be harsh and judgmental. Just the reality, the truth is the truth. "Wait a minute. That's not what we just heard. That's not what we're being taught. That's not what we were instructed to do."

“Yeah, but, who is he to tell us we have to do this? To tell us we should have to do something like that on a physical plane, that we might turn into zombies?!” I’m sorry, but I can’t help myself. Because we should see it that ridiculous. That’s how insane it is. It’s a physical thing and a pretty small physical thing in the scheme of things. And if we’re asked to do it as a body for the sake of a Body, for the sake of the community, for the sake of others around us? We can find fault with that if you want but that’s what we were asked to do. It’s like, can’t we be unified in something physical?

It really is very spiritual if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear about God’s love and love toward one another, and unity. We should love unity so much so, oneness, order.

We’re still being refined. Be so happy when we’re on the other side of this. Uh oh, going to be a whole world then of carnal human beings. One thousand years. There’s a lot of work to be done, but it’s going to be different. God’s Kingdom, God’s government ruling, no more oppression as far as government’s concerned. I mean, incredible freedom, beautiful.

One Church. We can’t even begin to grasp the power of that and what it’s going to do to mankind, give to mankind, opportunities and so forth. But still human nature. That will always be a part of our life and we’ll always be learning. But we live at a time right now that is so important in God’s plan because it’s the conclusion of, the fulfillment of 144,000. He’s going to finish it. He’s going to do it.

For what shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. And sometimes we need to stop the mouths of others, who if we’re not careful could become a lion (in the sense of devouring and Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour).

...quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong. That’s a beautiful thing. I love that because we’re weak as human beings. And it’s because of faith, looking to God, keeping our eyes focused on God that we have a little strength, that we’re able to fight and do things, and to a limited degree but to understand always the power and the might comes from Almighty God to forge our way though. So, we’re always looking to God for the help, the strength, the power of His holy spirit to be with us, to work with us.

...out of weakness were made strong. Fully committed to entrusting their life to God. Committed. Standing firm for God’s Kingdom, for what we’re picturing as a part of something that’s taking place at this Feast of Tabernacles, Last Great Day that brings us all into God’s Kingdom.

...became valiant in battle, turned the flight of armies of the foreigners. Women received their dead raised to life again. While others were tortured, not accepting deliverance. Incredible, what people have gone through who have gone before us. A willingness to stand

firm. And some of these very physical but very spiritual because it's about their faith, it's about what they believed. It's about that willingness to not give in, to not flinch, to not turn to the side but to stand one's ground.

...that they might obtain a better resurrection. So, what's first in our life? Is God first? Because then it's the only way everything else can fall into place.

Verse 36—Still others had trial from being mocked and scourged, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tested, and were slain with the sword. But they all stood their ground. Beautiful. They didn't budge from their position.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. That's an awesome thing to understand. Because it's not about the world yet and God calling people in masses out of the world yet, like it'll be in the Millennium and in the Great White Throne. It's different in what we go through in this period of time that we're in at the end of 6,000 years.

The world wasn't worthy because God's working with His people to have part in His plan, and wherever it is within the temple, in the structure of the government. And that's what's important and worthy.

They wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. Yet all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. They died in faith. Awesome.

So, at this Feast season it's very much, again, about, as it is every year, God's Kingdom, God's Kingdom coming to govern, to rule this earth. It's about His family. It's about Elohim. And prayerfully, we're learning to embrace that more fully with all of our being, to be ever so thankful, to rejoice before God for the opportunities that each and every one of us has, and that we're committed, we are determined, more determined than ever to stand fast for God.