

Last Sabbath we were in the Detroit area. For several years now it has been kind of a tradition to have a Thanksgiving meal type potluck thing in some of the areas, in Detroit and in Cincinnati. And generally, Cincinnati is a little closer to the actual Thanksgiving period and Detroit has been a week or two in advance depending on schedules and everything. This year we've squeezed in the Erie area. We're actually in Meadville, but we squeezed in the Erie area.

So, I'm going to make a confession; I'm not a real fan of turkey. I like smoked turkey, which I hear we have today, so we're in great shape there. But for whatever reason I'm not a real fan of it. One year we were going to—this is going back many years now—we were going to have a Thanksgiving meal and I told Laura, "How about if we just have a duck?" I like duck; she likes duck. Anyway, Jeremy said, how can we have Thanksgiving without turkey?" So, we had to have a turkey too. Anyway, that's when he was there.

Anyway, this year we have three in a row, so I think by the time we get through this I'm going to really be tired of turkey. But all the other things, it's good. The pumpkin pie that generally goes with it. A lot of other countries don't know what we're doing. Pumpkin pie, the cranberry, whether it be the type of jell thing or the cranberries, the sweet cranberries, and dressing that goes with the turkey. What else do we have as a traditional dish? Corn, sweet potatoes (oh, another thing I don't like). Anyway, everybody has different likes, so I've expressed mine. Anyway, so we've done that and this year we have three in a row, so that's great!

To be able to be down here is incredible, seeing everyone again here like this in this kind of environment where we have food in the back row and smelling it, especially the smoked turkey. So again, we've generally had this Thanksgiving style potluck, as I mentioned here. We squeezed in this one today. But for other countries I thought I'd mention that they don't know about our tradition here in the States and how it got started so I thought I'd just give a little bit at least.

It's a traditional holiday and has nothing to do with anything religious, in that respect, it's just an observance in the United States that first began with George Washington, evidently. He declared Thanksgiving a holiday. About seventy-five years later Abraham Lincoln did more so in the sense of formalizing it and pronouncing the last Thursday of November to be the official day for observing this holiday that's coming up. So, this coming Thursday here is the traditional holiday of Thanksgiving in the United States.

In thinking about this particular subject of thanksgiving it's quite evident that within the United States it is just a holiday, and the sense of actual thanksgiving escapes a lot of people, truly does, our society, our country, frankly, and the world, especially toward God, if you will for what he has given this nation. They don't even know in large part what God has given this nation and why.

We understand that; God has given us understanding of those things, of why this nation was given what it was, how it was set apart for a very special purpose toward the end of an age to be the single greatest nation the world has ever known leading up to the end-time and return of Christ, the coming of Christ, and to understand that it would be the strongest nation ever as well.

All those things are prophetic and we're at the peak of that, and candidly, at a kind of a decline now because there is another nation that's fast surpassing us. They're not going to be allowed to get to that point fully but it's very, very close, obviously, as what's taking place here, speaking of China because they're surpassing us as far as military is concerned in many different areas.

One thing that finally got the attention of everyone is this hypersonic missile that can carry warheads. As they're acknowledging now, they really didn't think that they could ever get this developed. Well, they've developed it and they've surpassed us and now they're even—news is out there now, I saw a thing that was sent to me, basically they're talking about how that they could have a first strike easily upon the United States without much difficulty if they want to. There's not a thing we could do about it. Totally clean things off across the board.

So, that's the state of the world we live in, and yet it's all prophetic. It's a part of what was supposed to come to pass.

Again, the world and especially the United States doesn't really grasp why and how we have this particular nation, how we have this greatness. We didn't do it. God gave it to us on a platter.

Matter of fact, I can't help but think about it sometimes when I think about the promised land, when the children of Israel came into the promised land, if you've ever visited the area of that area of the world, Israel. Seventy miles long, basically, and forty miles wide. It's really small. It's not very large. I may have the miles off but I'm pretty close as far as the width, I think. But the bottom half is the Negev desert, or the bottom third maybe, and you get up closer around Jerusalem and it's not like this area of Pennsylvania. You don't see trees like we do here and have the kind of rain and the moisture we have here. There's a lot of rock, a lot of rock all over the place, and yet it was a promised land.

It was the best of the land, in many respects, in that region of the world at that time. They were able to plant and do things on it that they weren't able to in other parts. Because, I mean, look at Egypt where they'd been brought out of there, the southern part of Israel if you look toward Jordan and some of those areas, not too nice. You look farther north, not so nice.

Yet this country, incredible what's here, the vast wealth...and just waiting. Anyway, it's incredible when you start thinking about some of those things.

So again, as far as giving thanks to God and having a mind of thanksgiving, it's getting weaker and weaker, and a sense of real truth and genuineness connected with thanksgiving, it really just doesn't exist.

So, today we're going to begin a new series entitled *True Thanksgiving* with this being *Part 1*.

We live in a world today where being thankful and expressing it is going more and more by the wayside. People just aren't thankful, as a whole. They don't think that way. There's not as much gratitude and thankfulness for things, though there's lip service sometimes.

So, the spirit of mankind has been turning toward a more haughty and pride filled spirit, especially within this country, that's tended to lead to a greater unthankfulness and selfishness. They work together. The more selfish people become the more inward people become, and because of technology people are turning more and more inward. A younger generation is turning horribly inward. They're trapped, and so is an older generation getting more and more trapped with this kind of technology that's out there and the kind of, the different ways of communicating now. It's not a pretty thing that's taking place, it really isn't, and what it does to us is not good. But in the long run it really destroys the spirit of thankfulness, something we really have to have in human life. In family, to have strong family, these things have to exist. If they're not there it makes everything much harder, much more difficult.

So, in thinking about this subject I often think of the account where Joshua addressed this attitude and spirit (and I think that's where we need to begin today), that's so deeply entrenched in the human spirit today. It's getting worse and worse very rapidly so.

Luke 17:11—Now, it came to pass that as he went to Jerusalem he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as he entered a certain village, and there, it says, met him ten men who were lepers who were keeping their distance. And they raised up their voices and said, Joshua, Master, have mercy on us. So when he saw them he said to them, Go... It's all he said, Go show yourselves to the priests. So it was that they went that they were cleansed.

Incredible! So, they did it. They were crying out to him and then as they turned and were leaving to go they were healed. Incredible.

Verse 15—Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed returned and with a loud voice glorified God. Can you imagine having something like this that's been with you for a long period of time and so obvious to others around you? And they kept their distance because they were, you know, you'd basically be shunned by others, of keeping their distance, so they kept their distance. That was just what was expected and that's the way they were adjusted or lived, had lived. Anyway, to give thanks to God, one individual out of the ten. Incredible.

It says here, **and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.** So, just the one came back giving him thanks, thanking him for what was done. It says, **And he was a Samaritan.** I mean, it's quite an incredible story. You would think that amongst those who were of Jewish background that certainly there would be more who would have that attitude of gratitude and thankfulness for being healed of something that had been with them for so long. It's almost hard to imagine that the others didn't have an attitude and a spirit of some kind of gratitude.

Here, of all the people, one who was a Samaritan is the one that turned around, came back, with a loud voice thanked God, and as it talks about here, fell down at his feet. Again, still thanking him. I'm sure saying it over and over again. I can't imagine what that would be like.

So, Joshua answered and said, Were there not ten who were cleansed? So, where are the other nine? There are not any found who have returned to give glory to God except this foreigner. So again, someone who wasn't a part of Judah, this foreigner. He was one who was thankful for what had taken place.

So, as I'm talking about some of this I can't help but think about the world today and think about society. You would certainly expect that amongst something like this happening to this magnitude, of being healed, but in other things in life you don't see it in society very much. Even sometimes within the Church I'm bowled over by people who aren't thankful. They don't express it. They receive certain help; they receive certain things, and they don't express gratitude for what has happened.

We have to be so careful. This world rubs off on us, it really does, and the farther we go into this period of time that we're in the worse it's getting, this attitude and this spirit. Because it's an automatic thing of turning inward, of becoming more and more selfish.

With technology we're becoming more and more selfish, we really are. We're turning inward. It's having an effect upon God's people too. It's a spirit that we can't afford to have because it rubs off.

You know, I can't help but think of another thing where it says, "He who is faithful in little is faithful in much." If you look at that in the sense of if we're not thankful for smaller things that happen in our life, or little things in our life, really, when it's all said and done, how thankful are we to God? How thankful are we for the things that God has given to us? Because the reality is if we don't think this way in the first place in smaller things what about the things that are far more important? And it definitely fits.

It's good at a time like this, especially in this country, and for others to think about the story of what we've talked about here, about this being a period of time in this country of Thanksgiving as a holiday, and realizing we all need to be on guard and looking at ourselves and saying, "How thankful am I for the things of life? How thankful am I for the relationships that I'm able to have? The friendships? And on and on it goes. Because there really is no end to thankfulness and gratitude of things in life. There really isn't.

It's good to look at and think about the words that describe a hideous spirit of selfishness, which is at the other extreme of all this when you think about thankfulness, sincere thankfulness and true gratitude, true thankfulness. Then you think of the opposite side. Because clear at the other end is this horrible spirit of selfishness and it produces ingratitude. It's just the way it works.

So, to look at that in our lives, it's wise to do it and say, "Where am I in the scheme of things, in the scheme of selfishness and coming away from self, getting away from self and moving more toward thankfulness and gratitude?" Because there is a difference, there really is.

The "me" generation. That's what we're turning into more and more, the "me" generation that reeks more and more with an entitlement mentality sweeping this country. It's really sweeping throughout the world,

but it's really hit this country in a very powerful way. It's something we need to see because you need to fight against it.

This thing of ingratitude: thoughtless or thoughtlessness. In other words, there's something we're not thinking about. Things that we receive, we're not thinking about it. Why not? There's that thing of selfishness there is why not. The more selfish we are the less we're going to notice and grasp those things or see those things in our life, and instead, a very dangerous mentality begins to enter in that's really sick.

Being inconsiderate. You think, well, what's that have to do with ingratitude? Well, it's a matter of consideration, it's a matter of, again, it's a thinking. You have to think about it. Inconsiderate has something to do with the thinking. Being inconsiderate, callousness. There's callousness in ingratitude, a lack of thankfulness. It's like the heart becoming more hardened, callous to others around us, callous to suffering around us, a lack of empathy and care and concern and not grasping when things come our way that are a benefit and a blessing.

Boorishness. You have to think about some of these things. I'm just tossing them out there.

Becoming bored. Why? Not grasping what we have. It's all around us. We're wanting something else. Selfish. Something else. "I need something else. I want something more! I'm not getting enough!" Not grasping what they have.

Disloyalty, unappreciative, self-centered. All selfishness. Careless, rude. We live in a world where people are more and more rude than ever before. Why? Because they're wrapped up in their little bubble, their world. They don't care about others. We have to be careful that doesn't affect us. Because the more we think that way the less ability we have, the less there is in our mind of being able to have a true spirit of thankfulness – especially toward God. But even if we're not practicing it in other areas of our life in smaller ways, we're not doing it toward God. Take that to the bank!

Unmindful. It's not in the mind. It's just not thinking about it. It goes back to this, what are we thinking about? How do we see things around us? How are we looking at this world around us, whether it be family, whether it be what we have, too often in life we're looking at what we don't have, what we want, what "I" need. "I need this!" "I want that!"

I also found it interesting when I was reading a quote about the mindset of entitlement that goes along with this, where this "me" thinking exists and is getting stronger and stronger. This that even surpasses this sick spirit of unthankfulness and ingratitude.

This is from a medical source. I want to read this, "Entitlement," it says, "is a narcissistic personality trait." Interesting. "It's not known exactly how this mentality develops." Well, it's because they don't understand God's way of life. It's because they don't have God's spirit. Where does it come from? This is what we're talking about.

There is a reason why it develops. There is a reason why this world is going the way it is. There is a reason why society is turning the way it is more and more because of an age of technology that we live in. It's speeding up. It's getting faster. It's getting worse.

Going on then I want to read some other quotes. "Someone with this attitude believes the world owes them and that other people are responsible for making their lives better," and we're not getting what we want. Maybe parents owe us more. Maybe they owe us more. Maybe grandparents. Maybe friends. Maybe...? What are we not getting that we're bored, that we're not happy with where we are and what we have? What's going on in the mind? It's dangerous, it really is, the movement in that direction.

So again, so often this begins with feeling parents owe more and often it's manifested in believing that employers owe us more. And where does it end? It's just we're owed more. We're not getting our share. We're not getting enough.

Another definition: "Self-entitlement is when an individual perceives themselves as deserving of unearned privileges." What's owed to us? Then the mentality of working and building and creating and constructing and the joy and the excitement of those things begins to escape us. The ability to find reward and gratitude and thankfulness in those things that we do have, that we're able to do begins to escape us.

So again, "Self-entitlement is when an individual perceives themselves as deserving of unearned privileges. These are people who believe life owes them something, a reward, a measure of success, a particular standard of living." I don't know. I don't want to go there. But it exists today. It's like, "We've got to have what others have right away!" Life doesn't work like that and because of credit and everything else it's amazing what we're able to do as human beings now.

So, the concept of work even enters in here. God created us to work. God created us to be able to produce and there is enjoyment in that. But it's being lost in the world today because they don't, because people don't think that way.

If we who are in God's Church aren't careful, if we're not on guard as we constantly need to be, we can begin to take these things we have been given that are all around us for granted (we truly do), and we miss out on so much because this is where the joy and the fullness of life comes from. That's why people become bored. They're not having joy and fullness of life. Something's happened in the mind, the thinking, and it goes back to this in such a powerful way.

Another thing here – taking for granted. Just looking at the words, the expression: "Fail to properly appreciate, recognize someone or something." It's what it means to take something for granted: "To fail to properly appreciate."

I hope we can all grasp this a little bit at least, and hopefully a lot, what we're robbing ourselves of. Joy! Happiness! There is joy and happiness, fulfillment that comes from this mentality of being able to understand what it means to be thankful, what it means to accomplish and produce and have the things of life, and to recognize what God has given to us and what family has sacrificed to give to us, and on and on

it goes, and what others sacrifice and do to give to us, what an employer has done in sacrifice and built in order to give to us.

Yeah, a lot of it, obviously, in this world revolves around corporations getting bigger and bigger and bigger and so forth. But thankful that some and so many went out there and forged the way to make some of these things possible.

So, are we like that? Do we have some of those things in us that need to be addressed and we need to look at in our lives concerning God, concerning how we think toward Christ, toward the Body of Christ? Because I know there's a lot lacking in our lives still concerning the Body of Christ, this thing of understanding the thing of seeing what God has given us, a family and what that means to God, what that means to Christ. Truth that we've been given. We can begin to take things for granted.

See, that's the real danger. I have seen this ever since I've been in the Church. So often when people begin to go astray it's because they've begun to take things for granted, that they've begun to have this mindset that, again, takes others for granted. I don't want to get ahead of myself here. There are some things I want to bring out later on.

So, let's go and look at the Levitical system. This is a good place to start because it teaches a lot. There is one particular type of sacrifice we're going to zero in on and to see how it was given to the Israelites and what we can learn from this process and then bring it more and more up to our time now, especially within the Church. I'm speaking in those terms of what we're to see on a spiritual plane.

In the Levitical sacrificial system of offerings there are a couple that, again, would be good to consider because they help set the stage on a physical plane (because that's all physical) of those things that we need to come to grasp and to see more fully and appreciate more fully on a spiritual plane, because this is what it's about, learning to appreciate.

As I'm going through this I can't help but think about this, our lack of ability to appreciate things. We don't understand how we rob ourselves of real fullness of life when we don't think that way. Not appreciating others, not appreciating things around us.

That's why people become bored with life. They don't appreciate what they have! You think, what's wrong with you? What is it you want more? Look what people do in the world. Look what they go to, to try to find something that they feel like they're missing in order to stir up something that is lacking in them. Horrible!

Well, there are different categories of offerings but within one type, the peace offering, there is that which is specific that is referred to as the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Now, we're going to talk about the peace offering, and it's made up of other things, but within it is this which is referred to as the sacrifice of thanksgiving. This is a matter of seeking peace before God through fellowship with Him, if you will, in thanksgiving.

It's a matter of how they were being taught on a physical plane to think, to regard things around them in their community, in their nation, in what God had delivered and given to them, and the freedom He gave them in coming out of Egypt, and all the history that goes with it.

Let's notice here, turning over to **Leviticus 7:11—This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offering.** It's the "sacrifice of peace offering." ...**which he shall offer to the Eternal. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer...** So again here, it's a matter of thanksgiving. It's a peace offering but with this mindset of thanksgiving.

If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving... Now, it's incredible how it states this, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving." What does that mean, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving?" Well, they're sacrificing an animal. They are seeking to have this mind, a peace, because of their life and they see things in their life that if they want to have a relationship or within the community at least, a thinking toward God, that they're moved by this on a physical plane. Not a spiritual one. It's strictly something they did as a physical people in a physical process here. But this helps to guide the thinking in a certain way.

Now, we're the ones to learn from this because they didn't get very far with it. Didn't last very long. Didn't produce a whole lot. But it is for us. So, when you think about thanksgiving you need to think about sacrifice because it goes with it. You need to know what you're sacrificing. Self.

If you want to learn to be thankful, if you want to learn to be more fulfilled in life, if you want to have greater joy in life, greater satisfaction in life, the mind has to change toward thinking in a right way. It has everything to do with gratitude and thankfulness. Because it's selfishness that keeps us from being thankful, to where we don't think about others or things around us and what we have. Instead, something hideous begins to happen where we begin to expect things from others and there is no appreciation, there's no thankfulness, there's no gratitude.

And parents, you have to teach your children to have gratitude. Parents, you have a responsibility before God to teach them about being thankful. Think about that. It's a great responsibility that a parent has, to try to work with young people as they grow up, to teach them to be thankful, to think about that in powerful terms, truly.

Just like it comes with God's way of life. It isn't just something of osmosis, as somehow by coming to Sabbath services and by children listening or whatever, that they're going to soak it up and "Oh, I love this!" No, it's tough as a child, you know, sitting around for an hour and a half, or sometimes it's been longer. Because it's a very physical thing, it isn't something that one just laps up and "I'm looking forward to that, sitting there for an hour and a half and listening to him talk." That's not that exciting on a physical plane. That's where parents come in.

And so, you have your part to do throughout the week in helping gear children towards their thinking about God. How many know some basic things about God? How many know certain stories in the Old Testament about God? About Jonah? Incredible stories that are back there. You can just start going

through different stories of the Old Testament; they're all there for incredible purpose and design for us in the Church, but also for children. Incredible! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Daniel and the lion's den.

You talk about getting someone's attention. A real young child will lap those up. Those are exciting. To talk about God's law? What are the 10 Commandments? Well, you've got to learn them. You really need to know them. What's wrong with that, teaching something like that? It's good! Out of that can grow thankfulness. You have to think about that, and you have to pray about that, truly. It's a mindset. It doesn't just happen by osmosis.

So, going on. "A sacrifice of thanksgiving." **...with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil.** We should understand what that's about. So, if you really want to be thankful toward God, if we really want to think right toward God and have true thanksgiving as a part of our thinking in our lives – because I believe this with all my being, that we want to have a heart of David, as we heard that sermon. Who doesn't want to have a heart like David toward God? One after God's own heart? I mean, we'd be nuts not to think that way. If anybody told me that there was someone perhaps in the Church who didn't think that way I'd think, "Surely, you're wrong!" So, I feel that surely we have that and other areas as well, of a mind that we want to have toward God, to be pleasing toward God.

So again, **unleavened cakes mingled with oil.** Well, what are unleavened cakes? Well, they're without leavening. Well, we know what that is. So, we know that which we need to give toward God is we want to be unleavened. We have to work at that. It doesn't just happen. Again here, it reminds us of the importance of offering. If we're going to offer it's going to be a sacrifice, and you have to sacrifice self to be without sin, to fight sin, to fight against the pulls and "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." You have to fight against your own selfishness.

What's amazing is out of that you can grow in gratitude and thankfulness in a really strong relationship with God, one that's filled with happiness, of fullness and excitement, truly. How can anyone be excited about God and God's word and God's way of life if they don't see these things to be thankful about?

"Mixed with oil." So, I love that. You can't have that which is unleavened unless it's mixed with God's spirit. If we really believe that then we know we have to cry out to God more in our lives asking for His spirit to live and dwell within us. We want, we need God's spirit if we're going to be unleavened. It goes back to this that to have thanksgiving there's a sacrifice, that thing of selfishness.

...unleavened wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil. Besides the cakes as his offering he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering. So again here, we know what it means with that which is unleavened. We understand what it means with that which is leaven. Again, this mind of a desire to sacrifice, to get rid of the sin in our life. It takes work in order to have this mindset.

Going on let's back up a little bit. **Leviticus 3:1—When one's offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers of the herd; whether male or female, the offering shall be without blemish before the Eternal.** So again here, there are so many things here one can be reminded of, thinking about how we're able to have

a right relationship with God, is because of Christ who was without blemish. But we're to become that way as well. We don't want to have this in our life. We don't want to have the blemishes in the sense of, again, talking about sin.

It says here, "the offering shall be without blemish before the Eternal." So, we want to please God. We want to be someone after God's own heart. It doesn't just happen. We have to pray about it. We have to think about it because that stirs us up then to see the things that we need to change in our life. Without thinking about it, what do we change, what are we going to address, how can we do it?

It says, **he shall lay his hand on the herd of his offering and kill it at the door of the tabernacle.** So, this is where people even then in this case who offered something of this type, of a thanksgiving, it was of theirs to be given and they were involved in the killing of the animal. It says here they are to offer it.

It wasn't something that was just given off to the Levites, all the different kinds of offerings. Here is one that a person is involved with. **He shall lay his hand on the herd of his offering,** whatever it is, whether it be a lamb, a goat, whatever, **and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around upon the altar. Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of peace offering an offering made by fire,** in other words, as a burnt offering, **an offering made by fire.**

So again here, these things, they're simple for us. They should be simple. We talk about this on Holy Days when it goes through in talking about an offering made by fire that's to be given before God. We understand what that means, fire. There is that which we have to go through to change. It's not meant to be easy. It's meant that we have hardships. It's meant that things be difficult. That's how we learn. That's how we grow. There is resistance, there is a battle, there are choices to be made in that process of becoming something different.

We understand trials are very much a part of life. Think about the trials you've had since the Feast. Has anyone not had trials? Hardships? Some kind of difficult things you've had to go through? You'd be very unique if you didn't have something going on, something that's hard, gut wrenching at times.

...an offering made by fire to the Eternal, the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove. Again here, it's talking about these parts here that were offered as a burnt offering. It's a part of the sacrifice. There are different parts of the sacrifice and what was done with them and that which was offered as a burnt offering, other things that they were able to partake of themselves.

It goes on to say, **verse 5—Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar with the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood that is on the fire as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma, sweet savour to the Eternal.** We understand the things of the incense that were thrown on a fire and offered up before God, the smell, the aroma, those things that we grasp and comprehend because of other scriptures that make it very clear this is about our prayers. This is symbolic of our prayers before God, that they are, if it's done in a genuine

spirit and desire to draw closer to God and we're praying about the things that we need as far as our lives are concerned that's something that goes up before God as something very pleasant to Him.

He loves it when His people look to Him, pray to Him, desire a relationship, fellowship with Him, who are consistent day-by-day-by-day-by-day praying to Him. That's what the incense is about, that aroma.

Well, so is this. It says here, again, that even in the offering something else is pleasing to God. It's not just a matter of the prayers that's pleasing to God, He's pleased when He sees the sacrifice in our life, what we're doing, and going through the trials that we're going through and doing so by focusing upon and keeping our eyes on God and looking to God to help us through those things, to see what it is we can learn, to see where we can grow.

So again here, talking about this offering made by fire, "a sweet aroma to the Eternal." We shouldn't lose sight of these things and what they mean. God loves us. What an incredible thing to grasp, to understand why we've been called. The fact that we've been called! How awesome is that? How many have been given such opportunity in 6,000 years? Well, that's something that people have to become convicted of. The more you become convicted of it the more thankful you can be, the more thankful you can become. The more you see these things, think about these things, pray about these things, and to understand. Because that's something that you grow in, to understand the calling you have and how few have ever had it.

How few out of the tens of thousands who were scattered out here after the Apostasy, we have those who came through it. How grateful are we for that? There's one scripture I can't help but think of fully, 100%. It's like the branding iron that was plucked out of the fire, otherwise, we'd all been there. That's where the majority went and haven't been plucked out. But so many of us have been.

Then those who since that time because of their faithfulness have had the ability because of their faithfulness, that there is that which enabled an ability of communication that went out that others were able to come in contact, that God drew and called to His Church.

How thankful are we for those things that take place in our life? Again, our calling. To understand the love of God to have such a thing right now, that He's giving that love to us. He's not giving it to the world. He wants to. He plans to. But in His time. Some that will go on into the Millennium and then that which is in the Great White Throne, billions and billions and billions, but in God's time because something is being worked out in all these phases. How thankful are we?

The more we see it, the more we believe it, the more we're convicted of it, the greater the gratitude should be. I don't know how anyone could go a day without thanking God. How could we do that? For something, for some things, to thank God. There is no end. If you started writing it down and started, where do you end? It'd be very long. But that isn't what God wants. He's not expecting us to spend hours and hours and hours just repeating or going over. But there are different things in our life that should strike us every day of something to focus upon to thank God.

It's a matter of thinking, it's a matter of thinking about those things because if we don't think about them it doesn't happen. That's why I gave the definitions I did earlier that you might want to look at again later on and think about because it's because people don't think about them that it doesn't happen. You have to conscientiously stop and think about it. That's what God wants, and if we don't we just turn more and more inward, farther and farther away.

We've had thousands and thousands of people just quit, give up, and leave. They became bored. They wanted something else. Maybe something material so money became more important, to use it someplace else, on a new car, a new house, a new place to live, new things we want to have so quit tithing, quit sending God, giving God offerings on the Holy Days.

Because we get bored. We want something else. Something else becomes more important to us. Why? Because we're not thinking about what God's given to us. You have to think about it day by day. What do we have? This relationship that we have, how grateful are we? If we don't think about it then we just turn inward and become more selfish.

People begin to cheat, rob God. It's mind-boggling! Or begin to be drawn to, generally what happens next or the next big thing, and sometimes it's been first and sometimes it's second. So, sometimes robbing comes first and sometimes this is sex. Someone else that you get drawn to and that becomes more important and it's like, "My life will end if I don't have this right now." Trust me, it won't end, not right now as a whole. There's time. God's given us time and things in His time and things to be done the right way. Then they'll be more meaningful and there'll be more gratitude and thankfulness, more enjoyment of life, more fullness of life.

But if we take to ourselves, if we're selfish, you know what? You won't have the joy that you think you will. If you don't do it God's way you rob yourself of doing it the right way, of what God says. Doing it His way, that's where the gratitude, the joy, the thankfulness comes from. I mean, they fuel each other! Yet the human mind can't even see that. It's so simple.

So, how happy are we? How much joy do we have in our thinking about God and God's Church and God's Family and God's calling? We need that because we live in a world that's pretty tough. I get in the car, vehicle, and I have a hard time having joy, happiness. There are battles in this world around us. There is so much ingratitude around us. People don't think about each other. It causes me to grit my teeth often, more than I probably should, but for sure, because that's not healthy either.

This whole process of the sacrificial system, we're to learn from these things what they mean. A sacrifice is a sacrifice; you have to give something. Gratitude doesn't just happen. Thankfulness doesn't just happen. Enjoyment and fullness of life doesn't just happen. They're done a certain way, and it comes from the mind in how we think about everything around us. One of the greatest of things is to learn to be thankful, to learn to be grateful.

We're talking about a sacrifice, this aroma that comes up before God. The more we grasp how God thinks about us, thinks toward us, what's pleasing to Him, the more we should want that, the more we should

want to have that kind of thinking in our mind, of what it means to have such sacrifice before God that's sweet smelling to Him.

I have to finish this in **Leviticus 22:29—When you will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Eternal, offer it at your own will.** What's that mean? Well, God wants it to be from in us. So, if we choose to do the things we need to do in life, the thankfulness, it's what we have to decide to do ourselves. No one is going to help you to become thankful. No one is going to help you to want to fight the battles we have to fight. It's something that you have to decide and want yourself. You have to determine that you're going to sacrifice. So, how much do we want to sacrifice before God of ourselves?

Leviticus 22:29—When you shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Eternal, offer it at your own will. So again, another point here about this kind of sacrifice that's pleasing to God. If we're going to have true thanksgiving, and that's what this sermon series is entitled, *True Thanksgiving*, if you're going to have that before God you have to sacrifice. You have to sacrifice things in your thinking and how you think, of things that pull you away.

Verse 30—On the same day it shall be eaten up, and you shall leave none of it until the next day. What's the point of all that? What are we to learn from that? He says, **I am the Eternal.** So they went, an individual went, offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving before God on that day, and God says eat it that day. All to be taken care of and burnt, leave nothing. That's just one day.

You are to be thankful to God every day. Something you have to do every day in your thinking. As much as prayer life is with God. It doesn't just happen; you've got to make it happen. You've got to think about it. There are times you cry out to God for help to think about certain things, and this is one of them. Thanksgiving should be a part of your prayers. Whatever it is we have to sacrifice, whatever it is we need to give up to do the right thing, so be it.

Therefore, you shall keep My commandments and do them. It goes with it. Coming out of sin, sacrifice, do it God's way, not our way. Our way is wrong. Are we willing to do that every day, fight the fight? It goes along with being thankful to God. Sacrifice. What is it we have to give up that we think we have to have that disagrees with God?

Again, He says, **I am the Eternal. You shall not profane My holy name.** That should mean a whole lot to us. We who are baptized carry God, His name in us. We're begotten of God, His spirit. We carry the name as a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. So again here, that has to be in our thinking, to realize what that means, to be thankful for that, and on the other hand, to make certain, to strive not to bring any shame to that name, to God's name, to profane His name, to take His name in vain. That's what it's about.

You know, in the physical world around us when you talk about the commandments and taking God's name in vain, basically, it's a matter of cursing and curse words and using God's name in vain. Yeah, for us it goes way, way, way, way, way, way, way, way beyond that. Because that should happen the day we come into God's Church – never again taking God's name in vain. That was my life growing up. It's all I heard around me. I probably couldn't do a sentence without taking God's name in vain. It's the way I grew up. It's

the way the community was around me. Today they go off to other things now. Anyway. It's out there in the world. It's just a part of the society.

So, that's not a hard thing when we're called and we see what God's placed before us, to stop doing that kind of thing, to quit instantly. At least it shouldn't be hard. We come to understand as we grow that this goes far, far deeper. It's how we live our lives, that we don't want to bring shame and dishonor to God's name, to the Church of God, to the Body of Christ.

Yet the vast majority of people who have ever been called have done just that, profaned God's name. Over sex. That's been the main one as a whole and stealing and robbing from God. You think, what's wrong? So much of it goes back to this thing of thankfulness and gratitude toward God. It doesn't exist. It isn't there. It goes by the wayside. It doesn't have meaning. People lose it. In God's Church. Don't lose that.

Therefore, you shall keep My commandments and do them. I am the Eternal. You shall not profane My holy name. But I will be sanctified. God says He will be sanctified, set apart **among the children of Israel. I am the Eternal who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Eternal.**

What an awesome thing to understand. I think about the children of Israel. Here they were in a nation, God intervened, performed incredible miracles, began to work with Moses, began to go back and forth with Pharaoh and brought all kinds of things upon Egypt in order to eventually bring them together so they could be taken out. Parted the Red Sea, all the incredible things God did with them, in the wilderness for forty years. Thankfulness wasn't around a whole lot. Incredible, how the human mind works even on a physical plane.

But those things have happened in God's Church as well. People begin to fail to grasp and understand what it was to be delivered out of Egypt. How were you delivered, those of you who are baptized and have God's holy spirit? What were you called out of?

I was thinking this morning of things that I have been called out of. How sick this world is. How sick we are as human beings. So thankful that those aren't a part of my life anymore. Happiness, joy that's filled there because I know what I have – I just need to think about those things more often. I have to work on that. I'm striving to do that, growing, desiring to grow more in those things.

But it goes back to how we think and ever seeking to grow more in those areas of life, to be pleasing to God and not to bring dishonor to God's name. Do we grasp the vast majority who have gone before us just leave? People in God's Church every year continue to leave. This is a hard thing for me sometimes. You get to know people, you go to God's house side by side, counsel blended sweet, spend time with people, go to eat with people, spend time talking with people and then they leave.

Was it yesterday we were talking about different ones who betrayed? I was thinking about driving down here today, Meadville. I wish I had a lot of good feelings about Meadville, but I really don't. Most of my real feelings about Meadville? I'm thankful for Conneaut Lake. But as a whole, for the whole part, not.

Now, I'm talking about different ones who remain faithful to God out of this area, came along, were a part of helping make it possible that others came along to this group.

But when I come down here I think of different situations that happened and people that fought against the truth. People that fought against us. Incredible what took place. I mentioned this often, this area prepared me for the Apostasy. It did! It was horrible what we went through. It started out great... Well, I can't say that totally. But as a whole, it started out pretty great.

But as time went along, you know what, familiarity breeds contempt. People wanted something different. Then when they would hear different sermons that kind of rubbed against what they wanted and so there's this battle that's starting and we're getting closer to the Apostasy and this spirit that's at work out there. And gratitude? It wasn't there because familiarity begins to breed contempt. We become...whatever it is we want something different than what we have. And so, someone else came along who kind of gave X-rated sermons, and some parents even asked, "I didn't know we had to have sermons rated before we bring our children to Sabbath services," because of what he might say.

It's amazing what we have gone through in God's Church over time, things that have happened. So again, the things we live through. What do we have? How blessed we are with what we have, with what God has given to us, how He prepared us, all of us that have gone through some of these things for an apostasy and to come through it? So, we all need to be on guard spiritually, recognizing that especially in this age of great technology, and I have to say relative affluence, because we really are a very blessed people in this country. You know, you look at other countries, you see what other people have in different places and where God's drawing people and calling people as a whole. Very blessed, truly.

Now, maybe everybody doesn't think they're always blessed. Yet we are! We have some of the greatest wealth the world has ever known, as I'm mentioning here comparing it to the Middle East and just what we have in this country. You know, where can you go in the world? This is the best place, as a whole, to come to work, to work hard and get ahead.

I think of an individual that he snuck out first and had to bring his family later. Out of Romania. Talking about a time under, I think his name was Ceaușescu. Anyway, thinking about that period of time when they were under communist rule and here when we were in this particular area we had this house that we lived in for a couple of years. This individual over a short period of time raised enough money to buy the house. When it was time we sold it, he had the cash. I think it was five years he sacrificed in some of the ways he lived and what he did because he scrapped and saved everything he could so that he could have his family live in that house.

I've heard stories like this at different times where people have come in from different countries, worked hard. We live in a world today where it's pretty hard for people to find people that want to work. I've talked to different people, contractors, and others in the area we live in and there are times there are different ones that they can get a hold of that are from other countries that will work for them and work hard and will work late and work early. But those who are local as a whole, what they find is you don't know if they're going to show up on time. They don't even like to show up on time, and if they do show up

they look for a check, they want money, and they go out and spend it on, generally, drugs and things of that nature because people have lost the concept of work ethic and how to have happiness of life.

So, we live in a, as a whole, a very affluent world. If you want to work you're going to have a lot. Too bad that everybody in this country can't go and live in a different part of the world for a few months to see what life is like, the danger, the squalor.

Sometimes it breaks my heart when I see pictures of people, young kids. I mean, there are places like Rio de Janeiro, kids all over the place who have no homes. Kids! They're going out begging and trying to stay alive and trying to find food. Places where there are shanties and cardboard things where they go out on these heaps and when these trucks come in and dump stuff they're out there scouring through things for food.

I saw a thing on TV here the other day where some were just looking for trucks that would dump trash and there'd be some kind of food in there that they could use. Nothing that we as a whole would use. It's in the trash. They go and get it and try to clean it up the best they can in order to eat. Most people in this country have no concept of what people have to go through in some areas of the world like that.

And so, we have what we have here. We have absolutely no excuse whatsoever to not live well, to have plenty to live by. Food, shelter, transportation, it's available, it's there.

I think it's 2 Timothy 2. I am now, I think, caught up to where I wanted to be. Again, we need to be on guard spiritually, recognizing what's happening in the world around us. Don't let it happen to you. Because I still hate to see people go by the wayside. It doesn't matter when, but especially now of all times you'd think where we are and what's getting ready to happen in this world. We're not very far away.

That's why I feel this year's Feast is a very important Feast for us, really is. I'll be real candid with you, I'm not sure we're going to have another one. Time will tell. It's on our doorstep. Things with China? They have designs for us and those designs aren't very good. I'm really thankful that the world is starting to wake up to that a little bit. But it's going to be too late. It's too late now to turn the tide. They're already out ahead of us in so many areas – on the seas. In the place it really counts, the weapons that carry nuclear devices, they've passed us. They're way out ahead of us now. Russia is too in that area.

We don't have that technology and we let them all know it: "Our hypersonic missiles are failing right and left!" Let's just tell the world all about it. Let's advertise it. We're so dumb! Not that they couldn't find it out because of all the spying of things that take place in this world. But it's like, where are we? We see them building a hundred silos over there in a dry area in China.¹ I can't think of the area now. What are they planning of doing with all these? We're so stupid.

So, how close are we? You know, it wouldn't be very hard, be pretty easy for them to do what it takes for the first four Trumpets. That China does it, actually. But by the time it all happens we wouldn't know it was

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/02/asia/china-missile-silos-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>

China. It's very easy to make something look like it's North Korea, and even coming out of North Korea, right on their shores. "It's coming from North Korea!" And so, what do we do in a case like that?

I'm serious. We are so stupid! This country is so blind right now. But it's prophetic and it has to happen, has to take place. But it hurts.

I hope we understand that urgency. I have that sense of urgency in me. I believe, I'm watching more than any time in my life where we are, and yet all my life I've been looking five and ten years down the road. We still recognize that things can be farther down the road if it's God's purpose and God's will, and if we're not ready. Because a lot of it's about us and about where we are and what God wants us to see.

2 Timothy 2:19—Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His. Now, what an awesome thing there again. Do you see yourself there? Do you have a confidence and a boldness in that? Of who you are? Of very few in the world that have the opportunities that we have right now? And God loves us with love that we can't even grasp? Has incredible patience with us? Incredible mercy? Wanting to forgive us? Desiring, offering that to us so that we can be? And we just have to make the choice to repent and fight. And you know what? God loves that, and He loves us. It's a sweet aroma to Him.

When you go through trials and hardships you're not alone. God is watching. He's there. He desires that you share those things with Him. It doesn't mean He's going to take you away from the suffering. That wouldn't work! He lets you go through it. He lets us experience it. But He's there helping us, strengthening us if we're looking for that strength to go through them successfully, fighting the good fight, as it says. What more could we want?

And if we really grasp it then we know we have to experience it. Every hardship I've ever had in this Church, in God's Church, in the Body of Christ, has made me stronger. Even the world recognizes that to a point. "If it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger." You know, they talk like that. They understand that there are things that are good for you in this world, to go through certain hardships. You get up, you fight, and you fight harder. How do you develop that? Because of what you struggle through. It made you something different.

In God's Church that is so many times more because of God's spirit because of what He's working in our minds, in our lives to mold and fashion us, truly making us stronger. It's awesome, it truly is. That's exciting. Something to be thankful for because that's where the excitement comes from, the joy of it, the fullness of it.

I love this way of life! How could we not? But that comes with thankfulness. Because I'm thankful for it. I see it. I know what it is. You have to think about those things. What do we have? Those are the things that help you to be thankful for it. To rejoice at a Feast of Tabernacles like God commands us to, it should become more natural as we go on through our lives because we see things that God has placed before us, He's given to us. That's what makes life enjoyable and rich and relationships rich and enjoyable because we see. We see we're all a part of the Body of Christ.

Our ability to cease judging and criticizing and condemning one another and tearing down one another, and instead wanting to see one another succeed, that's where joy and happiness and fullness of life comes from – out of genuine love toward each other. How could we not want to see each other succeed? And so, whenever you find fault with someone else, what's going on in the mind that we do that, that we're thinking that way? On the contrary, we should want every person to succeed.

We all have our battles. I look around this room, I see battles. I know there are battles. I understand them. I understand a lot of them, a lot more than you know that I do. And I love you and those listening. We should love each other. We're in this together. It's not easy being who we are, keeping the Sabbath, keeping the Holy Days, taking children out of school at a certain time of the year to go to a Feast of Tabernacles. Those aren't easy things. Standing up for this way of life? Awesome!

So, we're in it together and it's a beautiful thing. I'm thankful for every one of you and I hope we're all thankful for each other. If you have something against someone or you think of them in a bad way get self checked...get self checked. Beat on it a little bit. Readjust some thinking because something is wrong, distorted.

That's where love comes from. It comes from being thankful. Do we grasp that, that's where love comes from? I'll guarantee you, the more you see what God has given, the more thankful you are for it, the more you will love God. The more you recognize what Christ is doing for us as our High Priest in giving us, and giving to us as a Church, feeding us Sabbath after Sabbath (because he's the one doing it, God the Father has given that to him to do), the fact that he did what he did to give us the ability to be here, willingness to sacrifice himself as he did?

What are we told we need to do? We need to be willing to sacrifice to move it all forward. Because it takes sacrifice to go through this, to become a part of God's Family. It wasn't meant to be easy. But that's where the joy is. That's where the fullness and the happiness is and the fullness in relationships. You know, our ability to come together in fellowship and to be excited to see each other, do we grasp that, where that comes from? That it's made possible by God, by God's spirit, and how good that is?

I love it when I hear that sound! Because we didn't have it for about a year and a half, a little over a year. Then we started trying to visit more areas again and having people together again. And especially at the beginning of that when you have something that is kind of taken away from you, again, there can be a greater appreciation.

I remember learning to appreciate the Sabbath and the Holy Days more when it was taken away from us, and the first Sabbath we had and how we felt in God's Church after the Apostasy, and the fact that a few were able to come together. It killed us that there weren't more and that they wouldn't listen. But that excitement of those that are here? It should be very powerful and live within us in a powerful way.

The Lord knows those who are his. How awesome is that? **Also, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity,** from unrighteousness. That's just the way it should be. Our desire should be to get away from, to get rid of sin, to fight against it, we want it out of our lives.

But in a great house... Now, we're going through some scriptures here that we focused upon in the sermon that was entitled *Focused on Planning Ahead, Pt. 3*. So, we're picking up these verses right now. That's where they're coming from. Then we're going to continue on because there's more that ties all this together as well about the subject matter of this series.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth. You know, and it's always been that way in God's Church ever since I've been in it since 1969. I didn't even know it for the first six months. I was blind to that. As a teenager and then going on in my early twenties, there in the beginning I thought everyone was perfect. I thought, this is God's Church. And I knew I wasn't, I knew what I was coming out of, and I wanted to fight that. I wanted to get away from that. I moved to another area to get away from a college town that I'd been in, for that very purpose, because I knew I couldn't stay there and fight that fight the way I needed to.

I moved away and went to work, quit college, and moved to a different part of Kansas, and there are things we come to understand in those things, of the battles we go through, of what it takes, who we are, how we think. I thought everyone was perfect until after about six months. Invited to someone's house in the area of Wichita. It had a church of about 600 there at that time. Now there is no one there. A church of about 600 at that time and husband and wife were fighting. They're in God's Church! They're fighting! I had a rude awakening – we're not all perfect. Or they're not all perfect.

I was striving to be, to live as well as I could, best I could and not having any sin in my life and I came to a stark reality that whew, and my eyes began to be open to a reality we have problems ("...Houston"). So, I began to learn, no, that's not the way it is. We have battles. We have sins. I have sins. I knew that. You have to keep fighting.

So again, we begin to learn these things, that we have a long way to go when we come along like that. Sometimes we have rude awakenings, but the battle has to be there.

In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth. So, as time went along I learned that there are people who weren't really with the program, there were people, ministers even, who got upset at Herbert Armstrong over different things. I found that there were different ones that I would be around and hear deacons and deaconesses and different ones talking about Herbert Armstrong and what he was doing wrong in leading the Church and decisions he was making. It was like, wow.

"There are vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and earth." I saw a lot of wood and earth and people who went by the wayside over time because they weren't what they needed to be, and we have the choice to decide if we are the gold and silver or the wood and the earth. That's our choice whether we're going to respond and desire to go through the fire. Because gold and silver have to go through the fire to be refined, to understand the importance and the willingness to fight that fight. It's because it's a sacrifice. It's a sacrifice. But it really isn't. But you have to decide what you're going to do in it to be of gold and silver.

...but also of wood and of earth; some to honor and some to dishonor. So, I've seen a lot of that ever since I've been in God's Church, things that were to dishonor. To talk about God's apostle that way at that time, to some of the kinds of things that people go into, the sex, the stealing, the robbing, the leaving of the Church eventually, it's always been there. Some to honor, some to dishonor. And you know what, you learn from that.

I've made this comment many a time. Most of my training within the ministry has been what not to do, that there are things that just aren't of God, can't be of God. So, you can't be that way, and if I hadn't seen those things I wouldn't be as strong as I am today of being able to see that isn't right, so how can you do it?

It's like what I wrote recently. I don't know if it's on the last chapter that's out there already or something else I've written, but I think of what some at headquarters did. I think about twelve individuals, ten to twelve individuals who were evangelists who knew for two years what was coming down the pike, that there were plans to change the Sabbath, to change the Holy Days, and they didn't do a thing to warn any of us in the ministry, who were in so many cases basically under them, because we looked to them for guidance and direction. All they had to do was let us know and they didn't let us know. They let a few friends know here and there, but they kept it to themselves.

Now, I don't know about you, but I call that a vessel to dishonor. You won't stand up for God's people? You won't stand up for the ministry? If you won't stand up for the ministry, you won't stand up for God's people, then what are we doing? So, I had to experience that, and it fits this, vessels to dishonor. They dishonored themselves before God. I can tell you assuredly they were rejected as well. You think that was pleasing to God if you have a responsibility? If any of us has a responsibility when it comes to something that's right and we don't stand up for it and we don't do it, how do you think we're judged?

So, we learn from this. That's why God allows these things to exist, to be. That's why a lot of times I'll tell individuals, I talk to different ones, I tell them to just let it go. Certain things in the ministry, just let it go its path. We're not going to address that now. I may address something in a sermon and sometimes those who need it the most can't hear it anyway. I know it exists. But it's not my job to go and take care of those situations. It's a matter to let them exist oftentimes for that very purpose. Because I look to God and look to God to guide and direct me and inspire me as to when these things are done as well.

But they have to exist. Do you understand that? They have to exist in order for us to learn, and we learn gratitude from that as well. For when others do what is right. I have great respect for those who stand up, those who fight, because that's the way we should all be.

That's what this is about, he's addressing something. There are vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. And who else can make the choice but us as to which one we're going to be? I hope all of us choose to be a vessel to honor. A vessel is that which God works through, which God's spirit works through to change, to grow, to prepare to serve more as time goes on, later on especially. We have no idea how great things lie ahead of us, brethren.

...some to honor, and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a person purge, which means “to cleanse thoroughly,” **themselves from these...** From what? From the things of dishonor, from the things of wood and earth, the things that don’t stand when you’re building. You want that which is strong. You want that which is enduring.

In this case when you talk about gold and silver, the wealth, that which is what you want to keep and get rid of the dross, hold on to that which is valuable, to see that which is valuable that God offers us and gives to us because He offers that to us. He puts it before us. We have to make the choices.

If a person cleanse themselves of these they shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, set apart, in other words, continue on in the Body. Because to be sanctified means that God is the one who sanctifies us. We’re sanctified through the truth. God gives us His word, His truth, His way of life. We’re able to see it and hold on to it through the power of His holy spirit that He gives us as well. All things to be thankful for. Because without it we’re gone, we’re going to be the wood and the earth, the dishonorable part.

I say these things because they will continue to happen until this is over. They’ll continue through the Millennium. They’ll be in the Great White Throne because we’re human, human beings. But when God offers us the greatest of anything that could be offered, the purpose for our being created in the first place, to be a part of His Family forever and forever, we have a hard time grasping that. You really can’t without God’s spirit, and even then how much do we really grasp? But that’s what we hold on to.

Because this physical life doesn’t last very long, and everything we might think we want to have in this physical life, it’s for a very short period of time. This isn’t what counts. This isn’t where the wealth is. The gold and the silver is that which is way beyond, truly. And so, we need to learn to be thankful for those things.

They’re to cleanse thoroughly, **purge themselves of these, they shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified and meet,** which means to be of use, useful. To God! To God’s service. To God’s Family. **...meet** (of use, useful) **for the Lord, and prepared.** That’s why I love our name, PKG – Preparing for the Kingdom of God, planning ahead, **being prepared unto every good work.**

Now, that was covered in that particular sermon. Now we’re going to go on. **Also, flee youthful lusts.** Now, what does that mean? It means a thinking. It’s about the thinking and how we can be when we’re young. It’s just the way we are as human beings. It takes time to grow, to learn all the things we go through.

But when it says here, **Also, flee youthful lusts.** Passions, desires that we might have that sometimes we’re not thinking about the long term. So, it has to do with sin, yes, and how we are as human beings, but it also goes beyond that because it has to do with, again, a thinking. And so often in life, especially when we’re younger, it’s just the way we are. I’m not picking on anyone who is young because I was young once!

Anyway, when it talks about youthful desires, because that’s what the word is, it’s about desires. So, yes, it’s good to have right desires. It’s good to have desires of life because these are the things that motivate you. But we have to examine them as to whether they’re healthy for us. Sometimes having a new car isn’t

what we need right now. Sometimes having something else isn't what we need right now. There is other planning and thinking that needs to go into it.

So, this is included in here as well because we have to be careful how we plan ahead. That's what this is about. It's about thinking ahead and planning ahead and what we just covered before this, "in meet, prepared unto every good work." So, whatever that might be, the planning ahead. It's about thinking, and we don't tend to do that when we're younger. We don't tend to do it as well as when we get older and begin to have more responsibilities and maybe get married and then have more responsibilities, and then to have children and have more responsibilities. Hopefully, we're planning and preparing as we go through this process.

Anyway, so that's a part of what it's talking about here. **Also, flee youthful lusts, but follow...** In other words, we have to weigh things out. We don't have to have everything right now. Work toward it. Build up. That's a part of the thinking here. Plan ahead. Plan wisely.

But what really counts? **But follow** (pursue) **righteousness, faith, charity.** Why? Because all these other things are going to go by the wayside in time. Do we grasp that? It's only what's in the mind that we're going to take with us. This is what's going to continue on, the mind. In a different body in time, but this is what has to change, and this is what counts. It's what you have in your mind, it's what you allow into your mind, the thinking. And so, that's why we're thinking about and talking about and focusing upon gratitude and thankfulness.

Flee youthful lusts. But follow after (pursue) **righteousness, faith, charity.** These are the things that last, how we live life in our relationships. The more we learn to live them right the more thankful over time we can become. Not necessarily at any moment in life, but that too grows.

...**righteousness.** Follow those things, pursue them, **faith.** In other words, the belief that God has given to us, to work on those things, to teach them to our children, to grow in these things, the truth that God has given to us. ...**peace, and those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

But as it says here in **verse 23—But avoid foolish and ignorant questioning** (questions). We've gone through some of this in other verses as well. Again, as we went through in the previous sermons here, in the previous series here about some of the things we have to be careful of in this world, of people getting off into politics and getting off on conspiracy theories and listening to junk out here and some of the things that go on with the human mind. You have to protect this.

But avoid foolish and ignorant questions (questioning), **knowing that they produce strife.** This can have to do with God's Church as well. **And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient.** Now, that's for all of us, but this is speaking to Timothy. He was to serve God in a particular way. Paul was encouraging him. But all that was given to Timothy is for us as well, every one of us.

...**patient,** in other words, how we need to live our life.

...in meekness instructing those who set themselves in opposition. Sometimes we may have a friend who we see is doing something that's dangerous, getting involved in something that's not healthy for them. So, out of love and care, if the opportunity is there to help individuals, as it says here, in meekness, understanding ourselves, but an ability to help someone else. Especially, to stand for something that's right if someone we see is doing something that is definitely wrong.

"Who set themselves in opposition." What does that mean? It means they are doing something where they're hurting themselves. They're setting themselves and opposing something that they shouldn't be opposing when it comes to living God's way of life.

So that if perhaps God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. So, there are times that people haven't gone to a brother when they know that they're going astray, doing something that's wrong and just let them go. But what an awesome thing if you have an opportunity to say something to someone, if it brings about, which is what we hope that it will bring about, someone, a change that will cause them to do this, "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," that God might grant them that ability because of what they hear, because you're doing it God's way.

...so they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. Sometimes we don't recognize that power that's out there.

Quickly here in Chapter 3. I want to just go through the first few verses. I'm sorry, I'm trying to rush through this too quickly.

2 Timothy 3:1—This know also, that in the last (speaking of) days, last days, it says, "**perilous times,**" it's a word that means "hard to bear." There's really no way to express this in a better way than this, not just the "last days," but when it talks about "hard to bear." It's difficult seeing some of the things take place in the world around us today.

So, it says, **hard to bear times will come,** seeing people doing what they're doing. **For people will be lovers of their own selves.** That's why we're having the problems of unthankfulness and gratitude. ... **covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers.** So again here, just this matter of being proud, of people knowing that they have the right answers, this stuff that sometimes I get so fed up with, of people reading things on the internet and becoming an expert.

...disobedient to parents, unthankful. It's what these things lead into. **...unholy,** not able to serve God anymore. And so, I say these things because some in God's Church to this day are living on the edge. Some aren't living what they should be living, and some will be leaving before the next Feast of Tabernacles. What a horrifying thing to know as a matter of knowledge and truth. I've said it every year.

...unthankful, unholy, without, as it says here, **natural affection,** but it's kind of a unique word here. It's about family, that which should be natural within a family and how we think and how we are or should be.

...unloving, trucebreakers... This "affection" is about being not loving, loving within the family even or those around us and within the Church.

...trucebreakers, false accusers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of those that are good. Do you realize this is talking to the Church? This isn't talking to the world. God isn't dealing with the world. These things weren't written for the world. They're written for God's Church. And it's a very difficult thing sometimes for us to realize this is what can happen to us because I've seen hundreds and hundreds of people go this route.

...traitors. To betray. What a horrible thing. **...traitors, willful, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.** That, to me, is the height of definition of selfishness and a lack of grasping and understanding where real happiness of life comes from. Because people think they're going to find pleasure and enjoyment in different things out here, whatever it might be, something physical, some other relationship, whatever it might be, and they don't realize that's not where it comes from. You're not going to be happy. You're not going to be fulfilled. On the contrary, you're going to have to learn the hard way. You're just going to have sorrow, heartache, and what you thought you were going to get you're not going to have.

What a horrible thing for human beings to have to go through to learn. But that's what we do. Most never learning because the only way you can learn is in God's Church, to truly learn.

...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. What does that mean "having a form of godliness?" Coming to Sabbath services, paying of tithes, having a form but when it says, "denying the power thereof," what is "the power thereof?" It's God's spirit. Because of some sin, because of some thinking that's wrong, we don't let God live in us to the degree that God desires.

...having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. From such turn away. Sometimes we have to do that toward others but it's talking about each one of us; from these things every one of us needs to turn away.

So, this is a beginning of learning how to be thankful. Think about it. Pray about it. Try to understand what these verses here we just went through are about in that regard because it's talking about the spirit, this mind of gratitude and thankfulness in the midst of this for a purpose, which leads to that which takes us away from God. What a horrible thing to happen.

So anyway, this is about thanksgiving. There is happiness and joy and fullness of life in that kind of thinking. So, really focus on this as we go through this series because we're going to have at least three sermons in this, and maybe even more, because there's a lot we really need as God's people this time to think about in this particular area so that our lives are richer and more pleasing to God.