

This is *Part 5* of the series *True Thanksgiving*.

Again, as I've been mentioning in this series, it's always exciting to me when we have a series, especially like this, that we can focus on for a period of time because of things in our own life that we can look at more deeply and just be reminded Sabbath after Sabbath after Sabbath about being thankful to God because that's what this is all about. It's about ourselves getting to the point where we do that more readily in our lives and are more alert to that in our lives, we're thinking about it. We see areas of things we need to improve upon, and that's what this is about. So again, to me, an awesome thing to be able to do that.

We're going to pick up just a few of the verse where we ended last Sabbath in 2 Corinthians 4 and then we'll continue on from there in chapter 5. This was toward verse 15. I gave a more accurate translation of that verse.

I hope all of us are becoming more and more aware, and I think we were beginning to see that more in the translation of the books at one point in time, and people were learning from that, that anything from one language to another, especially when it comes to God's way of life, you can't convey the meaning of things unless you know the truth. You can't convey the meaning of things into an other language just by words or by that kind of speech where you might have some kind of a translator, in the sense of a program that would translate, because it doesn't give the meaning.

That's the way it's been through time. People have gone through and tried to translate the Bible. They started trying to translate it into Latin at one point in time, and some of the other languages that came along, the Greek translation as well because the writing was in Greek and so they tried to do the Old Testament in that as well, and that was a fairly good job. But you start taking other languages in after that, English especially, and there are so many things that are so poorly translated, it's just sometimes it's exceedingly frustrating because they're not getting the point across at all. So, they pick words that they think it's about and that's in the world of protestantism and how they think and what the ideas they have about God, and it just really it turns into a nightmare.

I'm very thankful that God has been blessing us more and more to be able to go through this process ourselves when we have sermons or whatever it might be to clarify things because it's about the intent of what's being said on a spiritual plane, and they can't grasp that when they translate.

So it says here, again, **2 Corinthians 4:15—For all things are for your sakes, that the multiplying of grace, because of the thanksgiving of so many more...** So, it's talking about a matter here, a situation in Corinth, in the region of Corinth that Paul is addressing here and

discussing here about grace, which is about patience, it's about mercy, it's about forgiveness, it's about all the characteristics and qualities, if you will, that I should say, even make up grace, the qualities of God that we are blessed to be able to have and all the things that make up grace.

...for your sakes/for all things are for your sakes, speaking of the Church and the desire for grace to be stronger, become stronger in our lives, that we be able to receive more of God's mercy and patience and favor. And so much of what it's going through in Corinthians here is a matter of showing that we receive it from God. We receive mercy, patience, love, kindness, all these qualities from God, and we're to learn from that, they live through us towards others.

That's what it's talking about here, this grace that's abounding and becoming stronger as far as the Church is concerned. It's not something we just get from God, it's something that we are to live and give through our lives toward others in the Church. Just like the matter of forgiveness, of being forgiving toward others, of being patient toward others, all these qualities and characteristics that are supposed to become more a part of us.

So again here, **Because of the thanksgiving of so many more that it may abound to the glory of God**. So, whatever we receive from God and are able to begin to live toward others, that's to God's glory. That's what it's talking about here. It honors, it glorifies God that we respond in such a way to be honorable to Him in how we live.

It goes on to say, **Therefore, we do not lose heart even though our outward self is perishing**. So, we go through a lot in God's Church. We have all kinds of battles on a regular basis. It's not like the world, that time and chance happen to them. We go through things, and we learn from it because we're striving to live God's way of life. The world isn't. And so, because of that we go through a lot, and a lot of it in the mind, the stress, the hardship of life. We're not just talking about physical things; we're talking about the thinking. Because we have to battle self, we have to battle our own selfishness, our wrong thinking. That's a part of the story here of what we're looking at.

So, it says, we don't lose heart, we keep battling. So many times talking to other people in the Church about different things they're going through and sometimes people do give up. But as a whole, those who keep pushing forward, keep fighting, yes, it's hard, but we don't lose heart. God gives us strength to keep pressing forward, to keep fighting the fight we have, and as long as we respond to God He blesses us. That's about grace as well. He just gives us more strength and more help. But it's necessary that we go through these things because that's how self changes. It's by fighting what's inside of us, the inner self, that we are able to grow spiritually. It's the only way we can grow spiritually. It's about the mind being transformed.

So again, all of this is an awesome process we live through. It's a creation. It's from God because it's on a spiritual plane.

Therefore, we do not lose heart, even though our outward self is perishing. So, we know that. We understand that this body isn't being renewed, it's dying. The physical body is running down from the moment it's born. Yes, we get taller, we go through various things at a young age, have a strength and a vitality within the 20's and 30's that you don't have in the 60, 70's, and 80's. That's just life. But we understand that body isn't getting stronger and better in life in the sense of going to be able to live longer. It's the reality that no, it's running down, you're running out of time. The longer you live the more time you're running out of. And eventually, what happens? We all die. It's God's plan that every human being die. Everybody has to experience it, as a whole. There'll be a few in time who won't, but as a whole, most everyone has to experience death. It's a cycle of life, if you will.

That's what's so awesome about God's way of life because He's shown us what is beyond this. That's why we have so much peace when it comes to death. Yes, we miss people. There's pain, there's heartache in that when you're not able to be with someone anymore. But our life continues on, and we continue on, we keep fighting. We understand it's a part of life.

But the world, and you think, they don't have the kind of hope and understanding we do of a Great White Throne. They don't grasp what it's going to be like, that everybody is going to be resurrected into a physical life again. On the contrary, when they hear that, or if you were to tell them that, which sometimes people are told that, they think you're absolutely nuts, "To live in life a second time?" That's why they can't address certain things in Revelation when it talks about a second death, that the human body can die twice. "What's that all about?" So, they skip it. They don't even address it because there is nothing that fits in what they believe.

So, you have to feel for the world and be patient and look forward to the time that they can grasp and see what we're blessed to see. And thankfully, we're getting very close to that now, where they're going to have that ability.

...even though our outward self is perishing... The longer God's people have been in the Church and have gone through perhaps the Apostasy, come out of Philadelphia perhaps, lived through Laodicea, getting older. We have a lot of people who are just a lot older in the Church. That reality is a part of our life. We understand different ones are going to die as long as it continues on, this process.

...our outward self is perishing; yet the inward is being renewed day by day. When it talks about the "inward self" it's talking about the mind. It's being renewed on a continuing basis. We have a relationship with God, we pray to God, there's growth that takes place in a spiritual relationship with God and this is what it's talking about. "The inward self is being renewed day by day." And what is the primary thing you do to be renewed day by day? It's spiritual. It has to be with God. It's a relationship with God and it's in your prayers. It's in your prayer life and in your thinking about God at different times, or God's purpose or God's plan throughout the day in different things that happen to you. But especially in your prayer life and at different times,

wherever you might be, and you ask God for help or you're looking to God or you're thanking God for a matter that just happened to you.

It doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing, and it doesn't have to be in words or in a closet somewhere, as in scripture, it's just giving you that example. It's private between us and God. And so, God is always here, and He hears everything we have to say or think if it's in prayer to Him, and we're being strengthened by that. You can't explain that to people. You have to live it. You have to experience it yourself. As we experience that we realize what an awesome thing to be able to communicate to God, to pray to God at any moment any time and know that He's there, and to grow in that and to know that He loves hearing from us. That's what He wants as much as any parent wants to hear that which is good that comes from their children. God much, much more because of what He is doing in us is up here in the mind. It's spiritual.

We know that this dies, but life goes on, and this is not what it's all about, this physical life. That's very hard sometimes for people to grasp and young people to grasp, as even young in the Church or whatever, and eventually that becomes more of a reality, and we realize this body dies but what's ahead of us is forever.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment... So, it's putting things in perspective. Yes, we're going to die. But what we live, what we suffer through in this life is minor, it's small, it doesn't last very long. **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we do not look,** in other words, our focus, **at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen.**

So in other words, we don't put our hope on the physical of life. We're looking to God. We look to God for the things which we come to believe and understand. But they're spiritual in nature. You know, every once in a while you think about it in prayer life, and you think, what an incredible thing, I can't grasp what it's going to be like to live for decades, for centuries, for thousands of years in a spirit composed body that doesn't ache, it doesn't suffer, and you don't sleep. I mean, that one there is just by itself kind of hard for the human mind to grasp. So, what are we going to do for 24 hours a day? Because our minds are geared toward that - we sleep, we wake, we sleep, we wake - and to use time in a more constructive way all the time? We can't think that way until we're there. Incredible. But that's what's ahead.

So, we look at the things that aren't seen, spiritual in nature, **which are eternal**, as it says.

We're going to continue then in chapter 5 here from where we left off. **2 Corinthians 5:1—For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were “thrown down; overthrown; destroyed,”** it means if we die, **we have a building of God, a house that is not made with hands.** In other words, it's what God is doing is spiritual. He's the one that's going to give us spiritual life, a spiritual body when the time comes. For some, in the Great White Throne He's going to give another physical body. You know, at a young age, a younger age, an ability to live

for a hundred years. Whenever that happens, whatever age they are resurrected, that they might have lived to when they died is immaterial. But God's going to give that life.

So, it's talking about this body, when it dies, "we have a building of God." So, we have a confidence that there's a resurrection. We know that. We understand that.

...a house that is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from out of heaven. In other words, the source and the power come from God. What is in our future comes from God, and He is going to give us life, eternal life in His time. For some, it may be a part of the 144,000 as soon as Christ returns. Others who are alive now it may be at the end of a thousand years because there's going to be in a great, incredible resurrection then. There are people who are going to live on into the millennial period who aren't going to be resurrected.

There was a time in Worldwide that it was felt that what would happen during the period of time of the thousand years is that something similar to baptism, when someone gets to the age of baptism that... 19, 20, 21, 25, whatever it might be, that they came to that point in their own choice and decision to be baptized, they would be able to be baptized. But then after they had matured on a spiritual plane they would come to this point where they're ready to be resurrected and that there would be people who would be able to be resurrected.

So there were different thoughts and ideas of what might happen during the Millennium, that those kinds of things could take place. But it wasn't really known. God hadn't revealed it yet, what would happen until our time, that no, there is a reason why during the thousand years that people need to experience what people have always experienced from the beginning. Death. So, everyone who is alive, who lives into the Millennium is going to experience death.

Those who aren't a part of the 144,000, it's intended that they experience death. Because there's a great deal learned from that; that we have temporary bodies, that we look to God, that we look to God's plan, that we realize, we come to a deeper conviction this is the right way, this is the only way, this is the best way because it comes from God. There are reasons that we must learn from that.

Otherwise, it wouldn't be as healthy for us, even for those who live during that time. If God let everybody live, the early ones for a thousand years and be like some who were in the Old Testament there who lived hundreds of years, it wouldn't be good. Now, to go through that and understand that is something that each individual has to do in time in their growth, to come to grasp more fully why that isn't healthy, and why it is healthier spiritually to know we all have to die and there are going to be people we love who die, and we are going to die. We all come to that.

Because our hope isn't in keeping self alive and living forever. The hope is that once we do there comes a time when God gives us life forever in a body that will never suffer. That is mind-boggling. So, we love God, we love God's plan, we love God's purpose, we embrace it

with all of our being - but it be done God's way, that God's way is right, and not trying to live our own ways in that process.

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were thrown down, destroyed, we have a building of God, a house that is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from out of heaven. So, this is what we're fighting for. We're fighting for that time... What's it talking about? Being in God's Family. Those are choices each one of us has to make, we want to be a part of Elohim.

Everything is about God's Family. To be offered that, mind-boggling. We don't deserve it. On the contrary. We have to receive the grace of God first through forgiveness, through His love, when He begins to pour out upon us and gives us understanding of what is purposed and our creation is about in the first place, and then we have to make choices. For those who make the right choices and fight for it? Because you have to fight for it. You have to determine to fight against your own carnal nature and submit, yield, to God's way, to God's law because you know that's what is best and right.

To have peace can only come in one way. It can't come our way. It can't come the way of human beings. There is only one kind, and it comes from living what God has given as right in our relationships toward one another and toward Him, and if we don't like that and don't choose to do that then we're going to suffer. That's just the way life is. We learn the hard way. We tend as human beings so often to have to learn the hard way, so that we can have what we think we want when, you know, that's different from what God says. Then, eventually, we have to come to face that that doesn't give us happiness and peace. Only God's way does.

Selfishness doesn't give peace. It just gives frustration, unhappiness, sorrow, pain, and suffering in human life. Drama. Lots and lots of drama. And so, God has offered us this.

Verse 3—If so be that being clothed, having clothed ourselves, in that respect, **we shall not be found naked.** In other words, we have to make that choice, don't we? God gives us the choice to be clothed, to be clothed in white. What does that mean? We have to choose to repent. He gives us everything, once He calls us, to be able to be in His Family. Then, day by day, we're making constant choices along the way that this is what we want, that this is what we're willing to fight for.

As we continue to make those choices, what happens? This mind is able to be changed. It becomes stronger in spirit. It becomes stronger in conviction. You actually are growing in godly character. What an incredible thing. The longer people keep at the fight the more character they're going to have because they want, we want this way so much, we look forward to being in God's Family.

But too many have left the Church throughout time. That isn't what they wanted because they didn't really grasp the choice in many regards, and even when they did for a time, whatever it

might be that people want and why they leave - money, relationships that aren't right, whatever it might be - God says, "Okay, you can have it. It's your choice. You can have it." People go out and they suffer, and people who leave, they end up suffering horribly, especially the more that they've known.

We don't want to be found naked. In other words, spiritually. We want to be clothed the way God says we're to be clothed, with what is right and righteous.

Verse 4—For we who are in this tabernacle do groan, in other words, in this body, because we're going to groan in this. It hurts, it's painful to be in this body, to know what we know and to fight against it. Because the more you grow the more selfishness you see in yourself. The more I've grown, the more I grasp and understand selfishness. It's just there. The more we grow in that the more we see it, and the more we begin to see the motives, the thinking in the mind, which is where it all comes from and how we think as human beings.

We as human beings are just selfish. That's what we're motivated by, love of the self. We don't hate ourselves; we love self. We fight to protect self first. We want our way, and we don't want anyone else telling us otherwise. "I'm going to do what I want to do." That's how we live life. So, we have to make choices along the way when we decide to start changing some of that and realizing that's harmful, it causes pain and suffering, and drama.

For we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. Seeing we desire not to unclothe ourselves, but to cloth ourselves. So, he's talking in a way that's sometimes a little difficult to grasp, but he's talking about this battle that's going on, of being clothed in God's way of life, meaning living His way of life and realizing as Paul talks about in Romans, there's this battle going on. We see a war. There's a war taking place because the carnal mind wants something different. The carnal mind resists God.

Selfishness resists God. It's not God's way. He wants us to learn that it's harmful. We have to come to the point where we learn to hate it. The more we hate selfishness, the more we'll fight against it and be so disgusted by it that we embrace righteousness more, what is right, and we start living it more. So, it's an ongoing battle.

To me, this is an incredible process that God has given us in human life. That is mind-boggling, it really is, to grasp it. You look forward to the time the world can see that.

For we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. Seeing we desire not to unclothe ourselves, but to clothe ourselves, in other words spiritually, that battle, **that the mortal, in other words, the dying might be swallowed up of the life.** Because that's what it's about, fighting self to the point we're able to conquer it, to be able to have that life forever in God's Family.

Now, He who has worked in us for this same thing is God. God is the one that accomplishes this in us. It's not something we can do on our own. That's why we have to have this relationship with God. That's why we have to cry out to God to help us in this growth, to be

renewed day by day knowing that the strength and the help to fight this battle comes from God. So, we cry out to God.

Now, He who has worked in us for this same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the spirit. Interesting way it's phrased here. We have of God's spirit, and this "earnest of the spirit" is a word that is "a part payment in advance for security." It's like this earnest, this part payment. In other words, we're given a little bit. We're not given everything yet. God gives us a little bit, a little bit of strength, a little bit of power of His holy spirit to experience, and we're able to grow in that then, but it's a small portion.

I liken it sometimes to the Feast of Tabernacles. What an incredible time when we have eight days that we can focus on God, think about God, hear sermons concerning God's plan for us on eight straight days. And not only that, but we're able to be away from our jobs and be away from the pulls, as a whole, from the world, even though we still have to rub shoulders with the world in different things because we're still in it. But every day we come back, and we hear more.

That's a time that we're able to experience more of God's spirit in our life than any other time of the year. There's no time like it because it's not duplicated at any other time. We don't have eight days any other time of the year where day after day after day and we're here together with, so often, with other of God's people. Not always because of health and other situations that people can't travel. But as a whole for the Church, for a body, we're able to be together. There's a power and a strength just in fellowship, let alone what we hear spiritually and then able to spend time with one another. It's awesome.

I'm more stirred up at that time of year spiritually, strengthened spiritually, experience more of God's spirit at that time of the year than any other, and so do we all. We're able to experience a relationship, a closeness to God at that time of year in a way that we aren't able to the rest of the time.

And so, when it talks about having "earnest as a spirit," a small portion of it, that's what God has given to us. We don't have it by any measure. We need that continual help every day and so we cry out to God for it.

Verse 7—For by/through faith we walk, not by that which is seen. So again, spiritually in what we grasp and what we hold on to, it's things that are a matter of what we believe. That's why we do what we do. It's a choice. God's given us the ability to believe and know the truth and then it's up to us to hold on to it and to embrace it and live it.

We are confident, a word that means we have "good courage," and "**willing**" rather is not a good way of saying and **well pleased the more,** that's what it's talking about. **We have courage and are well pleased the more to be/to become/to be away from the body.** In other words, there is this point in time where we realize yes, we live this now and we go through our routines in life, but everything needs to be geared more and more toward our calling. It's about

striving for and fighting for and realizing everything we do in our jobs and everything that we have in life, it's a means to an end.

This isn't what it's all about. Our occupation, whatever it might be that you have now, this isn't what it's all about. This isn't what your life is going to consist of.

So, we go through this process and it's a means to an end. To live this life, to be able to have clothing, home, shelter, various things that we have to learn on a physical plane about work, that God wants us to learn on a spiritual plane about it, and we look forward. Not that we're anxious to die. We want to live this life fully. But we so look forward. I look forward to being in the God Family. My fight is about being in the God Family. That is my purpose for life. Everything is geared toward that.

And who is going to get in our way if that's your focus? Who is going to keep you from it? That's why I love the way Paul talks about that in Romans: "Who is going to keep us from it?" Only one can. Self by our wrong choices because we decide we want something else out there in the world that God says isn't right for us. The majority of people who have ever been called have gone that way.

That's why I mentioned last Sabbath, I'm really encouraged when I see people, because we're whittled down in size, and those who keep fighting. It's because of the conviction they have up in the mind. Worldwide, just because of the numbers, it doesn't keep you in God's Church. Our satisfaction doesn't come because you're a large group or a large organization. It's because of what you believe and what you know.

We look forward to being, in time, in a spirit body in God's Family forever and forever and forever. This physical part will be over. Sometimes, well, it just gets really hard. It gets really hard in the mind, the battles we go through and what we're fighting. We see what's happening in the world and we see what's happening in maybe families or whatever it might be, and we realize this is an incredible struggle because everything in the world is geared against God. It's geared against God's Church, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, our routine of life. It's geared against the truth. The world hates it because there is a being who is the god of this world and he's done everything he can to attack us.

That's why with technology today, he's the god of this world. That's why everything is misused. He has more power now over human beings than he's had at any other time in human history because of technology. He can sway, turn away, whatever other process you might want to look at here as far as his power to influence human beings than any other time.

Look at how things are used out there that affect human relationships. He's done more to destroy family relationships than at any other time. He's been able to work with people (he always has), broadcast to people, but now he has more power in that, of something that people like.

He's been able to keep people in line in false religion, like through that great church, like this time of year, because all the glamour of it. Because people are attracted to it. Giving gifts, receiving gifts, I mean, what's not exciting? Giving gifts. Looking for a moment in time you're going to start unwrapping them.

I remember when I was a kid looking forward to that. To a young kid, that's got you. I mean, it's not just a birthday when you might have gift or two, this is Christmas. You're talking about more gifts. There's only one time you can start unwrapping those, and it's either the 24th or the morning of the 25th. Sometimes you beg and coerce so much that they give in, and they let you do it on the night of the 24th, you know! That's exciting to a young mind. People, as adults, they are at a point in time where they love it so much, they love that experience. You talk about power to keep people deceived.

So when the truth comes along and tells you he wasn't even born around that time of year? "He wasn't even born around that time of year, so that's a lie." "Well, yeah, but it's a good thing to be able to give gifts and receive gifts and talk about Jesus and baby Jesus." You think, no, it hurts people. It has hurt people horribly and kept them entrapped in false belief systems.

So that's minor, those holidays, the coloring of eggs, the going out and finding them around a tree or in a clump or grass or whatever it might be because somebody has gone out and they've hidden the eggs, the colored eggs. Anyway, that's Easter time. So, these things are exciting to people, to young people, and it keeps them entrapped in a religion. You think, how do you break them from that? There is a being that has great power over that.

But now today, I hope you understand, Facebook, TikTok, all these things, the more things you can have to get people together to where this is what they're doing all the time, just typing faster than I could ever dream of typing on a little device. I need a keyboard. I've learned how to type fairly fast, but that's nothing compared to those where you don't even have to have full sentences.

Then as you're typing along with your little fingers you see a word. You type maybe one letter, because it picks up your flow of your sentences, and so three words pop up at the top of your phone. You don't even have to type the whole word. If you can get fast enough you just pick that word. "There's the word!" And you're just typing along madly. People are at stop signs, stop lights, they're (typing/texting) and people behind are honking. Anyway, this world is nuts. But he uses this in a very powerful way.

I think of how video games was a beginning process of causing harm in families, getting young people away from family, to where a child didn't want to have anything to do with even going to eat, you know, because this game is so exciting. Their ability then eventually to begin playing the game not just in your own home. In the beginning you were locked down to having to have someone beside you or you're just on your own, playing, whatever it might be, Pac-Man, you know, shooting, different games.

Then it got to the point where you could do this online with somebody else or several people in the world. It's like you can have these games and you can start chatting with them, you can start talking. You build up these friends you don't even know, but they're your friends because they love the same game you do. Anyway, I'm sorry but people don't understand the harm that can cause in life to a mind in a family.

I have seen so much damage done even within the Church in family because of electronic gizmos and gadgets. It separates. It's a powerful tool that Satan has, truly is. Today people are locked in their own world. They make friends with people they don't even know who they are, but they're friends or they're chatting with them.

So, the more you see some of these things coming about, of things of technology and different apps that are out there that people are able to do, what they're able to do and accomplish, things that divide families not to make families stronger. It makes you sick to see the way the world is going.

We live at the end of an age, and Satan has more power at this time than any other time because of technology. I hope we're able to see that. Whether it be in families, whether it be on a national scale, international scale, he has tremendous power. He's the one that has pushed things in the direction that he has, and now the world is imprisoned to it.

I saw something here on the news the other day here about different countries recognize the power that's out there now. If you lose your electricity, you lose your computers, what it'll do to society. We're slaves. We're slaves. I think of what it was like when the Apostasy took place and they threatened to take my email away, my ability to communicate with the other ministers. They took it away once. So the joke started going around, "Do anything to me, whatever, but don't take my email away, ability to contact others in the ministry to talk to them about these things." It's gone way, way beyond that now.

But we don't realize in this world today, what do you have when you don't have TikTok? All these different kinds of apps that are similar to it? And no Facebook? What are people going to do when they can't share self, selfies, and post these things out there and put out this fake life that's not even real that they want others to see?

We're like that anyway as human beings. We're deceitful. We want others to see us as good or in a certain way. And we don't want people to see us for what we really are, so we put up these barriers. Even in that human beings tend to be deceitful because we want people to see a certain side. That's gotten so much worse now with the ability of things like Facebook and so forth. Now it's gone to extremes that are mind-boggling that human beings can do this.

All this is about in the context of what I just said, "Satan has more power now than he's ever had." And if those things are taken away—and they're going to be taken away—there's coming a point in time when this country, as an example, is not going to have the ability to recharge

their computers and their cell phones and other things, and there are going to be a lot of people who are not going to know how to live, what to do.

It's going to be so disastrous in their mind mentally. There are people who aren't going to be able to deal with it—go another step farther—so much so that suicide is going to be manifold over than what it is. That's how far it's going to go because people won't be able to live in this world without it. Sick. Truly sick.

So again, our hope, what God has convicted us of, is a different life. Not this confusing drama ridden life that we as human beings have. That's why we have to come to hate these things. And as you do, what happens? The more you love what God has shown you, the more thankful you are for it, the more you're willing to express that gratitude. "Thank you, God Almighty, for blessing us and saving us from these things." Just like, "Thank you for saving us from this world of technology with all these apps, that we're not using them like the world is, and just frozen in that in time in those things." God has given us so much more.

So again, we have this earnest of the spirit, we're able to experience things that are unique to us in a very powerful way because of God's holy spirit and desiring to keep close to Him.

Verse 6—Therefore, we are always confident knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. So again, there is this process we go through, and we recognize that this life is going to go by the wayside, and we want God's.

Verse 7—For by/through faith we walk, not by what we have seen, as we mentioned earlier here. **We are confident,** we have good courage, that's what this is. **We are confident and have good courage, well pleased the more.** I think I've already hit that, I'm sorry, I'm repeating that. **Able to be away from the body and dwelling with the Lord.** So, we look to this. We look to be in God's Family.

Therefore, we labor, that, whether at home or away from home we may be well pleasing to Him. We have to work at this way of life. We learn that in physical jobs. But to prepare something spiritually, we have to work at this way of life. It doesn't just happen. We have to work at making sure that prayer is a constant part of our lives. We have to work to make sure that we're not letting up in this matter of thanksgiving and that we're thinking about these things and keeping our eyes and mind focused on God's purpose and plan for us. Because we have to fight against this.

Let's go over to Romans 6 because it's good at this point to consider the reality of what God has placed before us at times like this. And that's why it's good to think about some of these things in a different manner sometimes, and this is another aspect of what leads to thankfulness and gratitude, the more we come to grasp what God has given to us.

So, here in **Romans 6:23** it says, **For the wages of sin is death.** Now, this is very basic. That's what everybody gets. Now, we're not just talking about the first death because that's just going to happen. We all have to experience it, as a whole. It says that there is going to be a

few who are going to be a part of the 144,000 who will never experience death. We don't know how many. Two? Three? Five? Six? A dozen? We don't know. It's not going to be a large number, but whatever number it is, because there aren't even that many in the Church.

You know, we start talking about how many are actually in the Church of God right now and different ones, and you realize the number can't be large. It can't be a thousand. It can't be five hundred. So, whatever it is that happens toward the end of those who don't die before Christ returns, there are going to be those who are yet alive and are going to be part of the 144,000. They are the only ones spoken of in scripture that basically are going to be changed. It's almost in the language that your body is just going to disappear and you're going to be spirit, you're going to be changed to spirit.

It's like when Christ was able to manifest himself physically to the disciples after his death and then he'd be gone, spirit. So, it doesn't mean that whatever was there physically now is on the ground in a pile of dust. It's just it's gone. We can't grasp things like that but that's the power of God. The only way I can grasp that is probably as deeply as I can is because of some sci-fi movies we're familiar with. You know, all of a sudden, somebody is there, and you see the little twinkles of light, and then it's gone and they're up somewhere else. Anyway, God's power far, far, obviously, beyond that.

So again, there are things like this we just really don't grasp, we can't grasp.

For the wages of sin is death. So, this is another matter. We all have to die and that's a part of God's plan, but this is talking about forever, death forever. I don't mean to digress, but this is something that God has been making clearer and clearer the more He's helped us to grasp and understand, that the Millennium is not a utopia. There are going to be people who reject God throughout the Millennium. That's kind of hard to understand.

It's not as difficult, hopefully, to understand because there was a time in the Church we felt that the hundred years was a super-utopia. I mean, here you have animals that are changed to where a child can put their hand in the hole of an asp and be bitten even, if that be the case, if that were to happen, and nothing happens to the child. A lion, their diet, something has to happen. God's going to have to do something to creatures for them to eat straw. There's going to be a lion and a lamb beside each other, and for a lion not to trounce all over that - supper? I mean, that's a big change in nature. So, we have understood those things.

There was a time when some of that was believed to be for the Millennium, but it's for the Great White Throne period, a protection that God gives to everybody that ensured, guaranteed everybody lives for a hundred years, has that ability. Nothing in nature, in that regard, is going to kill them or hurt them or be a harm to them.

So anyway, but the point being is it's not a utopia. Human beings are human beings. Especially during the hundred years, think about those who are resurrected, the lives they have lived. Can you imagine some of the wars and the reasons they fought them? Minds that know nothing

about God and why they did the things they did. They believed in the false Gods and some of the weird religious practices they had in those times, and they're resurrected to life, to have a physical life again?

To think that everyone is just going to choose God's way then just because it's revealed to them? Well, God is showing us more and more that's not going to be the case. And so, whether it be during the Millennium or the Great White Throne, not everybody is going to choose God's way of life. The point of all this being is that the wages of sin are death. There are people who are not going to want God's way of life, and the only thing for them if they don't want this way of life is that they're going to die a second time. Incredible, to realize that's going to happen to millions, hundreds of millions, and billions of people at the end of the hundred years, who will have chosen that they do not want God's way of life. God just gives human beings an answer to what the result of that is - death never to be resurrected from again.

Because that's the only way life can continue on, is to be resurrected, to have a second life, a second body, second opportunity, in the sense your first opportunity to learn God's way of life and live it for a hundred years is unique to itself. But after that we better have made the right choices if people are going to continue on.

So, the reality is "the wages of sin is death," and those who won't repent of those sins, they're going to die. In time, there will be no memory of them anymore. Families, God's Family continues on. It's God's way.

But people don't take it seriously. How many times have people in the Church since they've been called, since Paul wrote these verses here in Romans 6:23, and people have been called into the Church during the time of Ephesus, the first Church era, and heard these words? And then the next era that came along, and then the next era, and those during the Philadelphia era have heard these verses over and over again.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Joshua the Christ. Well, a lot of people have heard it and the vast majority of them have turned against God, have spit on the sacrifice of Joshua. That's basically what they have done. So, my whole experience in God's Church year-by-year-by-year are people who have turned from this way of life. What a horrible thing. But it's choice.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God... So think about that. That's contrasting something here. You can choose death if you want, or you can be richly blessed with the gifts of God. God has given us the gift of Eternal life if we want it. When we're called that's what He tells us; you have the gift of eternal life if you want it. You have the gift of being in God's Family forever and forever and forever, to do things we can't even begin to grasp and comprehend within the universe that's out there.

Billions and billions and billions of galaxies. We don't know! We're learning more and more, no end to it, as it were. And God says it's yours. You inherit all things, everything—I can't

comprehend that—along with Christ. To be in that Family? To inherit everything that is created? And yet people have left the Church over finances, over something physical, over tithes, over whatever. It's like, can't we see?

The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Joshua the Christ, our Lord. So, what goes along with that gift? Well, when we start thinking about the contrast between the two, why God created us, the fact that He's called us, how blessed we are? Now, the more we see that, the more we believe that, the more we think about it, the more we pray about it, how can we not but thank God? To thank God that "Look at me and look at what I've been given, to be able to be forgiven of sin, to be able to know the truths that we know that others in the world are blinded to." And yet we're so richly blessed? Thank God.

We have so much to thank God for day after day after day. The more we see of the gifts of God - not just eternal life, but everything that goes with it and the process that leads to it, everything we have to be thankful for physically. Everything we have! How can we not thank God for everything that exists? Color? Smell? Taste? Could have made us different. But these are things to appreciate, to appreciate life. Viva la difference, yeah. The variety of everything there.

But that's why I think of that in the context of God's people too. Thank God so many different personalities within the Church. God didn't call a bunch of people who were pretty much alike. He called a bunch of people who are vastly different in so many ways. To me, that's beautiful because we can learn through that and appreciate that more deeply in life. There is no end to the learning just of that one alone. So on and on it goes, the gift of God, what He's given to us.

Ephesians 2:8—For by/through grace you are saved through faith. What an awesome thing just in the mind to be able to believe something that God gives you to see? To believe the Sabbath, to believe the 7,000-year plan, to know why the seven-day week exists, that there's a picture of that of a 7,000-year plan, there's order in God's creation. It just goes on and on and on.

So, that's why I'll never forget. It's etched in my mind. It's like etched in stone the first night I ever heard about the Sabbath and knew it was true. The first night I knew about the migrations of Israel and what happened to them in Europe, and how that some are over here, and that this nation exists because of God's blessings and what He gave to Manasseh. How blessed are we that we live in the richest, the wealthiest nation the world has ever known? We are awesomely blessed to be able to be here. That just goes on and on and on, the blessings that God has given. But what an awesome thing when He just puts it in your mind when you've heard it and you know it's true?

The reason I mention and stress that even more so because there is a time in the Church that basically it was stressed by a lot of the ministry that you have to prove everything to yourself. It's like you have the ability to go into your Bible, even as I heard one evangelist not too long ago (who was an evangelist, who's dead now), on his television program talking about some of

this. He was talking about, “If you’ll just open your Bibles,” in essence, “you can prove this to yourself about the seventh-day Sabbath.” Now, that’s a bunch of bull! You can’t do that.

You can do it on a physical plane like Seventh Day Advents perhaps. Perhaps you can convert someone else to believe that, yeah, it says a lot about the seventh day there, and here you can look at this scripture and that scripture and you can prove that. But to understand it, to see it spiritually, to grasp it, to know it’s true, it’s just in your mind and the 7,000-year plan and the reason for it? God has to give that in your mind.

That’s why our calling is such a miracle, and to be grateful to God for those things, of what you’re able to see. The point is, because I’ve had to deal with that as a minister in times past, that some would be called or come across the literature and it’s like, “Well, I began to prove this to myself a long time ago before I ever heard Herbert Armstrong or before I ever saw *The Plain Truth* magazine, and I started doing certain things.” And it’s like, “I did this.” I think, no, if you’re being called you didn’t have diddly squat to do with it. God did it. God has to call us. God has to put the truth into our minds so that we’re able to grow and see and know it and hold on to it. But if we take it to ourselves?

I don’t know any of them who stuck to it. All went by the wayside in time. Because that isn’t how it works. It’s a gift from God, the ability to believe the truth, to live by faith. Because that’s a choice. Faith is a choice. Belief, God has to give it to you in the mind. He has to give you belief about the Sabbath to know it’s true. But if you choose to start doing it, that’s what faith is. It’s the putting it into practice of the truth that’s in your being, in your mind, and your choice to live it and live by that. To live by everything in life, that it’s about being in the family of God, that’s a choice. But if you believe it and become stronger in your belief and you’re living it, that’s what faith is.

That’s why God accounts faith, living by faith as your righteousness, as righteousness. It’s not you, but it’s your choice, but He attributes that to you for righteousness. It’s not because we’re righteous. We’re far from it. We recognize what we are - selfish human beings. But inside this selfish human being is God’s spirit, the impregnation of God’s spirit in the inner part of our minds, and we make choices.

I think of that sermon Wayne gave, “My choice is God.” That should be the way we think, “My choice is God always, always, always.” You want something else? God will let you have it. He doesn’t hold us back. He doesn’t prevent us from leaving, from doing stupid things, so the choices are ours.

For by/through grace, God’s patience, God’s mercy, God’s love, forgiveness, all these things that make up grace, you are saved through faith. So, all that is a gift, that grace that God gives to us. ...and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Thank God!

Sometimes it’s good that we just think about, sometimes the word is “meditate; think about” the things that God has given to us, the things that we have that are made possible. And where

do you stop? So, it's not hard within a prayer to start thinking on those things and to thank God. There's tremendous power in that that is pleasing to God Almighty, when He sees that this is the way we think and this is the way we are toward Him, that we're thankful to Him, that we grasp and understand it's made possible because of Him. What is that saying to God? "I treasure, I value You and Your purpose and Your plan." It's what it reveals to God more so. So, we have to express those things. It has to come out of us.

Ecclesiastes 3:13—And also that every person should eat and drink, and enjoy... So, he's talking here, in essence, Ecclesiastes is going on here, he's writing and he's talking about the various things here, that it has to do with this thinking and recognizing the things that come from God. He's talking about the rich things of life and says that **...every person has this ability to eat and drink and enjoy the good of all their labor**, that this is one of the great blessings of life, that God has given us that ability to work, to produce, and through that we learn things and then we're able to enjoy it, that we have the blessings and the favor of that.

Sometimes in countries and places people don't as much, but as a whole, as a part of life we have such a blessing. But it comes from God, the ability to do these things, the ability to produce, and it depends on what we put into it what we get out. We have the ability to go out and plant a garden. We have the ability to go out and do this or that, or whatever it might be that we want to do as human beings and enjoy it and the enjoyment of our labor. That's what he's talking about here. The enjoyment of your labor gives much satisfaction in life.

That's why my wife and I, we love being able to, if we have the time of doing various things, and sometimes it becomes more of a chore to keep it up, but to work outside. I love doing that. I have the farmer thing in my mind because that's where I grew up and learned those things with working with animals and working with the land and crops and just to go out and plant things and sometimes just to look and think, this is amazing what God has given us the ability to appreciate.

I remember working my way through college roofing, and in the summertime we'd go out and chase hailstorms wherever it hit a city. We'd go out because people would want their roof done right away so I'd get a crew of about six or seven guys, we'd go out and we'd start doing roofs putting on shingles. As small as it might seem you stand back and you look at something when it's completed and you see the straight lines—because I have this German thing, and if you put them all over it's not as good—but back then to see those straight lines, there's satisfaction in that. It's a job. It's work, whatever it might be. It doesn't have to be clean, you know, sitting behind a computer all day and you know, and with a suit on or whatever it might be.

That's why I marvel sometimes how people put people in different classes of life. I think, what a horrible tragedy that we don't appreciate that it takes all of us to have a civilization. And yet there are people who look down on certain ones and the jobs they do and so forth. I often think about that when I go through some places, and I appreciate a clean bathroom when I go into a place. I really don't like it when you think, "I don't think anybody has been in here really for at

least a year and a half.” I basically want to leave at that point, and it’s like I don’t even want to touch anything, let alone be here.

And so, to appreciate the person, the individual who works at that to keep it clean, I respect that highly, I truly do. Because we need that. And different things that people do in life, and yet there are people who will look down upon different ones for what they might choose to do or what they are doing or whatever it might be. I hope you understand what I’m saying. It’s a matter of appreciating one another. I can’t help it, almost every time the trash truck comes by I’m thankful for them. I really am. I feel for them because I know there are people who look down upon them. They’re out there.

My brother did that for a time. He did that for quite a long time, then went out and bought his own trucks and started his own business and did really well. Gave people jobs, employment, and being able to go out and take the trucks out and gathering trash and so forth. Even did another one that was even a little worse. He liked playing cards and he called this next company here “A Royal Flush,” and it was porta potties. Everywhere you’d go in different parts of Colorado you’d see this on the side of these porta potties, “Royal Flush.” Did well at it. But you think, there are times I’ve needed that place, you know, and I’m very thankful that there was a business like that that had it there.

Anyway, it’s amazing how we are as human beings sometimes, that we look down upon one another because of certain things, and yet we should appreciate one another in the things that people do in life and give. There’s a satisfaction from that, whether it be in whatever function of life it might be, that we learn to appreciate the things that we have in life from our labor, for whatever work it might be.

Ecclesiastes 5:18—Here is what I have seen that is good and beautiful, to be able to eat and drink and enjoy the good of our labor in which one labors under the sun all the days of their life which God gives. The gift. God gives us the ability to enjoy life. What a beautiful thing. Sometimes we get caught in a rut and we don’t think about that, what we’re able to really enjoy.

As for everyone to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given power to eat of it... And people say, “Well, I don’t have riches and wealth.” Bull! If we are able to go out and work and we’re able to have, you know, whether it be rent or to buy or whatever it might be, to have a vehicle to drive in, if we’re just able to go back a couple hundred years, three hundred years, a thousand years, we would see an incredible contrast. We are so rich in this world, we truly are, especially in the western world, all the riches that are there. God made it possible. Not only that, just like this country here alone, we come to take it to ourselves. We realize, no, God gave us everything we have. Everything.

So, it’s a matter of our thinking, looking to God, giving God thanks, recognizing what He’s given us. He’s given us every ability to have wealth, to have riches. That’s why sometimes if we don’t see it physically in our life, what we have, the abundance we have and how blessed we are,

we're never going to grasp it spiritually. Because if we don't grasp something on a physical plane how are we going to really grasp the wealthy things, the things of wealth from God? To be able to make that contrast, to realize everything we have, that we see, and we know, how blessed we are to thank God for it. **This is the gift of God.**

So it says, again here, **Here is what I have seen that's good and beautiful, to be able to eat and drink and enjoy the good of our labor, for their labors under the sun all the days of the life which God gives,** in other words, a gift of them, **for it's our portion.** This is what God has given us to be able to enjoy physical life from.

As for everyone to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given power to eat of it, to receive their portion and rejoice. And yet too often people don't rejoice in that in this world. We get so much drama in other things, and yet it's right under our nose. To enjoy life, to enjoy family, to enjoy what we have and to thank God for it because if we thank God for it we're actually going to learn how to enjoy it more.

...to receive their portion and rejoice in their labour; this is the gift of God.

Psalms 100:1. It's a psalm of praise. In Hebrew that word means "thanksgiving." It's a psalm of thanksgiving. It says, **"Make a joyful noise,"** but again, the word is literally, **Shout unto the Eternal.** Cry out to God. That's what this word is about. **Cry out to the Eternal of the earth. Serve the Eternal with gladness,** or with joy and happiness. **Come before His presence with singing.** The Hebrew word is "a ringing cry." It's a matter of praising Him and thanking Him.

So again, this is a good psalm just to sometimes put out before God and to pray, to pray to God about what is said here in the psalm, a psalm of thanksgiving. God wants us to be thankful, to think on this.

Know that the Eternal, He is God. He has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. It all goes back to God. Sometimes we as human beings don't live that way, not even in God's Church.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving. What does that mean? Well, if we're going to pray to God it better be with thanksgiving, that it better come from inside, thankful for the things we have, physical and spiritual. Otherwise, we're just selfish human beings. That's basically really what we are, but there are incredible riches and especially enjoyment of life comes from recognizing God in it, crying out to God, being thankful to God. It's like this circle that just feeds itself in a beautiful way, being thankful to God, thanking God, then that causes us a happiness and a peace, if you will, a joy inside of us that only comes through that process. You have to live it to experience it and you have to experience it to live it.

Enter into His gates, we pray, with thanksgiving, and into His courts with thanksgiving. Basically, here it says, **"Be thankful"** but again, **Praise unto Him and bless His name,** to know how blessed we are, **for the Eternal is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth to all generations.**

So, just the truth we know and grasp and comprehend. The more we grasp how much God has given to us it should cause a fullness and a happiness in us. The more we know that and see it and thank God for it the more fulfilled we're going to be inside. Again, has to be experienced.

Well, there are so many scriptures that have to do with thanking God, being thankful to God. I'm going to skip over to one in Psalm 69. It's a psalm of David.

Psalm 69:29, it says, **I am afflicted**, it's a word that means "to be humbled," **and filled with sorrow**. There are times it's good to go before God. Sometimes if you're having a struggle in your life with whatever it might be, and you don't even know what to say to God and pray about, just go to a psalm. Sometimes just going through a psalm will jar something in your thinking as you're praying to God, and all of a sudden, things will begin coming to you. Awesome how that works.

"I am afflicted." There are times we go through things, we can look at our life and say, "Yeah, I'm afflicted. I'm humbled. There are things out here that I'm experiencing, and I want to respond to it in a right way."

"...and filled with sorrow." Sometimes we have that in our life, whatever it is we might be going through, that life's gotten the better of us. We're fighting a battle and we're filled with sorrow. I mean, that happens in our lives from time to time.

Your salvation, O God, has lifted me up. So, humble means being down in this regard, being afflicted, and looking to God to lift us up. "I need help. I need strength. I need to be encouraged because I feel (whatever)." God will do that. What an awesome thing. God will help us pull us out of that, get on track, get focused.

I will praise the name of God with a song, inside of us so often is what this is about and **will magnify Him with thanksgiving**. So, if you want to magnify God and think about God in a way that's profitable, in a way that's productive, in a way that there's power that comes from that, do it with thanksgiving. Thank God. Learn to be thankful to Him. Think about it - what do we have to be thankful for. Sometimes that gets us away, too, from the thing of feeling bad for what we don't have, something not working out right. Look at what is working out right. Thank God for those things.

This is more pleasing to the Eternal. I love this one. So, giving God thanks, we just read this, magnify Him with thanksgiving. That's up to us. You're going to magnify God in your thinking, in your mind, do it with thanksgiving, look at things to be thankful for. You know, there are times we just need to have prayer that focuses on nothing but thanking God for what we have to be thankful for.

Then it says, **This is more pleasing to the Eternal than an ox**, meaning as in sacrificing an ox. So, what did that mean? Not much. That's why it wasn't pleasing to God. It's like people can go through that and so often it was to make themselves look good. It was a matter of pride, not humility. This is a matter of humility, and that's what's pleasing to God, being thankful.

That is more pleasing to the Eternal than an ox, or a bullock having horns and hooves. In other words, that's a term that's used as in presenting it before the priests to be offered up. So, that was a physical thing. What happens up here in our thinking toward God, it's between us and God. The thing that is exceedingly pleasing to God is that we get it, that we're thankful to Him and we express it over and over again. It's amazing what that does to us inside, by the power of God's spirit.

The humble who will see this will rejoice. So, you have to be of a humble spirit to thank God. **And the heart** (inner self, as the word is) **will be alive in those who seek God.** In other words, it's something that just gives you strength. God has given it through the power of His holy spirit, to give us strength through this process.

So, the next time you're feeling down, you're in a battle that's been overwhelming, just go pray and start thanking God for what you do have, and just keep at it and keep at it if you have to and this will begin to change and the thinking can begin to change, and the strength that God can give you, will give you, will begin to change. It just works that way.

Because we get our minds off of ourselves and our woes and our sorrows and our hardship and we begin to see the bigger picture and why we were called, and for that we have everything to be thankful for. Regardless of how hard it might be of whatever we're experiencing in this life, it's nothing (and as we read earlier), it's but for a short time and it doesn't last very long, and it's gone. What we have ahead of us is forever. That is what's worth fighting for, and that's what God wants us to see and to be thankful for.

Ezra. We'll turn over to Ezra and complete the series here and what's being said. I'm going to back up all the way beginning in verse one here. Now, this was a period of time when the children of Judah had been taken captive and they were coming back to Jerusalem. They were coming back to Judah. They had permission to do so by the king of Persia. God makes it very clear how much He was involved, that after their captivity they began to come back at different stages there to begin to rebuild. The hardships that were involved in that because it wasn't easy, because other people had already moved into that region claiming it, living there, their homes were there. This is seventy years, we're talking about, that they were in captivity, so a lot had changed, and so they weren't all that welcome back in their own land once again.

This is a part of the story of what they were going through and what they were experiencing in a physical plane that we're to relate to on a spiritual plane and live it. So, here it talks about, **Ezra 3:1—Then when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people...** So, what's in the seventh month in God's calendar? The first day of the seventh month - Feast of Trumpets. So, here we're talking about they'd come up to this point in things they were doing and rebuilding and working there.

And the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. Then Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and his brothers arose and built the altar of the God of Israel. So, here they were preparing for what? They

were preparing to worship God; they were preparing for the Holy Days. Here now they were back, and they were so thankful that God had brought them back after all this time out of captivity, and now they were starting this arduous task of rebuilding everything.

I think of the Apostasy when I go through this. I can't help it. I think about the rebuilding that had to be done and some of the things coming back and trying to get things back on track again. There are spiritual battles we go through in life that we can relate to, and this is good in that regard.

I remember the first Sabbath we had afterwards, and it was so hard. It was so hard to speak on that day and I was not fully there. It's just it was overwhelming. We had this ice chest because we didn't have a podium and I stood up there behind an ice chest and gave a sermon and we were just thankful there were a few that came through who wanted to keep the Sabbath. Because we felt it was all being taken away and everybody we'd ever known, as a whole, the vast majority had just gone by the wayside. So, to be blessed to be able to have a few come together, it was incredibly meaningful. Then the first Holy Day and everything else that followed.

The seventh month had come and the children of Israel in the cities, the people gathered together as one in Jerusalem. Then Jeshua, it talks about here, what they did. They had built up this altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it as written in the law of Moses, the man of God. So, in other words, it's talking about here what was written, given through Moses and recorded in the process of what was to be followed here in offering up offerings on the Holy Days, the High Days and so forth. This is what they were preparing for.

Though fear, it says, had come upon them because of the people in those countries. So again here, this wasn't easy because there were people who had attacked at different points. They had to have guards at different places here to protect themselves because others didn't like their presence and they wanted them out. They wanted, basically, to kill them.

Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altars on the base, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Eternal, of the morning and the evening burnt offerings. So, they went ahead and did what was important to them, and we make those choices all the time in our life. We're going to do what's important to God. We're going to strive to live this way of life and we're going to fight against those who don't want us to do it. The world is filled with that, whether it be on the job, whether it be relatives, whether it be different things that come at us from time to time.

Then it goes on to say in **verse 4—They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by the ordinance for each day.** So, they were following it systematically striving to honor God, to please God. That's what we should do day by day, Holy Day to Holy Day, striving to live what God has given us, the way He's given us to do it. That's our life. Exciting! Awesome! Sad for those who don't see it.

Afterwards, after that they offered the regular or the continual, the continuing of the burnt offering. In other words, continual offerings, and for new moons, and for all the appointed Feasts. And so, in other words here, this is how they kept track of time. There was that which was important because by doing so they knew when certain times would be. We have electronic gadgets to do all that for us today. They didn't. So, these were important times for counting. They knew the importance of the seventh month and that first day, the Feast of Trumpets. Awesome. On and on it went.

So, as a part of this process there was that which was even offered during these times. **...and for all the appointed Feasts.** It kept them focused on God, on serving God and doing it God's way at God's time, **and for the appointed Feasts.** These were appointed times of coming together and worshipping. So again, sacrifices, it talks about, that were done for the appointed Feasts when they were all to gather together.

...of the Eternal were consecrated, and of everyone, it says, who willingly offered a freewill offering to the Eternal. From the first day of the seventh month, Feast of Trumpets, they began to offer burnt offerings to the Eternal. And the foundation of the temple of the Eternal, it says, had not been laid. This is before the temple was fully established here. So, they're talking about things they had to go through for a long time in rebuilding the region and the things that were there and the walls and the whole history of Ezra and Nehemiah and the things that happened during that time period.

Verse 7—They also gave money to the masons, and the carpenters; food, drink, and oil, to the people of Zidon, and Tyre, to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the permission which they had of Cyrus, king of Persia. So, they had the ability, some of the wealth that was given and the ability to go back and reestablish this area. That's a story in itself how Cyrus was so moved to do what he did because he had seen that his name was recorded a hundred years previous to what he was going to do in time. He read this was of himself and he was deeply moved in what he did in giving this to the Jews to go back and rebuild. That's an incredible story of itself.

This is what it's referring to then. They had come back, and they had this ability to pay this out and so forth.

Now, in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God in Jerusalem, it says, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and the rest of the fellow priests of the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem began work; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of the house of the Eternal.

So, they had those who were overseeing what was to be done, the Levitical system that was important there, and that things be done in a certain manner. They were given responsibility to oversee some of these things, to make sure it was done the way that was written by Moses and so forth, and that they knew from their past.

Then it says, and then Jeshua and his sons and brothers, Kadmiel and his sons, and the sons of Judah, it says, rose up as one to oversee those working on the house of God. Now, when I read through something like this I think, all that they put into it. There was this incredible gratitude to come out of captivity, to come together to start building, exciting to be focused on what was there, to build the things that were there, to offer up the offerings.

We do the similar thing spiritually in our lives. It's a matter of our focus and what excites us. This excited them. They had enemies all around. Spiritually, this is what we live. Yet there has to be this excitement for what God has given to appreciate, to understand what we have, to fight for it, to be willing to fight for it, which they had to do as well, and then this process that God has given us as we even read in the beginning of this series (didn't even think about that), about this administration that God has given to us, this system that God has given to us to teach us, to mold and fashion us, to oversee the building of the temple.

That's what is taking place by God's ministry - overseeing the building of the temple. He inspires what's given. He leads us. He gives us guidance and direction, for correction, for guidance, for truth that's given. It's awesome. We're all a part of this process. But to be thankful for it, to cry out to God about it. We each have to choose to do that.

"Their working on the house of God." I think about what's taking place right now. We're working on the last part of the foundation of the house, the 144,000. That's the major work that's going on right now in the Church. Really is. Then there is that which is going to be a part of a foundation that goes on, but it is awesome where we are in time, to realize that we're almost finished with 144,000, and yet what God is giving in the Church is very much a focal point of the final refining of that process and our ability to receive it and grow and respond.

As soon as it's done, as soon as the 144,000 is complete it starts. That's an awesome thing to understand. God has it geared, ordained, timed. He lets us know things along the way at times and then at times we learn from others. But everything is systematic that God has. As soon as a 144,000 is done He lets us know what is going to take place. This nation begins to go through what's covered in the book in a very powerful way, the First Trumpet. Awesome.

Verse 10—When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Eternal, the priests stood in the apparel, with trumpets, and the Levites, and the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Eternal according to the ordinance of David, king of Israel. So, this is relaying a story of something that's exceedingly exciting to them on a physical plane that was ever so powerfully meaningful to them.

We live it day by day, year by year on a spiritual plane, and the more we see that the more fulfilled we should be inside, the more thankful we should be to God Almighty that we're a part of this and that we're still a part of this because there is not a lot left. There really isn't. In the scheme of things, we continue to get whittled down. I don't know what's coming, and neither do you. We know it's going to get a whole lot worse before it gets better.

And so, the closer we are to God, the more determined we are to go through that successfully serving God, needing His help, He'll be there for us. But we have to be determined. We have an incredible fight on our hands that is still ahead of us. We truly do.

Verse 11—So they responded by praising and giving thanks unto the Eternal. This is something we should do on a regular basis. As we see the temple being built, as we see the administration of what God's given to us, how His spirit works in our life to change us, to help us to see everything that we see, just to thank God for those things on a continual basis.

So they responded by praising and giving thanks unto the Eternal, for the good of His mercy that is forever toward Israel. The more we come to see ourselves, the more we recognize we don't deserve any of it. But thank God we have it. We are so blessed to be able to be forgiven of sin if we just make the choice to repent. He's there and He pours out His love upon us and helps us to keep going forward.

Tens of thousands have gone by the wayside already. Incredible, what's happened. To have a few hundred left should mean so much to us. A remnant as it talks about in Ezekiel, that's what we are.

Then all the people cried out with loud joy as they praised the Eternal, because the foundation (this is tough) of the house of the Eternal had been laid. Do you know what you're a part of? 144,000 is the basis of everything that is going to be built throughout the Millennium and the Great White Throne, of the millions and millions, and prayerfully, billions that are able to become a part of the Family of God, Elohim. You've been given opportunity to be at the foundation of it all.

Even those who are going to live on into the Millennium, you're still at the very foundation of it all, truly. To understand what you are a part of is something to thank God for. No matter what you have to go through, no matter how hard things are, no matter what you have to suffer, no matter how dreary it might be at times in our lives—and it does get that way—and we get attacked. There's a being that knows how to come at us. You keep focused and you keep thanking God for who you are in the sense that you have His spirit in your mind, in your being, and He promises He'll be there everyday if you just respond to Him and cry out to Him for continual help. Prayer, in other words, a relationship with Him. He gives us what we lack so we can go through this.

So, to read this, to me, is very emotional because we're a part of something greater than what we can really grasp. But the more we grasp it, the more we think about it, and the more we thank God for it, the richer it is, the more value we hold for it and thank God for it.

"Then all the people cried out." This is why we can cry out. This is why you can cry out and have this thankfulness and gratitude that comes from deep inside the more you see what you have that God has given. "...as they praised the Eternal, because the foundation of the house of the Eternal had been laid." I think we're almost there. Almost there.

You can't even begin to imagine, to whatever part you're going to experience in it, whether in it directly or you see it happening, when 144,000 come together and are made to appear on this earth. To think we're almost at that point. That is mind-boggling. To change the world.

I think of the thing that has to take place first, that that 144,000 and Christ are going to go to war and they're going to destroy those who are destroying the earth. Mankind has never experienced that kind of power, not even in nuclear weapons that are going to go off, and whatever is directed at any place to any people God is not playing games. Those who don't want His government, those who continue to fight to destroy the earth and don't want that to take place, they're just going to die. That's merciful. Then God's Kingdom can begin to be established and Christ can begin to rule, and the 144,000 with him in a new world, where all the ignorance of all the false religions out here is destroyed.

I think of what's written in the book and probably clarified in ways that are the clearest ever given, to explain what's happened in the world, what happened in 325, what's happened to religion since, and to realize where we are, that it's going to be even more difficult for the human mind. Well, the reality is it's there and individuals are going to be able to have a transition, those who receive it, into a new age. Incredible. ...as far as a calling that God gives, begins to give in a very powerful way to the rest of the world.

So again, to understand who we are and how blessed we are. I mean, how great is it to know what you're a part of? It's hard to grasp that, as small as we are, and God's doing that. Yes, this is where God is today. This is the most important thing to God right now. It's the Church of God. It's the Body of Christ. Awesome! It's you!

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple wept with a loud voice... It's my life. It should be our life, and this should move us. These are the things that move us, the reality of what God has placed before us, who we are, the calling we have. To see what God is doing? I mean, how awesome is that? They were seeing something on a physical plane. We're seeing it come together on a spiritual plane, of everything coming to this point in time.

God has worked for this since the beginning of time, that His Kingdom be established on the earth. There is only one in His Family right now, Joshua, and getting ready to add to that 144,000. You think that isn't awesomely moving to God Almighty? He has worked so hard to bring everything to this point in time through time, still working, still working with us because we're not quite there yet. When we are we can get on with it.

But many of the priest and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of the temple was laid before their eyes; yet many cried out with a loud sound for joy. So, there were those who were excited just to see it. But those who had experienced the past, or known of the past, the more they'd known about it and experienced it this moved them in a different sort of way to where they couldn't contain it.

...so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people. For the people cried with a loud sound and the sound was heard afar off. You read through a story like this, and you think, that's incredible. This happened on a physical plane about a physical location, a physical place, and we are able to see the spiritual part of it and what God is doing and what this was all pointing toward as far as a future was concerned.

How blessed are we, truly, and how much should our lives be focused upon day-by-day-by-day thanking God? That in itself stirs up a joy and a fullness in your life that can't come any other way.