

Today we're going to begin a new series. It's tied in directly, as I mentioned even last Sabbath; I believe I mentioned I was going to go into a different series but tied into the one we were just finishing. So, that's what we're going to do today.

Last Sabbath we ended the series *Understanding Government*, and this is a very close follow-up to it because it still has a lot of the same thrust in the sense of our ability to understand matters of government. People tend to think that they do in God's Church, understand government in God's Church, understand God's government, and it's too often been on the surface. So, there are things we need to understand and learn and grow in in order to build upon that.

This sermon series we're starting today is entitled *Humility and Seeing Ourselves*.

So again, before we get into some of the primary focus of what we're going to be covering in this series it's expedient that we first set the stage again by reviewing some of the things we have talked about in knowledge and truth of what was covered in the last series. Again, things of understanding government, history of the Church has proven, in that respect, that we don't grasp it to the level, to the degree we need to.

Now, we're not talking about government in the world and understanding the subject of government. We're striving to understand it on a spiritual plane. That's a whole different matter than understanding something on a physical plane as far as government is concerned in the world. We're talking about something that is to work in our lives that's spiritual.

Again, we may think we understand sometimes until we're tested or tried in different ways, and we come to understand that we really don't grasp it with the depth of the level we might think that we have.

We're going to begin this sermon today, in as far as scriptures are concerned, in Proverbs. So, if you want to go over there we're going to spend a little bit of time in Proverbs because there are things we need to grasp as a basis of our life, and that is that government over 6,000 years of mankind has always failed.

It's because they don't look to God. They don't grasp God's government. They don't grasp how God is to work in our lives, and so, because of that governments fail and do their work poorly because they really have no ability to do things in a right way, in a proper way until, unless or until individuals come to understand God, begin to see and understand things that are on a spiritual plane.

We have to be able to come to that point in our lives spiritually and this is our environment. The Church has always been the environment for us to begin to learn on a spiritual plane

spiritually how God's government works. That's a lifelong process for us because there are things that we have to address in our lives because our lives are not right. We have to repent, we have to change, we have to come into greater unity and oneness with God, and that's all about government. We have to see it in that light because we don't tend to think that way.

Again, the reason that governments fail in the world is because people do things their own way. They don't understand God's way. They don't grasp God's way. That's what they have to rely upon. Man has to rely upon his own ability and that is sadly lacking. But in the Church we're to change that. We're to cease from doing that. We're to come to understand and grasp the thinking that produces that that is a part of the world and see a distinction and make a distinction in our life from God's ways to man's ways, God's government to man's government.

Proverbs 12:15. Really simple scriptures here but sometimes just not so easy to live. **The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.** Now, that says a lot when we think about the series we just went through because we focused a lot upon that. We think our way is right. We all have that in us. That's what we have to battle.

We have to understand a natural proclivity of reasoning and thinking that human beings have, what we have, and begin to understand where that comes from in order to combat it because we can't live that way. We can't live that way in God's Church and do it right in the sense of a relationship with God if we're relying on our own reasoning, our own thinking.

Now, we have to reason, we have to judge things. We grow in that. But to begin to see things and understand things the way God wants it done, desires us to live, desires us to think, the way we're supposed to think, is a process that takes a lot of time. But sometimes we get bogged down. People in the times past within the Church have gotten bogged down because they haven't understood some of this, and therefore, really haven't understood government either.

So again here, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." That should tell us right away if we think we're right about everything we're being very foolish. We're really being a fool in our approach to life. Because it's not the right way to think. We can't think we're right about everything! Yet that's kind of how we are, isn't it?

Something comes up, a certain subject, and we have an opinion. We all have opinions pretty much about everything. Just ask us. Mention a subject (it doesn't matter what it is), and as a whole we have opinions. That's where we have to begin to be careful. That's the starting point of understanding we have to be careful of our opinions, of our way of seeing things.

Because we're not always right! And candidly, we're just wrong a lot in the sense of that kind of thinking, our opinion, our first reaction to something. We want to make sure that what we're thinking is right with God, in unity with God.

That has to do with some of the things that are really a little more difficult when it comes to striving to understand God and the way He wants us to live because it's about the subject of

what we've covered recently in justice, what is just. Only God can tell us what is just. What is right, righteous, only God can tell us.

And so much of this, again, has to do with our relationships within the Church toward one another, toward the ministry, toward the Church per se, toward God. The problem with a lot of that is so often we feel we're okay with God. We pray, we tithe, we do whatever it might be, and that isn't enough. That isn't what it's all about when it's a matter of living right with God, toward God.

So again, **A fool is right in his own eyes, but he who hearkens (listens) to counsel is wise.** So, right away the book of Proverbs, certain words ought to jump out at us because of past sermons and things we've delved into in the past. It's words like "the wise," "to be wise," "wisdom."

The whole book of Proverbs is about the subject of wisdom. It's about what God has given to the Church, what He's given to those who are called to begin to change in the way they're living and thinking. Wisdom comes from God. It's the mind of God. It's the being of God. That's why the words are really synonymous in that respect when you look in the New Testament especially and you look at the word of God, "The Word of God was made flesh," the mind of God, the being of God, the thinking of God. That's hard for us to even grasp there, and we actually have to have God's help to see that.

The beginning of wisdom, in that respect, is to understand where it comes from. It doesn't come out of us. It doesn't come from human beings. People think they might be wise in certain things, but unless it agrees with God, unless it comes from God it isn't what is true.

So again, mankind is foolish. That's what this is saying. The human mind it's carnal, it's foolish because it doesn't look to God, it doesn't rely upon God, it doesn't seek to change, to be in unity with God, to be in agreement with His thinking, His word, His mind.

So, "To listen to counsel is wise." We're not just talking about something on a physical plane here because the book of Proverbs isn't just about nice little quips here and there and little nice platitudes and sayings. It all is a matter of something that steers in a spiritual direction, to understand the mind of God.

As we so often do as human beings people hear about the 10 Commandments, and they don't understand them spiritually. We hear different things that Christ had to say, and we don't understand them spiritually. We take them physically just like the disciples did. The same thing is true when it comes to this subject.

Proverbs 21:2. Just a blunt statement, **verse 2—Every way...** I mean, this is powerful what it says, **Every way of a man, of a woman, of mankind (is really what the word is) is right in his own eyes.** That's what we've been talking about. Every way! It doesn't say a little bit here and there. It's just the way we are. We think we're right.

People get in disputes and disagreements. Why? Because each think they're right. If they thought they were wrong or believed that they were wrong then there might be some room there to work with something. But when you put two things together and they're both right, how can you have agreement, how can you have peace?

So again here, very simple what it's saying here, but do we believe it? Because this is about us too. This is about our normal, natural, carnal, human mind. **Every man is right in his own eyes.** Just the way we are. We don't think we're wrong. We have our opinions and they're correct, they're right. No. They. Aren't. We have to be careful of them.

Any disagreement within the Church, and I would say, well, pretty much every week we hear of some disagreement amongst some within the Church, personal relationships, whatever it might be. Sometimes with me. Those are really fun. But when it's with one another it's easier to do. You know, people get to know each other. We can be a small group, it can be a larger group, it doesn't matter the size, you can put two human beings together and it begins because that's the way we are.

A disagreement in a family. Why is there disagreement? They both have a different way of seeing something. They both have a different way of doing something. They both have a different way of addressing something. They both have a different solution, and they both think that they're right. That's where arguments come from. I don't know why that's so hard to see, but it is.

So, when was the last time you had a disagreement with somebody? Just look at it. And who was right? Isn't that the question? How do you work it out? How do you do it? Well, that comes from God. How do you resolve that? How do you work things out, differences? Because there can be many different ways of addressing a matter without sin, and no sin involved. They're just different ways of doing things. There are different things that affect our life.

But the problem comes when some are insistent, "takes two to tango," in this case, and both are at odds because they're both right in the way they want to do it. It doesn't mean that both ways couldn't work out. It doesn't mean that if they both supported just one way that it has good potential of working out. But then we have a clash. Why? People fight. People argue. Things that really should never happen in God's Church, they happen.

This has to do with government. Because we're not in unity with God's government of how our lives are to be governed if we're in conflict with each other, if we're exercising disagreement with one another without a resolution, without peace. We're supposed to be peacemakers. There's a way to bring about peace. There's a way to have peace in a family. There's a way to have peace in the Church, and it's not to have our way. That isn't the way to have peace. That isn't the way to have unity.

Again, I keep going back to that Covid thing because that's something that brought everything to the surface in a very big way. To have unity and oneness, something has to give. Our way. It's

a matter of surrendering our will to something else, something that God has given to us, a method, a means, a way. Whether He says it directly or through the Church it's the same thing.

So again, "every way." We just need to etch that in our brain, we think we're right, because every way, our way. Unless it's in unity with God, then you can have great boldness and confidence. That's beautiful. That's what I've said over and over here again is that if that's there and you know this is right with God.

But even sometimes you can be right with God but be wrong in how you deal with someone else. This happens a lot in the Church. So, that makes that wrong. So, we can be right about a particular matter, but if someone isn't dealt with in a proper way that can become sin depending on the situation.

You may be right about something you understand or believe, but to judge someone else and to deal with them in a harsh manner or a rough manner, to roughshod over them, whatever it might be, would be wrong. So, there are ways of administering things even amongst ourselves that determine whether something is wrong or right.

Every way of mankind is right in his own eyes. But the Eternal weighs the hearts. In other words, He knows how we think. That's why He said what He did. This is a matter of wisdom on our part, receiving wisdom because it comes from God, and He's telling us directly we just think we're right. Not once in a while, but as a whole that's our first reaction, we just think we're right.

To do righteousness and judgment... So even when something is right it must be done in a right way as well. That has to do with, again here, to do righteousness and justice, to do something in a just manner, in a just way, all this fits together as doing things God's way. It's not just a matter of being right because you are in agreement with God because you know that something is true and right. You can still sin by how you handle that truth.

To do righteousness and judgment is more acceptable to the Eternal than sacrifice. That's really a beautiful statement if we understand it. "To do," to live, "righteousness." So, it isn't a matter again just of being right, but how we handle it, how we handle the truth.

A haughty look, a proud heart... And these things are addressed over and over again by God. He wants us to come to understand our mind. Because it goes back to what was said in the first part of this, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." What is that? Pride. It's all it is. It's haughtiness. It's not just pride, its haughtiness, which is ugly. Haughtiness is an ugly thing, lifting ourselves up because we're right, because we know we're right.

I hope after this last series, and this one here, we come to really hate that kind of mentality. Because we have to start hating something in ourselves to see what it is we have to repent of and get rid of. Because this is a spiritual thing. It isn't just a physical routine, it's something that's of the mind, of our thinking, and it has so much to do with how we treat one another,

how we think toward one another, how we respond to things that are given to us, even from here.

A haughty look, a proud heart, and then it goes on to say, there's this one translation, "**and the plowing**" of the wicked... What in the world is "the plowing?" Well, it's not a good translation. Matter of fact, it has nothing to do with plowing unless that word - I didn't look up the history of it to see if it goes back far enough in English to see where how it might have changed through time. But anyway, it's literally a word in Hebrew that just means "a lamp," a lamp, a light, like a flashlight, a lamp, something that gives light, something that enlightens, something so you can see.

But it says here, **A haughty look, a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked is sin.** "The lamp." It's what we are as human beings. That's what enlightens in the sense, makes it clear what we are, how we think. To have our way, to do our way for the sake of doing our way because we know we're right, it's haughty and proud and that's sin. That's what it's saying. It's just sin.

God wants us to change. He wants us to change self. That's not an easy thing because we're talking about something here that really goes on to another plane, if you will, of being able to grasp things on a spiritual plane. Because to see those things is to see how we think, and this is the heart of change, where it has to come from.

That's why I love, again, I said it last Sabbath, the word "repent" in the New Testament is the Greek word that literally means "to think differently." That's awesome to understand. God wants us to think differently. He desires, as it says in Romans 12, for this mind to be transformed. It's not to stay the same way.

We come into God's Church, and we desire to change the way we think, because our thinking's all screwed up. One of the big ways it's screwed up is we think we're right. We think we're right. That's the way we operate. Our way is right. How we think is right. Our opinion is right.

What a wonderful thing when we can begin to think differently like that and our attitude changes toward a lot of things. We're more cautious, we're more careful in conversations with others, even how we treat others in those conversations. Even if we're right...when we know we're right with God.

So, this is not a small thing we're talking about here, and this is why government has been so poorly understood in God's Church, and lived, as our history has shown. God is giving us the opportunity of digging a little bit deeper right now, truly is. This is our time to dig a little more deeply so He's giving us more so that we can grow more. If we're given more, more is expected. There's a tremendous responsibility that goes with that.

I find that exciting because growth is exciting. Spiritual growth, to me, is an exciting thing. The closer we draw to God, the more we become one with God it's an exciting thing. It really is. To live that, to experience that more than any other ages of mankind? Awesome that we're so blessed!

Again, we have to come down to see where the haughty look, the proud look, the proud heart. That's the heart that says, "I'm right." That's what God is telling us. That's the heart that is saying, "I'm right. My way is right. My understanding, my knowledge; I'm right."

How do you deal with that? Well, that's what this series is about because it's not a simple thing to deal with. You need help. We need help in order to change in this area. We can't do it on our own, otherwise, we'll just stay like this.

Proverbs 16:25 or **Proverbs 14:12**, they both say the same thing. Says it twice here very explicitly. **There is a way that seems right unto a man.** Isn't that how it is, our opinion, the way we think something is? Just to let you know, God hit this twice. Very simple statement. Very strong statement so that we might glean from it.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. So, what's that saying? If we think that way, if we live that way, we're sinning. Because the end of sin is death unless it's repented of. That's exactly what we're being told. It's spiritual. God wants us to grasp how ugly this kind of thinking is, the way we naturally are as human beings. Our opinions, the way "I see" something, the way "I think," "I'm right, you're wrong."

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." It's stressing the same thing we looked at a moment ago about the haughtiness and the pride. It's sin. It's something that illuminates sin, if we can see it; that lamp that illuminates, if you will, sin. If we can see pride and haughtiness that's an awesome blessing, if we see it in ourselves. Not in others. Because that's a tendency we have as human beings anyway, we can see the pride in others, the haughtiness in others, and "Boy, they've got a problem. But I don't." It goes back to that splinter thing and the big beam in our eye.

So again, I fear in going through the last sermon series and this series, is that if we're not careful we can take this on a plane that doesn't see it for what it is. Because we're going into things, we did in the last section, that are on a spiritual plane. If we don't see something spiritually, if we don't grasp it spiritually, we're hearing things kind of on a physical plane and they're not going into the depth that they need to in our mind to realize the importance and the seriousness of the content.

Government, as an example. My time in God's Church since 1969 is to see great misunderstanding of God's government for a long, long time. It's what led to the Apostasy and battles ever since. They've all gone back to this. This is the root of it because it has to do with God, it has to do with how our lives, how we regulate our lives and what we yield to in our lives for them to work the right way. God has to be in it to accomplish that. If He's not there we're just carnal human beings.

So much of this, again, has to do with coming to see our ways, our opinions, our ideas, and to grasp and comprehend there are many other things out there in the world, not just ours.

I fear sometimes that many don't grasp as much as we really need to the danger of the time in which we live in with modern technology. Because this is enhanced, this has magnified, if you will, many, many times over again because of the rapid expansion, the plethora, if you will, of information that's available today through modern technology.

People go to things and read it, see it on the internet, not understanding that what you're choosing to look at and look up in the first place you likely already have a prejudice toward that. Just like on a news station we might get pulled into one side or another and begin to feel that, well, this one, this one is the best news. Well, sadly, in some cases if you get any at all it may be, but that tells the condition of this country, how pathetic and bad it really is.

I hope we grasp this, that because of the internet we can read things and we can look things up and we don't even understand sometimes how that actually is working, the programs that are out there to lead us in a particular direction sometimes because of the very question we've asked.

It reminds me of a time in the Church before the Apostasy when some of us out in the field in the ministry would contact headquarters and ask them, "Is this particular subject being addressed? Is there anyone out there looking into changing a certain..." They know immediately by your question how you think because you're asking it in such a way that they know what you disagree with, if they are planning something, and so they feed you something else.

But if something else comes along and a question is asked that's you can tell it's from someone who is having problem in an area because others are asking these questions and you don't fully agree with them, and they want to know how to best help them, how to work with them. No, that isn't what they really want to do. They want to know how to best deceive you. Does that make sense, what I'm saying? And so, they give you that answer.

There are actually programs today that are set up through word searches that can work to kind of lead you in a particular direction. You have to be careful what you're fed. You have to be careful what you eat of that's out there, that you put in the brain. Because it's on that sometimes that people begin to think, "I know more now because I read it on the internet."

Someone mentioned Wikipedia beforehand here, and something that wasn't really positive, possibly, I think, by the way it was stated, and I think, "Toward me, which is a shock!" But you know what, people go to things like that and it's like, "If it's in Wikipedia it's right, I read it. That's the only information I really needed. It was in Wikipedia." They don't understand how Wikipedia works. They don't understand how information is fed to them and what they decide and what's put out there.

If we're ignorant of things like that, if we're not careful, we let it into our brain. Same thing with news. If you don't know where someone is coming from, I don't care what you listen to, it might be BBC, it might be RT, but you can't even get that anymore right now, I don't think, in

the states, Russian TV. I think they cut it off totally. I think they cut it off totally because of what happened because of their influence.

Whether it be from China, whether it be Al Jazeera, whether it be France 24. But anyway, you have to know a people or perhaps a party to know where things are coming from and what you're being fed. Even today just getting news is a very hard thing for people.

But I've seen people in God's Church because they receive a certain news item and because it's presented in a certain way, I've seen it over and over again where people feel that's factual, that's the truth.

Whoa, wait a minute. Do you not know where they're coming from? Do you not know the slant in the very way they've written it and what they're saying? It might be about the economy. There are certain ones who push certain things because in the long run they want more money out of you. If they can get you pulled in they might be able to talk you into something.

There's a lot of manipulation that goes on in this world and we have to be careful and not just believe everything that's out there or think that because we've read it we know the truth. I don't care what subject it is as a whole in life, you can go out there and search on it and you can find something that's the exact opposite on the same subject.

But sometimes we have a certain idea or thought ourselves of what is right and so we tend to go in that direction and read up in that regard to whatever it is, sadly, that we want funneled into our minds. Be careful. Understand the dangerous world we live in today. Be careful of what you grab hold of.

You know, the mind is a very precious thing, it really is. Our minds are an awesome blessing from God. How we work with them, especially when impregnated with God's spirit, it becomes more precious in that regard as to how we respond and how we yield on a spiritual plane to what God gives us. Because so many have come and so many have gone because they haven't followed a proper process of how God's spirit works in our life and the choices that are made.

Ecclesiastes 12:8—Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher. Now, this is said many a time, referred to many of times in scripture, especially in Ecclesiastes and other places. But it's really about mankind. It's about the life of man, if you will, the life of mankind. It concerns the ways and the thinking of human beings, of mankind. This is what man has, mankind has.

The word means "emptiness, futile (futility); that which is like a vapor." It's here and it's gone. How do you grab a hold? What's there? The mind of human beings is very much that way. What is sound and solid? What is absolute? Nothing as a whole, in human life, except for the truth. 6,000 years human beings have lived on this earth, and what is the fruit of that? And if there was nothing else what other word could you give to it but this? It's all futility. If not for God it's empty, it has no purpose; it's vain.

That's what's being said here. Vanity, that which is vain, empty, emptiness. Think, what a horrible thing if we're just here to live and whatever that lifespan is and there is nothing else. It's here for a little while in the scheme of things and it's gone. Vapor. It's a vapor.

We have to see ourselves, we have to come to understand and see things ourselves in that manner because it tells us the opposite. It tells us that life is rich and has incredible meaning when God's in it, when He calls us out of this world and He begins to give us opportunity to see and know things that are of Him, that don't just last for a little while, they last forever.

What an incredible plan God has when you look at the 7,100 years of what God is doing, the creation that's taking place. That's what gives us hope. That's what gives us strength.

What is mankind? They hope in certain things. Different religions, they hope in different things, that they hope there's going to be an afterlife, they hope they're going to come back in some form, in some animal. They hope that there's something more than just living that short span, whatever it is, seventy years, because it comes, and it goes. If you pass it up, that's a blessing. If you get there, it's a blessing. But it's what you do with it that's the greatest blessing of all.

What an awesome thing that we understand people don't just take off to heaven. What kind of hope does that give to people? But people try to hope in that. They hope that someone is up there giving them favor because they died, and they went there and so they're kind of interceding for them. Uncle so-and-so is watching out for you, or mom or dad. It's so shallow because it's not true and it's not real. But the more we see God and understand God's plan and purpose the more exciting it becomes.

I think of some of the things that happen in Ukraine. Because that's very gut wrenching when you see it on TV like that and you see things that you know are happening to children and families, and you see those things take place. But we understand it, it's been happening for 6,000 years and they all have an opportunity. It's going to be better than the one they have now, or had now, or had at this time, because they're going to be resurrected in the Great White Throne period having a physical life again.

What an awesome thing to know! Babies, children on up, whatever it might be. But what I love about it is to understand that those babies, those children, though they be young and the blessing of being young, the younger they are the less junk that's been put in the mind. So that when they're able to be taught and learn from a child the right way of life, truth beyond what we have now, and we have a lot of truth in God's Church. But they're going to have much, much more and they're going to be able to see God's Family because they manifest themselves as physical human beings on the earth. What an awesome thing!

The world is going to be filled with the truth and filled with peace. Wars aren't going to be allowed. And you think, what a blessing to grow up in a world like that. So, we don't mourn in the same way that others do.

I hate to see it. It's horrible what mankind does to mankind, but they're going to be blessed in a future time, they truly are. Far better than growing up in this cesspool. Because that's what it is in the world. Minds that are being destroyed, minds that are being hurt sometimes beyond the point of God being able to work with them.

Like it was before the flood and people lived so long and their minds became so tarnished, so corrupt that God couldn't work with them anymore. And you think, what a horrible thing that the mind can go so far that even if God's right there talking to you, you'll not receive it because you can't because it becomes like what Satan's was when it became corrupt.

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, All is vain. All is empty if it's just mankind of themselves. That's a hard thing for people to receive, sometimes even in God's Church because it's a matter of coming to understand without God that's what life is.

Even more, the Preacher being wise taught the people knowledge. So again, where does this come from and what is this about? We know that wisdom comes from God. And to have that, to be able to be taught that, whatever it might be that comes from God.

Goes on to say, **yes, he weighed and searched out and set in order many proverbs.** Now again here, we understand where the Proverbs come from. We just talked about that a little bit. Again, it's God's guidance and direction, but it's on a spiritual plane because every one of those things have to do with that which is spiritual.

I think of the one, I think it's Proverbs 6, where it talks about the ant, "Go to the ant, you sluggard." Well, you can learn from that physically, but how much more spiritually? If we follow through and do things in an orderly way, in a manner that it's talking about, by learning from a little bitty ant, it's not about ants and it's not just about physical work and labor, which if we can't learn that one we can't learn the spiritual side of it either.

I want you to hold your place there because let's back up here and just read in Proverbs 1. So, I'll come back to Ecclesiastes in a moment.

Proverbs 1:5, it says, **The wise will hear.** In other words, those who are really seeking out true wisdom. Because that's what it's talking about in Ecclesiastes. Where does that come from? It's a matter of a relationship with God. It's a matter of looking to God to learn, to receive what we can, whatever He offers us and gives to us, and striving to be of that same mind. Because wisdom, the word of God, it comes from God. God is the source.

If we want to be of a mindset to be of the mind of God we're going to listen, we're going to hear what God tells us. Now I say it again and again, because it's important that we learn and be reminded of it, over the past 2,000 years God has made it very clear many have been called into God's Church but very few of them have ever been chosen. That's an awesome thing to understand. What is that percentage? Very high. Very high during the period of Laodicea.

Think about it, during Laodicea and the Apostasy and then what came through the Apostasy. The vast majority turned against God, held on to their own ways. There were 600 groups out here because each one very soon after the Apostasy, because each one felt that they were right. It's that spirit, that mind.

"The wise will hear." If we're able to grow in God's Church it's because we're listening. Which isn't just a matter of it going in the ear, it's a matter of it going in the mind and living it. That's what faith is all about, being given the ability to believe God and then the desire the mindset that strives to live it. Because that's what faith is, living what we've been given to believe.

The wise will hear and will increase learning. So, growing in understanding, growing in our ability to learn is to me one of the most exciting things of God's Church. It has been especially in the periods we've gone through and especially since the Apostasy, candidly, and to see what God just continues to give, more and more because we're getting closer to the time His Son's coming and these things are going to be set within the Church. Awesome! So that we're the benefactors of that in a great way.

...**one of understanding will attain** or "acquire after" is what the word is about. So, "one of understanding." We want more than just knowledge. We want to be able to understand the matter. We've learned in God's Church very clearly that to grow in understanding means you begin to live and apply the knowledge you're given, and then you can begin to understand it. Before that you can't understand it.

It's like keeping the Sabbath day. You don't know everything about the Sabbath on the first Sabbath you've kept just because you obeyed. You don't understand it yet. You can be years in God's Church and continue to grow in understanding about the Sabbath day much later on. Incredible!

I think of the thing about not taking God's name in vain. It took decades in God's Church through Philadelphia and Laodicea to come to understand that that's not just a physical thing of taking God's name in vain on a physical plane, misusing His name, misusing Christ's name. Because that's what people believed because that's where we were.

We hadn't grown to a point yet where we came to understand that by what we live, by failing to live what God gives to us we take God's name in vain. We are the Church of God. We carry God's name and Christ's name because we are of the Body of Christ. If we're not living as we should in a right light or right example then we're taking their name in vain.

We learn that in time that that's what is spiritual about it, and so we grow in understanding. Understanding is a beautiful thing. Understanding government is a beautiful thing. Knowing about it is not enough because the vast majority that I have known have gone by the wayside never understanding government. All those who spoke, and the evangelists included, except for two, maybe three, of all who were evangelists during his time turned against Herbert

Armstrong, didn't understand government at all. Some of them did it very early on in the 50's and in the 60's, and it just got worse and worse and worse until we had an apostasy. Amazing.

...one of understanding will attain (acquire after) **wise counsels**. Again, it's knowing where that comes from. It comes from God, wanting to do things His way.

...to understand a proverb. Again, it isn't just a matter of knowing the proverb, like I mentioned the one in Proverbs 6, "Go to the ant, you sluggard," and it goes on to explain. That isn't enough. You have to understand what it's about. And if you can't do it physically, the physical part of it, if you're not living the physical part of it and being productive in your life and so forth, then you're not going to be able to learn it spiritually.

There are so many things we have to go through physically to learn what they're about, to learn what it is on a spiritual plane. If we don't get it physically we're not going to get it spiritually. That's why we can be judged and are judged by the little things in life. Because if we're faithful in the little much more can be given because this is where we're to learn spiritual principles and apply them in our lives.

Our lives are not mundane. Not the great of the world, because first of all, they won't receive this way of life. They won't listen to God. They won't listen to the truth. 6,000 years has shown that. People have to go through some pretty horrid things. We're going to read one later on. Not today, *Part 2*, I think, and then *Part 3*. But incredible what human beings have had to go through in order to begin to acknowledge something on a physical plane.

I mean, look at Pharoah. Even after everything he went through he never surrendered whatsoever. He never got it. He never wanted to get it. He just wanted his way, his rule, his government. How can you help a mind like that? You can go through a lot of things, lose your entire kingdom, see everything destroyed, see your own firstborn destroyed, be so haughty and proud you're going to chase them down into an area that you ought to have more sense in doing. Here is water on both sides and you're going to chase them, the Israelites? But he did and paid for it with his life because he wouldn't listen to God.

We're exceedingly stubborn, human beings are.

...one of understanding will attain to wise counsels, to understand a proverb and its interpretation... or the interpretation, it's interpretation. In other words, it's not just a nice platitude and nice saying because, again, as a whole within the Church through time Proverbs has been looked at on a very physical plane, to learn things from it to help a person physically.

Just like the ones about adultery and so forth, and people have looked to those things many a time on a physical plane, the examples that are given there in Proverbs. Yet it's more about that which is spiritual and what we can do toward God.

...to understand a proverb and its interpretation, the words of the wise... See, each time you read that, it just ought to scream out to you "the words of the wise." That's God's word

because there is no other source of wisdom. True wisdom, the words we want to latch on to for life come from God.

...and the dark sayings, or the hidden meaning. Even more so, it's hidden for a reason because it's spiritual and we can't see things that are spiritual unless God gives it to us. Especially in the Proverbs then if you start going through some of those things, it's hidden because we can't think any way but physically, as a whole, until that begins to change and we cry out to God and we seek after wisdom, we seek after being of one mind with God. Then we can begin to even see things like different things in Proverbs and learn from it, what it means on a spiritual plane.

...and the dark sayings, which it means just the hidden meaning. **The fear of the Eternal...** That's why it says this: "The fear of the Eternal." To understand not to be afraid of God but to be afraid of going against God. You begin to have a mind that realizes everything that's true, everything that's good, everything that's right comes from God, and I want to be of the same mind. I want to think the same way. I want to act the same way that He acts toward us.

He's very merciful, patient, loving, a kind of love that we experience from time to time but just don't have all the time because we're carnal human beings. We have a selfish love, *philia*. That's the best human beings can have, *philia* love. To have *agape* comes from God. It's God's love because it's of His spirit.

The fear of the Eternal is the beginning of knowledge. So just knowledge alone; we don't have understanding yet, but it begins here. We begin to learn when we're first called about the Sabbath, about the Holy Days, and we start building upon some of those things, we begin. This process begins and then as time goes on and we're able to begin to grow spiritually we begin to understand them, why, why it's there, what it's for, what it means.

...but fools despise wisdom. That's the history of mankind. Because it comes from God. That's what it's talking about here, it's talking about that which comes from God, the mind of God, the being of God, the word of God, because that's where true wisdom is. It's not about human wisdom, human reasoning.

...but fools despise wisdom, another word talking about those who just won't hear because why? They already know. They already know what's right. **...and instruction. Fools despise wisdom, and they despise instruction**, which this is a word for "correction" or "discipline." Who likes to receive correction and discipline in life? But in the Church in time, we learn "That's what I need. To change and to grow I need to know where I'm wrong."

I've known of people who have gotten so disillusioned they just quit the Church because, they express it, "I'm tired of being told how bad I am, that I have sin, that I'm wrong." Well, we can't afford to be tired of that in God's Church because we have to change. That's our hope, our strength.

Proverbs 1:8—My son, hear the instruction of your father. So, this can be just taken physically, but if a person can't learn what that's about, for a child to begin learning in that

regard what that is meant to be even on a physical plane and how it should be, to come to understand what it is spiritually for us is on another plane. The instruction of our Father, God Almighty, that's what it's about.

...and do not forsake the law, or the instruction, as it is, of your mother. God lets us know who our mother is. The Church is the mother of us all. It's how we are able to grow. It's the molding and fashioning and how we receive things from God. God gives of His spirit, candidly, that we be able to begin to learn from the mother, through the Church, because that's how He feeds us. It has to do with an attitude of mind toward God and toward His word, and toward what He tells us.

Just like what we've read. You know, that should trouble us when we read something, "every way of man is right in his own eyes." That should be scary to us. It really should. To think that's the way we are naturally as human beings. Our first response, our first reaction—what's it telling you—is a carnal one because it's coming from our mind. "I'm right."

That's just the way we are. That's the way we're wired. That's the way I'm wired. That's the way you're wired. God made us this way for a purpose, so that we can learn and want, make choices, do we want His way, do we want to change that because we see what our ways produce, the ways of mankind.

Nothing but drama. Absolutely, that's all that man's ways can produce because of this mindset, is drama. It's not peace. When has the world known peace? How long has the world ever had peace? It doesn't last long. We've had war after war after war after war, fighting and fighting and fighting and divisiveness and people fight each other. It doesn't matter what kind of governments existed; people fight against it, people fight each other.

Today you would think that people would be getting sick of fighting each other, sick of how evil and how ugly things can get, how people can treat one another. That's not God's way. Yet some of them talk about God and give you this concept of mind that they're on God's side, and yet speak evil toward others. That's not God's way. You're speaking with a forked tongue here.

On one hand they're talking about various things of churches and what churches are doing, and then on the other say something about others. And you think, is that God's mind? Is that the way God says to treat one another? Is that the way to have unity and oneness and peace?

It's why democracy can't work. That's why no form of government can work. That's why voting can't work. That's why we don't have voting in God's Church. "Now, everybody that agrees with me, hold up your hand." "Should we do this or do that? Let's vote on it."

I think I was talking about the father and the mother, yes, and listening and so forth. So, let's go back to Ecclesiastes 12 now because really that's what it's talking about here in Ecclesiastes, the same sort of thing as we read there in verse 8 and 9, now continuing on in verse 10.

Ecclesiastes 12:10—The Preacher sought (searched out), it means to “seek after,” **sought to find out acceptable** (desired) **words**. So, we’re like that. If we want to do what’s right we have to learn even what things mean. Certain things that are maybe mistranslated or not translated properly, and then when we start to see them God gives us an ability to see them in a light that “Now I understand it.” And so, we’re ever growing in things like that. This is a part of what it’s talking about here.

This is what we have to do. It says **and wrote the truth**. That’s a pretty bold statement. But I like it even in one translation that translates it **and wrote the plain truth**. Because that’s what it’s about. Because it literally means, “and wrote the truth plainly.” So, you can say it either way, “wrote the plain truth,” or “wrote the truth plainly.”

God gives us that ability to grow and keep learning and growing in understanding. This is something that’s an exciting thing to experience. That’s why I used to love the name of the magazine *The Plain Truth*, because what other thing expressed it more? And Herbert Armstrong, he had an ability, a blessing that God gave to him to put things in a plain way.

That’s why when he talked to world leaders some, including evangelists, got upset because he wasn’t quoting scripture to them. “If you’re to go into all the world, preach the gospel into all the world...” and they literally got upset because he wasn’t quoting scripture. You think, give me a break! What he told them was the plain truth. He told them about nations and why nations don’t, aren’t able to have peace. He got to the heart and core of things that are spiritual in nature but did it plainly so that they could understand. They couldn’t understand things of the Church. They didn’t have God’s spirit.

He even spoke to them; I remember listening to one where he was talking about Satan. One fellow listening on the other side there was agreeing with him about Satan. If I remember right he was in Egypt at that time and the individual was agreeing with him, about, “Yes, that’s right. He’s a very real being.” Because many in the world and world leaders as a whole, they don’t see him as a real being and what he’s doing.

...and wrote the truth. The words of the wise... So again, this comes from God, and how does it benefit us? Well? **The words of the wise are as goads**. The word, it means that they can cut and sting. That’s what it’s referring to here in that respect. God’s word is that way. What is true, there are things that sometimes just sting. When we have to acknowledge certain things and say, “Yep, it’s the way, my first reaction. I tend to think I’m right. I have my opinion.”

You have to just stop and think about it because as we grow we should have more of the mind of God working in us. But you have to check that and make certain before something is blurted out. I don’t do that nearly all the time. (Don’t ask her, but you could ask my wife.) So anyway, that’s the way we are as human beings, that’s the way we tend to think. That’s the way we tend to respond to things, carnally and physically. The first thing that comes to our mind, it’s good to put a check on it.

“The words of the wise.” So, if it’s true and it’s right there are going to be times that it does smack with a little bit, it hurts a little bit. It’s painful to see ourselves the way we really are. But then to thank God for showing us that so that we can change.

And as nails fastened by the masters of assembly, which are given from one Shepherd. So again here, just a different way of expressing something here as a matter of building and so forth here and what we should do when we’re striving to be wise and live what is right and checking ourselves about various things. That’s just a matter of smart construction as far as yielding ourselves to God’s creation.

“Which are given from one Shepherd.” We have Christ who is the head of the Church and God’s given everything to him, and that power and authority, and we understand those things. So, another way that this word is described, or these words are described is “as something that is sharp and can sting; it can cut,” but also, “something that can be driven into the mind,” because this is a pretty resistive thing. It can have to do with how we build and wanting to build right, but it can also have to do with the fact that something that is sharp that takes a lot to get into here through this.

Verse 12—Further, by these, my son, be admonished, literally means “to be warned,” **that there is no end in the making of many books.** Now, that one ought to just jump out at us in a big, big way right now as far as the world is concerned, as far as what’s out there on the internet.

...and much study, or “reading,” as the word literally means, **is weariness to the flesh.** Weariness to human life. Why is that? Because what is out there, as a whole, is just packed with opinion. “The way I see it...” “What I think is right...”

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. So, this is after going through the entire book of Ecclesiastes, this is what it leads to, **Fear God.** Because the whole story through Ecclesiastes is one of people do not look to God. The human mind doesn’t naturally look to God, as a whole, if you will. The only way it can truly look to God in spirit and truth is when God begins to call us, begins to work with us, begins to give us that ability to see what then can be changed. Because otherwise, it really can’t be changed in a way that is in unity with God.

So, it begins by fearing God, which means literally to fear to do anything that is not in agreement with God, and that’s wisdom. If only we could do that. We can’t do that perfectly, but we should strive to do that and grow in that ability.

...and keep what His commands, which may come directly from Him, may come through the Church by what He’s given to the Church, to the ministry to give. **...for this is the whole of man.** In other words, literally means it’s what makes mankind whole, it’s what makes us whole and complete. Because, again, it comes from God, it’s of God’s spirit.

For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. That’s an amazing thing to understand, that God knows everything about us. He knows the very thoughts of our

mind. That ought to be sobering in itself, to know that God knows everything we think. The desire is to get this thinking right because we want Him to see something good, Himself, His mind, His being, His way in our thinking.

For God will bring every work into judgment. It's all about judgment. Things we're going through right now in this stage just before Christ returns is very much about judgment. It's about how we're responding. Because there are things happening within the Church right now that individuals are being judged in a (how can I say it?), in an accelerated fashion because of where we are in time, because of what has to be finished before Christ returns.

For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it's good or whether it's evil. So, nobody pulls anything over God's eyes where God can't see. Everything comes out. Either we're in this, we stand for this way of life, we seek to live this way of life, that is our heart, our mind toward God, or we're playing some games somewhere. I'm just going to say we have some that are playing games still, and God will bring that all out because we will be cleaned as a Body before Christ's coming.

Once again, I'm going to quote here from in the beginning: God's ways have everything to do with righteous judgment, has to do with how we think in the mind. Having our own opinions, feeling that we're right, is not smart. It's not good judgment. Definitely is not righteous and it's not judgment. It doesn't fit the definition of what comes from God. Those are hard things for us to learn, they truly are.

So, all these things we discussed in the last series, the things we've hit upon here at the beginning about our way, our thinking, our mind, we have to change. God desires us to become better now, stronger in spirit, more at one with Him now as a result of going through these things.

We haven't been just going through this last series and now this series just to have a routine of life, going to services and listening to sermons. It's about a change that God desires that we make in a matter that reflects growth and progress in our life.

Hopefully all will be able to learn from this and begin to be more on guard and watchful of "The way I see things," "The way I think," "The way I respond to matters," and ask—because you have to have help, because you can't do it on your own, and that's where we're going with this series—you have to have God's help, and it all starts with humility.

Humility is a threat to our being right all the time. Humility is a threat to our carnal human nature because it works against, which is good, our own carnal human nature, when we have the begetting of God's spirit living within us. We have to seek having a spirit, a mind of humility, and to have that in truth and spirit is a matter of going to God and asking God for help to develop that more fully. We want to seek it. We want to have that. There are ways we can do that. Again, you should know exactly where this sermon is going if you know this.

We want to have a humble spirit and more humility in our life and less pride. And pride, it's out there and it's in life. It's in life within the Church and it's something that we have to fight against with all of our being, of being lifted up. Again, this is about our minds and the way we think.

So again here, first in order is to be able to come to see and then acknowledge our ways. It requires humility to do that. You have to cry out to God for it. But to really see ourselves, brethren, it takes God's help. You can't see your own mind. You can't see your own motivation for things. You can't understand how this mind works. We know how it works - out of selfishness. That's how it works primarily because we're carnal human beings. But it needs to work more by yielding to God, by wanting God. God has given us means whereby we can do that.

Proverbs 15; so much in Proverbs. **Proverbs 15:31—The ear that hears the reproof, a word that means “the rebuke or the correction,” of life will abide among the wise.** Because to grow in the mind of God this is the very process we have to go through. We have to understand how we think and then fight against it.

So, you've got to be able to come to see more how you think in the sense of you're being right, of you standing up to you're right, your opinion, your first reaction so often in life. God is making it very clear to us we have to make a dent in that and have to start changing that more than we ever have.

It's a matter of receiving then that correction, to know that God knows what we need and when we need it, and where we are. Our desire is to abide among, to dwell among within the Church as well, the wise, those who are doing this very thing, seeking to be at one with God. Not just living life like we have for the last 20, 30, 10, 5 years, ever how long we've been in God's Church. This is an opportunity to grow more.

We've been given a lot and great changes have taken place in our lives, but God's letting us know we can make more.

He who refused instruction (chastening) **despises his own life.** What a horrible thing! Yet I know there are those who fit this category, who will not hear, will not do this, go through this process in the way that they should. God says if you do that you just despise your own life. Don't fight against it. It's a matter of, again, believing God, fearing God, and knowing that God is right.

...**but he who heeds** (listens, hears, pays attention to) **reproof** (rebuke, correction) **gets**, or the word is (acquires) **understanding.** That's what we want. Because knowledge isn't enough. We can hear this last sermon series and this sermon series and maybe have certain knowledge that we're able to agree with, but God want us to have the understanding. That comes from practice, from experience, from putting it to work. In other words, being active in thinking about when we have opinions or disagreement or judgment toward someone else.

That's when you've got to nip it in the bud. It's when you've made a decision, a judgment in your mind toward someone else. The only reason a judgment is made about someone else is because you're right, they're wrong. Every time that's the result. We have to begin understanding that thinking, a disagreement with someone, something that someone has said, because we're right. Are you? Truly? And if you are, how are you handling that truth?

God wants us to handle His truth in a right way. Our history is full of people who have not handled the truth right. I think of all those evangelists and what they did. They were given the truth. They sat at Herbert Armstrong's feet in Ambassador College when it first started, his first students. I think of the hideous betrayal of their lives toward God, but who they saw was Herbert Armstrong, and they became familiar. He had weaknesses. We all have weaknesses.

They began to look at various things and judge accordingly. They became or they came to a point where they knew they were right. Amazing! And even knew more! That's why they didn't listen to him anymore at Bible studies and Sabbath services like they should have. Because what they did in Bible studies they did in Sabbath services as well.

But he who heeds, or again, "reproof, rebuke," **acquires understanding**. So, it's a matter of the hearing of it and hearing doesn't mean it just goes in our ears. But it's a doing of it after we hear it. That reveals whether we really listen to God, whether we're really hearing what God gives us is when we start doing it. Because just the noise isn't enough. Pharoah heard God and didn't change. Many people hear God, and our history is many have heard the truth and yet look where they went.

The fear of the Eternal is the instruction, and the word literally means "chastening" of **wisdom**. So, wisdom for us, it's going to be a corrective thing. Receiving the mind of God is a corrective thing to our thinking. That's why we have to repent, think differently. We have to know where we're sinning. We have to know.

We already read the scriptures that talked about haughtiness and pride, and yet we understand what it says, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life," that's what we are as human beings. That's what controls us unless we learn to begin controlling it through the power of God's spirit, fighting it through the power of God's spirit.

The fear of the Eternal is the instruction (chastening) of wisdom, and before honor is humility. One of the greatest obstacles I've ever seen in God's Church that prevent people from growing is pride, is haughtiness. It's a stumbling block. It's a roadblock. It's a concrete wall that you hit going very fast. You may not even know you've hit it, but you've hit it.

So, if there is pride and haughtiness and people get lifted up, because every time people have desired power, every time people want recognition, every time people want to be heard because they're right... I think of some things we went through after the Apostasy and different ones that would come forward, that they have this sermonette they'd like to give, or this sermon they'd like to give. And you think, "You've got to be kidding me." Anyway, I'm sorry.

Anyway, it's that mind of haughtiness and pride. It's like "I've got things from God that I want to share with others because I'm right." It's a sick thing, it really is.

It's like that cookie thing I've talked about. Dispute? Why dispute over something like that? Very physical. Power, it does strange things to people. Authority can do strange things to people. You can never, never, never let it go to the head. If something is done right, thank God. It's God that receives the credit because if it's right it comes from Him. If it's true it comes from Him. He's to receive the glory, not us. We're not to try to lift ourselves up or be looked upon. That's not the way it works with God.

Then it goes right on into **Proverbs 16:1—The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Eternal.** This is not a very well translated verse.

Actually, there's a version in the Bible that does have a closer translation of the actual intent of what's being said here. **The plans of the mind belong to mankind.** In other words, there's a way we think. We think we're right. We make plans according to how we think we're right, and on and on it goes. ...**but the answer of the tongue is from the Eternal.** In other words, our way isn't right. God's already shown us that our way of thinking, our ways, our opinions, unless they're based on what is true from God they're just sin because it's pride.

It's about pride and haughtiness. That's why we do those things. That's why we think that way. It's because of the ugliness of pride. "I'm right." That's why any time two people have a spat, a disagreement, a conflict, definitely one is wrong. Most often both are. But definitely one is wrong. It depends on whether God is in any of that and where. If it comes from God then beware.

So again here, **The plans of the mind belong to God, our thinking, our being right, but the answer of the tongue is from the Eternal. All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes.** Isn't that amazing? It's that same saying like we read earlier. We're right. Our way is pure, our way of thinking. Just wish everybody else could see that. Sometimes we just look for opportunity to share that.

That even gets worse sometimes when we want to share what we know. We want others to hear to the point sometimes we'll bully, or what was the expression someone wrote recently here, this mindset of interrogating others, of interrogating others, to ask questions to pull something out of them so they can find a fault so they can come at them with something that punches because they're right and they feel that they're doing things wrong in the first place, so they're judging them. They're trying to get something out of them in order to, in their distorted thinking, prove they're right, lift themselves up in pride. It always has to do with a wrong judgment toward someone else in those cases.

The ways of a man are pure in His own eyes, but the Eternal weighs the spirits. So, God knows what's in us and He'll help us see what we can't. What an incredible thing to understand, that the only way I can deal with this, the wrong thinking, the wrong response,

which is I hope we all do, is cry out to God for the right mind to deal with that, the help to see those things and not to blindsides ourselves.

Because the human mind seeks to deceive itself because it wants to be right, it wants to see not just itself, it wants others to see it as being right.

Commit your works to the Eternal, whatever we do. You know, we just want to make sure that God's in it. I don't care if it's something small, something big. I hope we are doing those kinds of things in our life to where we want to share our life with God.

He already knows everything we're doing but the things that are important that you share in prayer, and so often that's a matter of thanksgiving as well included in that, God wants us to enunciate. It doesn't even have to be said, it can be just out of the mind to God in prayer because He knows everything there and you can pray to Him that way.

He wants that feedback, if you will. He already knows but if we are thinking that way that means we're thinking about that response, but we're thinking and then it's coming out of us what it is that we want to do that's right. God loves that, truly does. When we're doing the right thing the right way, it's a very pleasing thing. Just as a child to a parent. When a child does things that are right, that are good, that are whatever it is, giving thanks, whatever it might be, different things that a child might say, and it's pleasing to the parent, how much more to God?

Commit your works to the Eternal and your thoughts will be established. So, in whatever we do we want to make sure that it's in agreement with God. Ever how we do it we want to make sure it's in agreement with God. Then God says because of that, if we're doing it that way, if we're seeking to do it in the right way, He says our thoughts, our thinking will be established.

Isn't that what you want? Your mind to be transformed and your thoughts to be established in God's way? Your thinking to be established in a unity and a oneness with God? That's what we want.

Proverbs 18:12—Before destruction (ruin) the heart of a man is haughty. It's because of sin, and it's a very hard thing for us to see pride. Yet there can be no greater pride if we can see it, "My way," "I'm right," "You're wrong." We have to be very careful with that. Better be sure you're right with God. And if you are, then be careful how you handle it.

Before ruin the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility. So, I love the examples where it talks about don't be concerned about lifting yourself up as human beings do. You just do it naturally. But about God. If you do the right things, God lifts you up. What can be a greater thing than God lifting us up. That means because of His way, if it's living in us and toward others it's God that receives, is to receive from us the thanks, the praise for even that ability. Because it's not of us, it's from God.

Verse 13—One who answers a matter before they hear it is foolishness and shame to them. It's a word that means "humiliation." If only the person could only see it, that they're actually humiliating themselves by things that they're saying. So again here, it's about the thinking and be careful before something comes out of our mouth. Be careful of words that we use and how we use them.

Proverbs 22:4—By/through humility... So, this is something that we're going to be talking more about next Sabbath, about how to grow in humility, about how to humble ourselves before God and you already should know the answer. But we're going to focus on this a little bit more as we go along here because this is where we have to focus, this is where this change can begin to take place in our thinking. It's humbling ourselves before God, looking to Him for the strength, the mind to do right, to think right.

By humility and fear of the Eternal... That always has to do with when it's said that way, to fear not to have God in the issue, in the matter at hand. His way, doing it His way, doing it the right way because it's God's.

By/through humility and fear of the Eternal are riches and honor and life. It's talking about eternal life. That's where it's all leading as we yield ourselves to that process.

So again, it takes so very much for the human mind to come to true humility. It isn't something we automatically have within us. It isn't something you can just think about having tomorrow, "I think I'm going to be humble tomorrow. I'm going to be more humbled tomorrow than I was today." It's a spiritual thing and it comes from God by crying out to God for the help to have that kind of a mindset, so that we can come to see our own ways, our own opinions, our own ideas and thoughts, judgments and so forth. Because they're not God's, they're ours. If it says it's ours, if it's a matter of something that is ours it's ours alright.

Finally, we'll end here in **Jeremiah 17:5—Thus says the Eternal, The man is cursed who trusts in man.** Very simple. So, what does that mean? Well, it's like putting too much emphasis and importance upon things we might receive through that little square tube we watch or the little one that we search for things and things come to us, and we put too much importance in what's being said. We elevate the knowledge, supposedly, that's there and that becomes more our way. We add strength to our way already because we're wanting to whatever. We want to be right and so we're trying to reinforce our right.

God says, "The man is cursed who trusts in man." So, if we trust in ourselves or in others God says we're just going to be cursed. Why? Because it's a matter of sin. God must be first in our life. This is a real time thing then. It's not a matter of just saying it or thinking about it, it's a matter of doing it. That's reflected in our prayers and what we say to God, whether we really, truly trust Him.

The man is cursed who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, in other words, "his strength." So, where do we receive our strength from? Well, our prayer life should reflect that.

If it really comes from God we're going to be praying, we're going to be looking to God for help. We're not going to be doing other things that strengthen our viewpoint, our thinking.

...and whose heart turns aside from the Eternal. For he shall be like, it says "the heath" here. It's has to do with a barren area, a naked area, a barren area of land, if you will, **in the desert**, basically, is what it's talking about here. **And shall not see when good comes**, in other words, when it's right in front of them.

So, it's a matter of what an incredible thing, something good and right is happening, and the person doesn't even have the ability to see it. Why? Well, because what you're focused upon, what you're doing is wrong.

It's like saying here, **He is like one naked in the desert who cannot see when good comes along**. So, there's more to the story here. **...and shall inhabit the parched lands of the wilderness**. So, it's using something very physical here to draw an analogy, if you will, to something spiritual that we need to see. It goes on to say, **in a salt land not inhabited**.

In other words, it's giving an example of something here, you talk about a wrong place to try to grow something is in an area where there is a lot of salt, like next to the Dead Sea, and it's dry. And what can grow there? If it is, it's something pretty bad. So, anyway, it's not productive. That's the whole point here. Something growing there, but it's not productive. It's hard for things to grow.

Then it goes on to say, **But blessed is the man who trusts in the Eternal**. So, it's making a distinction here of something. If you rely on yourself, this is what you're like. How much of a waste of time is it to go out here, build a salt bed, and cover it so that no water can reach it, but so that it can really get hot, maybe put some heat lamps out there as well, and expect something good out of it. God's saying that's just kind of dumb. Nothing is going to grow. Nothing is going to be produced that way.

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Eternal." So, we look to God, we trust in God, **and whose hope is the Eternal. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters**, in other words, just the opposite. So, we can have something that's right that comes from God, that's productive that comes from God, because we're looking to God because God's our focal point.

Because we can go through the motions and say that God is and be in services and tithe and all those other things, and yet the majority have left. So, what does that show? Some were planting the wrong way.

So he shall be like a tree that's planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots on the river and shall not see when heat comes. It's not going to affect them. **...and her leaf shall be green and shall not be concerned in the year of drought and shall neither cease from yielding fruit**. In other words, if we're close to God, God says you're going to yield fruit.

You know what, God's spirit can't—it makes it very clear—God's spirit can't go out except that it produces fruit. If it's coming into our life it's going to be producing fruit. But it's all in a matter of how we use it because we have to apply it, just like this series is getting ready to go more deeply into.

The heart.... So, this is said right here in context with this. **The heart is deceitful above all things**, talking about our hearts as human beings. Exceedingly deceitful. We have to have things pointed out to us. "My way is right." "My opinion..." "My..." We have to see things plainly for what's said so that we can begin to address it.

Because God says this is the way we are. We either accept that as being true or we somehow deceive ourselves, "No, I'm doing pretty good and things are going pretty good right now." If we don't listen to it very closely, we don't apply ourselves to it because we don't take it seriously.

So, we hear the sermons, but we don't go home next week or the week after and pray about them, how to apply them. We're not seeking how to live them and meditating on some of these things and trying to see ourselves the way we're told we need to do. So, either we do that, or we don't.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Isn't that an incredible thing to say? But God says that about the human heart, that pride, to uphold our being right, to get offended or to fight against someone who would dare come against that. We can turn ugly as human beings, think evil things, wrong thoughts. That's what it's talking about here. That's just the way of our thinking as selfish human beings, this protective thing that's inside of us. To protect pride? Yeah, we do it.

Who can know it? With the whole point of this being God is saying, you can't know yourself, you can't understand this, you can't see it, you can't deal with it unless you look to Him, put your trust in Him. You look to Him for the help to fight it, to conquer it, to overcome it.

I, the Eternal, search the heart. That's why He can reveal to us what's inside. We can't search it. You cannot search in truth, in spirit and in truth your own mind without God's spirit. With God's spirit you can, you can see these things, you can grow in these things, you can fight the fight.

I try the reins, even to give everyone according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doing. So, we want to make sure, strive to do the right thing, and then we'll be blessed, and God will help us even more so.

So, with that plenty of food for thought. Next Sabbath we'll take the next step.