

## The Love of God, Pt. 2

Ronald Weinland

March 4, 2023

This new series about *The Love of God*, of which this is *Part 2*, is very timely, especially when considering some of the previous sermon series and the upcoming spring Holy Days, because they're coming up on us quite quickly.

This sermon series helps tie these things together in a very meaningful way, and as we continue to go through this hopefully we will grasp that even more deeply. So, as stated at the beginning last week, growing in deeper understanding of the depth of God's love toward us actually helps us to more fully trust Him. They go together, and the more we can see those things the more at peace we truly are.

We need that ever more so especially as we see how the Thunders continue to be as powerful and as strong as they are, seemingly increasing in power and frequency as we continue on. So, that means we need to grasp more deeply this subject matter so we can better navigate the times that are in front of us. Because they're not going to be easy, they're going to be very difficult, very trying.

Now, last Sabbath we covered most of the book of Zephaniah. I was quite amazed, quite inspired, quite surprised in some of the things that were said there because I never saw the book of Zephaniah in that light until it was time. It's incredible how much God focuses upon the Church, the remnant Church, here at this end-time. Primarily because it goes together with some of the most important times for mankind, period.

We're at the end of six thousand years, we're at the beginning of a new world, if you will, under a new government, God's government, when mankind's government is totally taken away, and the fact that the world will no longer be deceived about God. They're going to have the truth, one Church. It's hard to comprehend all that but that's what God is going to do.

And so, because this is such a momentous time, a time as well that God has reserved for the judgment of mankind over the past six thousand years, it's going to be executed now in a very powerful way, although it was executed, in one respect, back during the time of Noah. But since that time then, obviously, mankind has continued on in the same ways and has gotten worse and worse until now we're at a point in time where I believe we've surpassed that period of time, of the times of Noah, as far as mankind and the mind of people and how people think because of technology and the misuse of technology.

But there is so much that focuses on this period of time about judgment, about a change in government, about all the things that God is getting ready to do in the world, and in the

midst of all that, His focus, He lets us understand and lets us see, is on us. It's on His people. It's on the Church. It's on the fulfilling of a government that's coming, the 144,000. That has to be completed. It's on those who are going to have opportunity within the Church to continue into that new age with opportunities before them that one can't really begin to even imagine.

So again, the book of Zephaniah covers that quite thoroughly in that respect, even though it's a very short section of scripture. But I thought it'd be good to review some of those verses here again today before we continue on.

Zephaniah 3. These things are going to lead us into things we're going to cover in other scriptures that we need to embrace even more so as we come to understand the love of God, and the love of God for us, for His people.

**Zephaniah 3:17—The Eternal your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save. He will rejoice over you with joy.** So, we live at a time although this is something He speaks of very specifically concerning this period of time and the Church at this time, both that which was scattered, that which was totally gone, and that which is a remnant, it still pictures the fact that God has loved His people, always has, has a great plan for mankind that mankind can hardly grasp or comprehend even with His holy spirit.

We're ever learning about that plan. We've learned so much since the Apostasy about that plan because God has revealed so much more. It's really incredible, it truly is. Sometimes we don't grasp what we've been given.

It says, **He will**, it says "rest in" but **work in His love**. He has, always has. That's the way He is. That's the way God is. It defines God, this kind of love. The more we understand that kind of love, again, the more we can begin to grasp the way God sees us.

**He will work in His love. He will joy over you with singing.** Again, that focus right now, it's the remnant, it's a small group of people.

Then **verse 18** goes on, **I will gather...** I'm just going to read it as it is and not the way some of the scriptures are in here. **I will gather My afflicted from the appointed time.** When you understand what this is about we have that same word that's used in Leviticus 23 about the Sabbath, about the Holy Days, about the Passover, because they are appointed times that God set aside year by year by year or week by week by week.

But here is another appointed time, something God has set aside in time in the seven thousand, one-hundred-year plan for mankind, a time of judgment, a time of a transition from one world to another, a time of mankind's self-government to that of God's government. That moment in time of God's judgment is an appointed time. God very specifically,

throughout the Old Testament especially, makes it very clear judgment is coming upon mankind. It's the execution of judgment for the way mankind has lived.

That's why there will be the kind of wars we're going to experience, the kind of horrifying things that are going to take place in a very short time. And so, this is addressed here.

**I, God speaking, will gather My afflicted from the appointed time who are of you.** Who else? What an awesome thing to understand. A moment in time when these things are going to be executed in the earth, and yet God is going to save people out of it, especially, first and foremost, concerning the Church.

**Who have been bearing the reproach, "the blame; the contempt" of others.** But it's not just us. Again, this goes through time. This is just the pinnacle of this period of time of six thousand years and what people have had to go through that have been called to be a part of 144,000. Because that has been God's primary focus for the six thousand years, preparing His government.

It's a lot of work! Work we can't even begin to grasp the magnitude of. Six thousand years drawing individuals out, calling individuals out at different times to mold and fashion something very specific within them. To transform the mind, the thinking, but unique characteristics of every person to fit somewhere very specifically so in that temple.

We can't grasp that. We believe it, we know what God has shown us that He's doing and has been doing, but the magnitude of it, we can't grasp. The work that's been involved in it, we can't grasp. We can't grasp how God works with this mind in our lives through that period of time to do this molding and fashioning, of His spirit that's working in us because He gives us of His holy spirit, an impregnation of it.

**Behold, I will deal with all who have been afflicting you at that time.** So, this is a very specific time that's symbolic in many ways of how God's going to work with all of mankind who have afflicted God's people through six thousand years. Because there's coming more judgment later on as well as individuals who are resurrected, but not the same matter of what we're going to go through at this specific moment in time, but still has a symbolism here and a truth involved here that God is still going to deal with all who have gone through these things at times.

They're going to be resurrected and they're going to be dealt with. And thankfully, because of this government that's coming before the Millennium, and then when the Millennium becomes established, and then the Great White Throne, it's going to be a whole lot easier for them - whole lot easier.

**Behold, I will deal with all who have been afflicting you (God's people), but specifically saying, at that time, and I will save those who are lame, and gather those driven out. And I**

**will set them up.** So again, what does that mean? God doesn't call the great and the mighty of the world. He calls us, He humbles us.

We have to come to a point where we are humbled to be able to receive His truth in the first place. We have to come to the point where we begin to see ourselves for what we are. And so, there is no mystery, we know what we are. We know that we need to be saved. We know that we need saving. We don't deceive ourselves in that. We grasp our evil human nature and the selfishness that's deep down inside of us.

So, He says, "I will save those who are lame, and have gathered those driven out," not yet whole but being made whole. The things we go through to get where we're going.

I think of the word used in Revelation that talks about those who were, it says, "beheaded," because they didn't understand what they were translating. A word that just means "to be cut off." You think, well, I can think of one, John the Baptist, but what about all the rest? They didn't have their heads beheaded, of people who are going to be in God's Family. So we came to understand, God revealed that it's a matter of people who are cut off. That's what happens when we are called into God's Church. We are cut off from this world, the way we used to live, the friendships, the relationships, because they don't want anything to do with us, as a whole. So, relationships go through a lot during that period of time, and this is similar.

**...those driven out. And I will set them up...** literally, it means **to be praised.** Now, those who are a part of 144,000 understandably so because they're in the God Family at that time, but also those who continue to live on.

**...and famous.** The world's idea of famous today is not the same as what God is showing what will be famous in the future. Sports figures, people look up to them, love to wear their names on their shirts. Now, some of you do - don't spaz out on me.

I remember when Calvin Klein first came out for blue jeans, and somebody had passed down a pair of blue jeans to our daughter. I don't know, she was about four-ish. In that area. Someone standing in line one time for a movie said, "Oh look! She has Calvin Klein jeans!" It's like, whoop tee doo. But it was important to them. It was like, "This is awesome, they're making them for children, and she has a pair." It's like, "Yeah, well, anyway."

But things that people esteem in their minds in this world is not what God esteems and what the world is going to be shown that needs to be esteemed. God, God's way, God's Family, God's people in the right way, even as the world will begin to esteem one another in a proper way as people are drawn into God's Church, receive God's spirit, the begettal of God's spirit, and then we learn to esteem one another in a right way, in a sound way.

**...and famous in every land where they have been put to shame.** So, the things that people have gone through, that we have gone through, it's going to be exciting for people when their minds are opened up and they begin to realize, especially those involved in the fact that they were involved themselves with causing harm, whether it be that which is stated and said toward God's people, family, people on the job.

Because there are a lot of people who have made choices and decisions to attack different ones of God's Church, and most always everyone in God's Church, because they dislike what you believe, they dislike what you do, they dislike the fact that you keep the Feast of Tabernacles, that you take your children out of school to go to the Feast of Tabernacles and you keep the seventh-day Sabbath, and all the other things that go with that. And how much more now if they know that you believe that Joshua has not eternally existed? Even within the scattered Body that has caused problems.

God's going to make things right. That's what this is all about. In many ways, individuals who are a part of God's Church are going to be on the receiving side of that in a very unique way, which is good and proper. But you've got to be able to handle it. You've got to maintain that humble attitude and spirit at a time when individuals are looking up to you and saying, "You! You were one of them?" "You went through the Apostasy?" "You were called in 2008, before...?" On and on it goes. The things they're going to be told in what individuals went through here at the end time that are alive at that time.

You can't grasp that yet because you haven't experienced it. You've been told about it, but it's going to be far, far greater than what you can imagine. That's why it's going to take a humble spirit. That's why I gave (and give) a forewarning: don't ever forget to hold on to a humble spirit and not take it to yourself. Because if any do that they will lose it, even in the Millennium.

**And I will set them up for praise or to be praised and famous in every land where they have been put to shame.** And so, where is that? New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Canada, scattered throughout Europe, South Africa, different places wherever God's people are.

**At that time...** What time? God's appointed time when He starts doing these things in the world, when He allows these things to take place and He's instrumental in doing so much of them. Because He's orchestrating the timing of when people are going to do, nations are going to do the things they're going to do.

**After that time, I will bring you again, even in the day when I gather you.** So, it's during that time that God talks about gathering us together, which has to do with watching over and taking care of us during this period of time, giving protection, intervention, and help. But

gathering them together to go on into a new age. That means putting a shield. That means putting a wall around. That means guarding and watching over, keeping His people.

**For I will make you famous and a praise among all people on earth.** So, every person? Well, for those, candidly, who begin to learn, which will be most – God says there may be some who will not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, but in time they’re going to learn. But as a whole all people who will receive Christ as the King of kings, His government, and the truth, which will be most of mankind. It’s what it’s talking about here, those individuals.

“And I will make you a praise among all people on the earth.” They’re going to know that there was a little Church, a little scattered group of people. Little group in Cincinnati. Little group down toward Dallas. Little group in Dublin, Georgia. Wherever God’s people are scattered, and some not even able to be together with another group, just by themselves.

**For I will make you famous and a praise among all the people on earth when I turn back your captivity from before your eyes,** says the Eternal. When He fulfills and accomplishes this.

So, let’s continue on in this subject about the love of God and begin in an area of scripture in John 3. We’re familiar with some of these verses. The world doesn’t grasp these things. That’s a marvel when you go through John 3 because there are things here that as they are read one can’t help but think about how traditional Christianity sees these because they can’t see it for what’s true.

All the more so we should grasp how blessed we are, how much God loves us to reveal these things to us. Sometimes we just don’t grasp how blessed we are, we really don’t.

**John 3:5—Joshua answered...** He’s talking to Nicodemus and the subject matter being born again. It blows his mind. Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews and he can’t understand what Christ is saying because he’s not being given of God’s holy spirit to grasp it.

**Truly, truly, I say to you, except a person be born of water and spirit...** Now, that word “of” means “from out of.” So, what’s that? When you enter into physical life? Or is there more to it than that? Well, obviously, everyone has to be born in physical life before they’re going to be able to have opportunity to have part in anything greater. But we are born as we come out of the water and have hands laid upon us. That’s what the subject matter is here. We have to be begotten of God’s holy spirit in the mind.

**...except a person be born from out of water and spirit.** In other words, when hands laid upon us. They go together. You can’t separate them. We have to put the old person to death, symbolically so, under that watery grave. Then we come up out of the water and God says we’re to walk in newness of life.

But we can't do it on our own. We might be repenting and asking God to forgive us of all our sins, which this is symbolic of, but until we receive the impregnation of God's spirit, and then the holy spirit that will come into us in that mind, that new mind, there are things we wouldn't be able to do and see or understand.

That's what He's saying. You can't be born again until you do this. You have to be born from out of water and of spirit. It says, **they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God**. What an awesome thing we know what that means, to enter into the Kingdom of God. When does that happen? When you're born again. When you're born of spirit. Not just impregnated with God's holy spirit.

Because just because someone has been begotten of God's holy spirit doesn't mean you're going to be born into that Family, for there are many who have been begotten of God's holy spirit and they have to wait until the Great White Throne. Some have been judged that they're not going to have that either because they've gone too far. They've destroyed, in that respect, their thinking, their minds, and that spirit that God gave them after baptism, people who turned against God in a very ferocious and evil way. Some have done that in our age leading up to the Apostasy.

**That which is born of the flesh is flesh.** So, he's explaining it in very basic terms but what's amazing here, Nicodemus can't understand it. It's like later on when a woman comes down at the well, John 4, can't understand it.

It's there where it talks about as well the situation where Christ speaks of eating his body, his flesh, and drinking his blood, anyway, and many Jews quit following him after that point in time because they knew that that was unclean. You can't eat human flesh and you can't drink human blood. You can't drink any kind of blood. So, they quit following him because they couldn't see it on a spiritual plane at all. They only saw it something physical.

This is part of what Christ is going through here with Nicodemus when he says, **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.** It's very simple.

Well, we're not there yet. We're begotten but we're not born of the spirit. We're not in God's Kingdom. That's what he's telling him.

**Do not marvel that I said unto you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes.** So, he's using an analogy here that they can be outside, and the wind is blowing - well, where did it come from?

Well, today we think we know about all that. We can tell where it's coming from and what it's going to do, and sometimes they get some things right and some things wrong. But that's not his point here. It's about wind. You're outside. You can feel it, but you can't see it. Where did

it come from? "Well, it came from that way." Well, that's not what he's talking about. Where is it going? How does it work?

He says, **And you hear the sound of it.** We heard it this week a lot. **You hear the sound of it but you can't tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the spirit.** There are things that are spirit; you can't hear it and you can't see it. Because even more so, physical, as far as wind, we can kind of grasp what he's giving as the analogy here if we're just thinking physically, as Nicodemus was, but he couldn't see the rest of what he was telling him.

How can the spirit be like that? Do I hear it? Do I feel it like the wind? That wasn't Christ's point. You can't see it. You can't know where it is. We can't understand spirit unless God gives us of His spirit to understand certain things about it.

That's why to understand what it's going to be like in the God Family, we haven't a clue. I can't imagine never sleeping again. It's like, I'm going to be awake 24 hours? No, you're going to be awake forever. Because we think in these human terms.

**Nicodemus replied and said to him, How can these things be?** Blew his mind! He's trying to understand it. **Joshua answered and said to him, Are you a master of Israel,** a great teacher of Israel? That's what he's asking him. Because he was. But he didn't understand this basic thing. But it's not so basic if you don't have God's spirit.

So, he says, **Are you a master or great teacher,** if you will, **of Israel and you don't know these things? Truly, truly I say to you, we speak that which we know and testify of what we have seen. But you do not receive our testimony** (our witness). You can't. He's telling Nicodemus, "You can't because it takes God's spirit. You can't understand. You can't see. You can't know. You can't see what we see. You can't know what we know."

**If I have told you earthly things and you don't believe it...** What an incredible separation in life. We learn that fairly early on, or at least we should. It may take us a little longer in some instances as we grow, but we learn in time here no relative, no one on the job, no one you work with, no one is going to understand and see what you are talking about if you tell them about this way of life. They can't see it. They can't. They don't get it.

Why? It takes God's spirit. They have to have God's spirit drawing them, opening up their mind to receive it. You should know very quickly if they're receiving it or not, and if they're not it's like, why say any more? Are we going to try to talk them into it?

Because some used to try to do that. They used to get down and set in scriptures and go through various scriptures. I think of one individual on a telecast talking about, "If you will just open up your Bibles," in God's scattered Church, "If you will just open up your Bibles and go through these verses you can see this! It's there!"



I thought, “No, you can’t.” They can’t. There might be someone out there who could if they’re being drawn by God’s spirit, but what are they being drawn to? Scattered Churches? God hasn’t been working that way. Have a lot been being called and drawn to this Church? No. Some have at certain times there, 2005 through 2009, in through there, but God did that. Only because God did it. That’s the only reason.

That’s why we can look at things when we have various advertising out there and see various responses, but we still have an obligation to put things out there because we don’t know all the timing to set the stage, to be ready. So, we’re in a unique position in how we have to do these things as God’s Church.

He says, **We testify of what we’ve seen, and you don’t receive our witness.** So, who does? I’m more dumbfounded now than ever before. There was a time when certain things might be able to go out there and people would respond just out of curiosity because they’re wondering about various aspects of it. Not because they’re necessarily being drawn, though God may be planting a seed in some cases.

But I think of today. This world, we’re at a time when this world just doesn’t care at all about what is true. The only thing that is going to change that is if they get really, really scared. That’s what’s going to begin to make the change. That’s why it’s going to happen exactly the way God has said.

**If I have told you earthly things and you don’t believe, how are you going to believe if I tell you heavenly things of the spirit? You can’t.**

I hope we see ourselves in this, of what we can see. What an awesome, if you will, even miracle, it is, that God’s spirit can work in our human minds, specific individuals whom God has called to see the truth, and you can’t tell others about it. They can’t see what you see.

**Verse 13—No one has ascended up to heaven.** What does the world believe as a whole in traditional Christianity? That’s where they want everybody to go. Something that everybody is supposed to be really happy about, being up there, but not so happy and they’re not so sure because there is that lack of knowing.

I marvel we know. We know. When there is death I don’t see it like I used to. Sorrow when certain ones, in the sense of not being able to be with someone, we go through that. But to know where they are, maybe part of the 144,000, whatever it is, even if it’s the Great White Throne, we know. Time, and in time as a whole, we’re going to see everybody again, people that we’ve known that have died. Out of the Church, but in the Church. Those things are in God’s hands.

But we should be at peace with that and not worry and be fearful like the world is without knowledge or understanding. In other words, it gives us peace. It should. The truth should give us peace.

What an incredible thing to be at rest with something like that. When little ones die, I don't care what age, to be at peace with that and to understand they have it made in a resurrection and it won't be like this sick world where a lot of people have to be deprogrammed, in one respect.

I think of young people today that have gone up and by the time they get out of college in so many cases the stuff that's been put in their minds, the stuff that's out there, and the way universities have gone, it's sick! It's distorted. A lot of it is just too incredibly perverted. But they think this way. A lot of them become leaders. They think a certain way and it's not right.

But someone who has been a baby and they die in this age, and they're resurrected in the Great White Throne, they don't have to go through that. They get to start afresh and not have all that pollution and garbage and twisting and distorting that so many are pumping into the minds of young people.

**No one has ascended up to heaven, but he who came down from...** Now, the word literally means "from out of." There are those who say, "See, he's eternally existed." No. God gave His spirit in impregnating, mixing together with human life. And here, of the mind, in the being of a baby in Mary, in her womb. Came down, whatever, in God's spirit that He gave, the kind of mind that He made certain was exactly a specific, a certain way. Only to be one like that in all time - His own Son, literally. Something we can't fully comprehend how that worked.

But he had to come down from God, obviously, out of heaven where God is, and that's what it's talking about. Not in the concept that some have that he came down out of heaven and he decided (because there were two Gods or three as some think), but one time we used to think that there were two and one decided to give up his position in order to go down and become the baby. Then how can the other one be the Father? Well, anyway.

We weren't able to see these things that didn't fit together. What an awesome thing when you understand the truth. Pretty simple. Came down from the Father because you know what, Yahweh, the Eternal Almighty God is the Father. Pretty basic.

**...came down from out of heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven.** That's where he is.

I can't help but think of Leviticus 16 when I read something like this because I think of how the high priest every year, picturing symbolically the things of Christ and his life, when he goes into the inner part of the temple once a year on the Day of Atonement, picturing the

total reconciliation, the atoning of God's people, and he doesn't come out until everything has been reconciled to him and to God.

When does that happen? When the 144,000 are complete. Then he comes out of the temple. He returns. Awesome! It's beautiful.

Things that God does are so beautiful, so exact, even in the examples of things we have. The more we learn even about the temple as God reveals things to us in the future and has revealed to us already, every portion has incredible meaning to it.

**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness...** You remember the occasion when they were out in the wilderness after being taken out of Egypt and through their disobedience poisonous snakes came into the camp? Thousands began to die. He was instructed to have this pole made with this serpent wrapped around the top of it. They were told if you will look upon that and you're bitten by a serpent, you won't die.

But carnal human beings began to look upon it as a symbol of healing. Around seven hundred twenty years later they had to take that thing and grind it up, if you will, to get rid of it because it was being worshipped.

**So as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, the Son of Man must be lifted up.** So again, what an incredible example here of something that if you want to live physically after being bitten by a snake, it shouldn't take too long after you see certain ones dying and you want to live, and different ones have gone up and done that, and looked upon that serpent, just been obedient to God—to Moses (because they couldn't understand those things)—and lived, it doesn't take long before the word begins to spread: "You better go look on that pole with that serpent!" "Yeah! Good idea!"

What about mankind? If you want to live forever you better look upon him and what he did and what he sacrificed. Because that's what this is about, obviously. Easy to see, isn't it? Incredible analogy of something to compare.

**Even so, the Son of man must be lifted up so that whoever believes in him...** I hate some of this language and how it's used by traditional Christianity because they have these stories about him, but it's not believing him, and what his purpose was is being Passover because first and foremost that's what this is about. You better believe what he is and what he was to fulfill. High Priest and soon coming King of kings in God's time in God's Kingdom. That's what it means to believe in Joshua the Christ and what God gave Him as His Son and the things then he said, the truth that came through him.

But they can't. They can't understand that. They can't see that. They can't preach that, so they preach something else.

...so that whoever believes, the word means “into,” maybe doesn’t add that much more, but again more about the purpose and the fulfillment of his life. Why he was sent. Why he fulfilled what he did. What did he fulfill?

...believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

**Verse 16—For God so loved the world...** So again, a scripture we’re all very familiar with. The protestant world uses it a lot.

**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes,** again that word, **into him should not perish but have everlasting life.** So they get rid of what he fulfilled. Passover. They outlawed it. They killed people for keeping it after 325. Kill people for keeping Passover. Later kill people for keeping the Sabbath, too. But anyway, what an incredible thing.

God’s people had to go through various things. Anybody wanted to keep a Passover, the government is out to kill you. We think we ever have it bad? They had it a whole lot worse.

Let me go back up here, **For God so loved...** This word here “loved,” I love it because it says it’s “agapaó,” and it means “in this manner.” You don’t know what kind of love is being talked about. It’s a word that describes a thinking of human beings of love, but it’s only specific by the context. It reveals in the context what that kind of love is. That’s why it’s used. That’s how it’s used.

Even in the Church people have had difficulty in grasping different kinds of love. I think of the minister... I’ve told this so many times, but I was blown over by it. I can still see us on the road in the car driving up between Colorado Springs and Denver after having been out there and visiting them in the Church circuit, talking to him about Mr. Armstrong and how he said the best way to try to grasp God’s love is to understand (and human love), the difference is a mother’s love for her child. She loves her child but not others in the same manner. She can’t see them as her own in the same manner. It’s impossible for the human mind to do that, in that respect, in the same manner.

Again here, trying to give an example of something as Herbert Armstrong did, of what God’s love is more akin to to try to break through the boundaries of human thinking. People got stuck on philadelphia. It’s best in God’s Church to be a Philadelphian above all the other seven eras in God’s Church, so much so that people wanted to stay philadelphian’s. Anyway, I won’t go into that.

You think, don’t you grasp philia love is not God’s love? And people haven’t. What a sad thing. What does that show? The lack of God’s spirit, especially when God began to reveal those things more and more to the Church.

This word here for **God so loved...** Well, how? That's why it's said this way. How? In what manner then did He love the world? ...**that He gave His only begotten Son.** So, people being familiar with, especially at this time here, Abraham and what he went through. Because this is what has to come into the mind, of stories in the Old Testament. You think of Abraham and what happened there and how he was going to sacrifice his own son, and yet God told him no, there is another way, spare your son.

But God used that in a way to help us think about what an incredible thing that God did do that. Watched His own Son, His only Son to go through what he went through. We really can't grasp that, as to what God went through doing that.

Think it's easy for a parent? Was it easy for Abraham to prepare all that and do that, what he did? How much worse for God Almighty to know what His Son was getting ready to go through, to know the kind of suffering His Son was getting ready to go through, the way he's going to be beaten and skin ripped off of him, and so much so that even his face was changed in the sense you couldn't tell who he was just by appearance? Incredible.

"God so loved the world." What does that mean? His purpose, why God put the world here, why God put mankind upon the earth. It's about His plan. It's about Elohim. Because that's the only way you can get there.

I marvel. I can't even express it, what that means. It's so dumbfounding to comprehend the universe, the solar system, and this little orb, and this is where it all begins, God's Family. It's where God does it. It had to be a certain way to support human life, and then to make human beings, finally, who were selfish. It had to be that way to make us so that we had to be a certain way. There was no other way. We couldn't be given God's mind at that point in time because then, well, it wouldn't work. There was no other way.

The angels, we look at them and what happened to them, well, they were spirit from the beginning. But to make something physical, a being that is physical, and to understand the process that human beings have to go through being selfish, having a mind like Satan, selfish, actually evil? Because selfishness is evil. It really is.

Then through that process when God calls us through His holy spirit to make choices to change, to be something different. We see it to the degree, to the depth God's given us His holy spirit, truly.

**He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever (whoever) believes into him, as it is, should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world.** It wasn't about judging the world and judgment to come upon the world, though it's coming to that point in time. ...**but that the world through him might be saved.**

So, the word has deserved great judgment because it's only through Christ that we can be forgiven of sin. Otherwise, there is only the death penalty. That's what we're all deserving as human beings. It's hard for human beings to admit that, acknowledge that, because then you've got to admit who you are and what you are, what your nature is, and that you need, saved from your nature, your selfish "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life" nature. That's what we do when we come into God's Church. We begin to address those things.

**But that the world through him might be saved.** It's a process. **Anyone who believes him,** not "on." Again, it's that same word "into," same purpose, **him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is condemned already.** Believe what? His purpose, who he is, why he came, what is the process. The apostles made it really clear later on, the things of sin that we have to be forgiven of, that we have to repent, that we have to be baptized. On and on it goes.

If we believe that then we can come to a point where we go under the water, come up out of the water, have the impregnation of God's spirit, hands laid upon us, prayer made over us, God gives us the begetting of His holy spirit and we begin a battle. You begin fighting for the first time in your life in a very powerful way against this nature.

**But anyone who does not believe is condemned already.** I think of those who were a part and then chose to go away. That's a powerful condemnation, a powerful judgment there for sure.

**Because they do not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.** That happens to everyone who has ever gone out of the Church as well. They come to a point where they don't believe it anymore, they don't really believe that they need to be saved from who they are. They don't really believe God's Church anymore and where God's Church is. They don't really believe anymore in the truths that have been given to them. They can go back and begin to pick and choose what they choose to hold on to and what they choose not to try to hold on to. They really can't hold on to it with understanding anyway.

**Verse 19—Now this...** And I say this in the midst of two more people finally, officially—they already did it to themselves over several years ago, in one instance, but over the past year another one, two more people disfellowshipped officially from God's Church. But they were disfellowshipped a long time ago because they made their own choices. Sad.

You think this isn't going to go on? You think there aren't some who are disobeying and being disobedient to God now, who are in a particular point of not being able to reverse their course because they don't want to, because they have chosen not to because they've chosen something else, that they're going to be there right up to the end? So, we don't have to do it

officially as a Church; they do it to themselves whenever they begin to go in that direction. They're already disfellowshipped.

They might come to services. They might be at services. They might be with God's people, which happens, always happens. That's why I've made the comments it's going to happen right up to His return, but they're not going to be allowed to go past that into that new Kingdom, into that new age, into the Millennium. They will die.

Just? Absolutely. Fair? Absolutely. Heinous, hideous to do such a thing? Most assuredly. To turn from what we have been given, to go out and do something different that we've been told will cut us off from God.

**Verse 19—Now, this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and people have loved darkness rather than light.** Now, hopefully, every one of us can say that's the way our nature is. When there is sin, it's being in the dark. It's like Adam and Eve in the garden and they're trying to hide, they're kind of trying to keep in the shadows and not be in God's presence.

It's like, God made you. Do you not quite grasp that He knows everything about you, He knows where you are? Anyway, so it shows the limitations of the human mind sometimes, especially even at the beginning because they didn't seem to grasp that one.

Sometimes people in God's Church haven't grasped that one. God knows every thought of your mind! So there is no point in trying to hide anything from God. If somebody wants to go out here and have some kind of a sexual fling, God knows it when it first started in the mind. If somebody wants to go out here and get drunk, take drugs - which has happened in the last year in God's Church - God knows it. God knows it before. They made a choice in the mind before they ever did it.

So, God knows our mind. That ought to be very sobering. We don't hide anything from God, and yet do we sin? Yeah, we still do stupid things. Sometimes it's just a part of our nature. All of a sudden, just blurts out of our mouth or we do something... And you think, "How is it...?" Well, we're human beings. But we've got to be fighting the fight and you have to fight it in the mind. Not only that, but you've got to pray to God about it. Saying, "Father, help me to fight this. Help me to get rid of any wrong thinking that's not in unity with You."

Because we all, every one of us has something in our mind that's not in absolute unity with God! If anyone thinks they're totally at one with God in how they think then you are deceived, and you don't grasp the truth of this. You're not all at one with God. None of us are. If we were we wouldn't have any sin ever! Because that means we would agree with God in everything, period. We would never sin because why would we?

But what do we do? We're physical so we have sin in our life that we have to repent of. Pretty simple. Thank God we have a Passover. Thank God as soon as the light comes on. Because the light is there, it's just it hasn't come on in the mind when you're sinning. You've kind of gone into darkness right up here in the mind and you're blocking out what you know is true for whatever distorted, perverted reason we are as human beings. Then finally when that light comes back on it's like you repent.

Thank God He lets us do that! Thank God for the mercy and the grace He's given to us that we can repent and know immediately, be at peace. Thank God He has patience. Thank God He forgives us over and over again, sometimes for the same thing over and over again. We get caught up in something and it comes back out of us again because that's what we are. We're an enigma. It takes God's spirit to break through all this, to work through all this, and free us. Incredible.

But it's beautiful, too. Think of the love that God has for us, every one of us, to go through this journey with us. He does. That's what He wants. He wants us to come through this. We should want that for each other. When someone gets caught down in the mud or whatever and they've had the light go out for a little while, we strive to be merciful. We want to see people change and grow and everyone succeed in this.

Sometimes individuals won't allow for that. They begin to ignore fellowship. They begin to ignore phone calls and emails. What's going on there? Not a good sign. In the dark, farther, and farther, and farther away from the Church. That's why I say some of these things happen sometimes years back.

So, **this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and people have loved darkness rather than light.** That's our nature. It's our battle in the Church. We want to grow. That means we want to stay in the light, we want to draw closer to God in the light, we want to be more at one with God, we want to be in greater agreement with God. Those are our prayers. They should be.

**...because their deeds are evil.** So where do the deeds come from of someone who is not in the light, in other words, blocking off God's spirit? Well, it's from our nature, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." That's all evil. It really is.

**For everyone who does evil hates the light.** It's pretty simple. **...and neither comes to the light.** It's easier to stay back there in the shadows somewhere. You don't feel right when you're sinning, and you have sin in your life. If you keep sinning and you're not repenting then it's just really hard even to be with God's people sometimes.

**...and neither comes to the light unless their deeds should be reprov'd.** That's what the word is, "reprov'd," "exposed." It's a word in the Greek that means to be exposed. Why?



Well, we don't want people to know too much. We don't want someone to know too much. We'd rather keep certain things in the dark. "I don't want to get in a conversation and be uneasy..." So, incredible how we are as human beings.

**But whoever does truth...** There you go. How often do we talk about? How often is it mentioned? We've been given truth and we're to live by all the truth that God has given to us. **But whoever does truth comes to the light.** Where else would we want to be? Where else would we want to go? **...that their deeds may be manifest that they are done** (worked or performed) **in God.** That's what we do. We go before God. We want help to see any wrong and error in our lives. When we're able to see it we want to repent quickly. We want that Passover and the blessing then of being able to be forgiven of our sins.

Again, I hope this helps us to understand as we think about some of these kinds of things, the love of God to give us His Son, starting with Passover that we're coming up to, the Days of Unleavened Bread, the ability to come out of sin, and to recognize what we have, how rich that really is, how awesome that truly is, the kind of love that God has for each one of us.

**Ephesians 2:1—You who were dead in trespasses and sins, when in times past you walked according to the course of this world.** So, what does that mean? Well, it means until God called us we have the death penalty over our heads. That's what it means. This is how we were. We were dead. That's how we need to see what God says the penalty of sin is all about and trespasses. It's just about death.

So, until something can be done to get rid of the trespasses and sin, that's all that's there, is death, an eventual death for all time.

"When in times past you walk according to the course of this world." So, for us in the Church to realize in times past we weren't living God's way of life, we didn't know God's way of life. We lived as the world lives and this is where we were with the world, having that over our heads until we have the blessing of being called, drawn, and receiving help to be saved from that.

**...when in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.** In other words, not just because he broadcasts, but because that's the way we are as human beings. Selfishness. That's what he is. He's the epitome of selfishness, of lust, of pride. God wants us to get it. That's the way we are as human beings, and it stinks. It's ugly. It's evil. The more convicted we are of that the more we are able to get it out of our lives, be rid of it, having God's help, God's spirit to be more at one with Him.

**...according to the prince of the power of the air.** That's how we walked. Just like he walks, strutting around as he has for millions, millions, billions, whatever it's been. **...the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.** Who are they? The whole world. The children of

disobedience. Who obeys? Only those who have been given the ability, the opportunity to obey. Because people can pick a church to go to, people can, whatever that means, whatever religion it is, and they can try, they can even have the ten commandments as a placard on the wall, and it not do a bit of good.

Because the ability to see them, the ability to know them, the ability to keep them is a spiritual matter, it's not a physical one. Judaism is a great example of that. Christ condemned them in his time, Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots; all of them he condemned. Why? Because they didn't know the truth. They didn't have the truth. They were physical.

They had certain things that they held on to as far as stories of the Old Testament and their ideas, and especially when the Talmud came along, and they went off in writing on their own little things and adding to and try to live by certain restrictions. But there is nothing spiritual in that at all. Nothing of God in that except a resemblance to certain things He said certain laws you should keep. Yes, you should keep the Sabbath. But to do it in a carnal, physical way has no meaning unless you're in God's Church, unless you have His holy spirit, unless you understand it, what it's about, and they didn't. They still don't.

Who does? You. What kind of words can you find to describe that? The awe of such a thing that we should have and see in our own being. Then in the midst of that to grasp more fully the kind of love God has for the world, for His plan, for His purpose, for Elohim. Because that's what it's about. We just have opportunity very early on.

**...among whom also we all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh.** We're just like that. **...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.** Now, what's bad is when someone has been impregnated with God's spirit and they begin to go that route again and begin to drift away. Whatever it is that's pulling them, whether it be money, wealth, sex, drugs, alcohol, whatever it is.

**...whom we all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, were by nature children of wrath even as others.** Meaning there is going to be a time for judgment. God's wrath on disobedient human beings. It's a death penalty.

**But God who is rich in mercy...** We're the only ones who can really grasp how rich that is because we know the truth. We have personal experience. You know your own life. You know your own struggles. You know the patience and the mercy that God has given to you. At least we should. We should all be convicted of that and understand you can repent and you're in His arms, you're in His care, you're not cast aside. On the contrary, He's there, in that respect, embracing us, protecting us, placing, if you will, an orb of protection around us in our lives.

Does He let us go through various things? Yes. But He's there, and if other things happen in order for us to learn, in order for us to grow more, in order for us to come to see things that we couldn't otherwise come to see in that which God is molding and fashioning us to fit into, we're in His hands.

**Who is rich in mercy for His great**, meaning "abundant; extreme; immense" if you will, **love** (agape). Now it gets specific here. Before it was telling of a kind of love because of what He did. It reflects the kind of love He has. This here is being very specific about it. It's about agape because that's God. **...His great love wherewith He loved us.**

So again, this is continuing on here. **...even when we were dead in sin**, so it's going back to the same things, **even when we were dead in sins He made us alive together with Christ through whose grace you are saved.** In other words, that which God gives to us, that grace that comes from God, the mercy that God gives to us. It's through Christ.

**...even having raised us up together and made us sit.** Now, it's going through the process here that we understand so very well, but sometimes it's good for us to pause and think about it, what God is taking us through, and to understand, yes, we receive a lot of grace, we receive a lot of mercy, a lot of patience from God, and it's all about His love.

**...through whose grace you are saved.** We couldn't survive if God weren't merciful to us like He is, to be able to be forgiven whenever we sin and to sin as often as we do as weak human beings. Awesome! That He's willing to forgive over and over.

**...even having raised us up together**, talking about with/through Christ. It's about Christ. Where is he? On the right hand of God, coming back as the King of kings in God's Kingdom.

**...and made us sit...** This is that word that's used so often when it talks about "in place of authority." It's about that. It's not just going down to sit in a chair here, you're going to sit down. It's about authority like we've talked about in times past concerning the Apostasy, 2 Thessalonians, and some of the things that are discussed there.

**...and made us sit together in heavenly**, or "through." This word "in" is **by/through heavenly, through Joshua the Christ.** In other words, Christ is in heaven. That power, the might that God gives to us through forgiveness of sin, Passover, and our High Priest, being able to go before God on a regular basis, it's all done through Christ.

**Verse 7—that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in/ through kindness toward us, through Joshua the Christ.** So, what does that mean? Well, in time we come through it. We are able to have gone through this entire process and be changed from mortal to immortal, from physical to spirit.

**For by grace, you are saved because of,** as the word is here, **because of faith.** So, that's another subject in itself, just understanding this process of faith. What is it? Again, to be reminded God gives us the ability to know the truth. He gives us the ability to see things of the spirit like Christ was telling Nicodemus that he couldn't grasp, that we can. We see. We know. You just know. God puts it in the mind. It's in the mind. That's what this is talking about.

**You are saved because of faith,** because then you can act upon it. You have the ability to do so through the power of God's spirit. Because you can pray to God and ask for help of His spirit because you don't have it by yourself.

**...even that is not of yourselves.** Too many in times past tried to do things on their own ability. It wasn't a matter of really understanding or believing that they had to go before God on a continual basis day by day asking for His holy spirit in order to think right, in order to live right, in order to accomplish what needed to be accomplished in their lives in order to live right. They try to do it themselves by setting up regiments and certain things, like the Jews do, and so forth.

It's not wrong to have certain regiments, but if you think that the regiments are the things that are saving you and you're using those things in that context then you're wrong. Ministers that would talk about how many hours or half hours or whatever or times of day you had to pray and how many times, how much time you needed to spend in study.

Those things are all good if you do them, but to do them in a regimental way, that this is how you're being saved? That there is no flexibility? That something goes wrong and you miss a certain thing and it's, "Oh no! I missed it!" that somehow you didn't fulfill what you were supposed to do and you have to go repent about it? God's not like that. God isn't like that.

I hope you understand what I'm saying.

**For again, by grace you are saved, because of faith. Even that is not of yourselves. It is the gift,** and that's the word for "like an offering or a sacrifice." The gift before God like a sacrifice.

**It is the gift of God. Not of works lest anyone should boast.** It's not by what you're able to do. That's why I love the word before that where it says, "and even that is not of yourselves." God is in this all the way with us. We have God's help, His holy spirit to see things properly, the help to be able to have the mind transformed as you repent and become more convicted.

Every time you sin you're growing if you repent, if you're asking for God's help and forgiveness of what you've done because you believe that process and how you're able to have a continual relationship with God and because you want His holy spirit and you know you need it and that's why you do it.

**...lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship.** First and foremost God is doing the work. He's blessed us to be called in to be a part of it and we have to make our own choices along the way, and it might be for twenty years, thirty years, forty years, fifty years, sixty years, whatever it is, but we have to make those choices along the way and fight the fight.

But God does it. We can't do it on our own. If you don't have a relationship with God in prayer. If you don't have a relationship with God in the things you do and how you think. God is first and foremost doing it. We make some choices along the way. We have to. But the power to accomplish it comes from God.

**...not of works lest any man should boast, for we are His workmanship created through Joshua the Christ unto good works.** So, we're to do right things, we're to respond in a right way, and God will continue to help us to see the right way. But God's doing it. Because if He stops at any point in any part of that we couldn't make it. But He continues to show us the way. He continues to nudge us along and help us in the way. He continues to pour out at times, correction to get us back on the right course. Always forgiving us. Always loving us.

**...which God has prepared before that we should walk in them.**

I'm going to stop there. Something is wrong with my clock up here, but this is a good place to stop.

Things to meditate upon. Things to pray about. Things to think about. To ask God that He help us to understand more deeply His love.