The Bond of Works to Grace, Pt. 3

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This will be *Part 3* of the current series entitled *The Bond of Works to Grace.*

Last Sabbath we went through some of the things that the apostle Paul said in the book of Romans, Galatians, and I Corinthians 15. He has a lot to say about the subject throughout some of the different areas there. We're going to look at some more of that today, and this obviously has a lot to do then with grasping the process and bond of right works to grace and salvation.

So, again, I'm really thankful we went through the other series that talked about works, that God works, and there are works that come from God. And then if the works are of us, they are no value. That's basically what this is about, understanding how God works in us, if we desire that, if we seek that. So, let's turn over to Ephesians Chapter 2 today. Ephesians chapter 2, pick up a little from there and go on. We were about to go into Ephesians last week and I decided to end the sermon because there's no point in just barely starting, and that's all I would have been able to do is just barely get started.

Ephesians 2:1 It says, **Also you has He quickened** and none of that's there in scripture. The last part of it, **you has He quickened,** "has He quickened" isn't there. That's not what its saying. It's literally the words that have to do with being dead. The correct translation of this is, **Also you were dead in trespasses and sins.** So, it's making a direct statement here that, in a lot of ways, the Protestant world doesn't like. Those who have translated scripture in the past, when they don't like something, and it doesn't agree with their kind of thought about Christianity or about God or about Christ, then they've changed a lot over time. This is another one of those areas, something that they really don't like, because they would have to acknowledge here, if they really believe this, that sin, the penalty of sin, is death.

But basically, their idea is that you can come to Christ just as you are and they don't want to think about the law, or the fact that you have to obey, and that there are penalties for not obeying and so forth. So that has a lot to do with some of their thinking. But anyway, it says: **Also you were dead in trespasses and sins.**

All of us, its saying in essence, before God begins to work with us, before he calls us, that's what we have over us, the death penalty. It's just a reality. The only one that can save us from that, obviously, is God through what Christ did because he became our Passover. Very simple. But the world has kind of confused those things, or I should say, the world of traditional Christianity has really done a lot to confuse those things. And it really wasn't traditional Christianity that confused it at all. There's a being that has tried to twist and distort things, and he's done a great job, truly has.

So, it says, **Whereby in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.** So again here, a tough thing to acknowledge in life, to understand that

this is how mankind is. This is how human beings are. **The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conducts in times past.** So again, this is a pretty tough thing for people to acknowledge, in a world of Judaism as an example, because the Jews were constantly in all these areas where Paul went, and a lot of them had different ideas. It was a very difficult thing coming out of Judaism, even though these were in gentile areas oftentimes, there were still a lot of Jewish people and scattered throughout all these regions. They would come in amongst the midst as well, and they had a difficult time with this process of change. Especially those in Jerusalem who might go out and visit in different areas, they had a difficult time in dealing with some of this.

Among whom also, we had our conduct in times past in the lust of our flesh. It's a basic thing we have to come to acknowledge, isn't it? That our minds, our being, carnal human minds are selfish. We live by lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It's just our nature, and those things have to be addressed because we have to begin changing that. There's only one way to do it.

...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love… agape. So, it's about His love, it's about His mind, it's about His power, and the way He works with us. We come to learn there's a different kind of love than mankind has known, than we have known, and we begin to learn what that is all about. We understand that the only way to have this is from God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It says, this is how God has loved us with His love, obvious, and we love with our love, which is very shallow in comparison, if we understand that. It's based on selfishness. What is ours, brotherly love, even brotherly love and some who like to call them by that *Philadelphia* or *Philia*, but Philadelphia having to do with brotherly love. It's a kind of fraternal love, but it isn't God's kind of love at all. Incredible to come to understand those things, the great difference between them.

It says, **But God, who is rich in mercy...** And it is about mercy, it's about His desire to, in time, call us, work with us. Because the reality is He's not working to save the world, He wasn't at this time, He never has, in that respect, but there are a few that He's called out of the world over the period in the last 6,000 years, and we're just not to that time yet, where God's going to begin offering salvation, if you will, to all mankind. These are very basic things that we in the Church sometimes can begin to take for granted that the world really has no comprehension of. They just don't grasp it. And in times past, many in the Church didn't grasp a lot of this, how it worked, the process. We're talking about a process. The more we can understand the process, the more we can grasp how God works in our lives, the more we're really becoming at one with Him, with His mind, with the teaching, the instruction, the guidance He's given to us. It's a beautiful thing.

For His great love, wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins. So, again, when God begins to draw us, He loved us before that point because He decided to, whatever purpose, to choose us, wherever we are, whoever it's been over the last 6,000 years. We don't understand that process. We

just need to be thankful for it. “Why me?” that's what we ask sometimes, “Why me? Why not someone else?” Well, that's not what it's about. It's about the fact that it's God's choosing, God's time whenever He calls someone. And you're called to make the most of it, to fight for it if you want what He says is in front of you, “...even when we were dead in sins.” So obviously, God knows us. He knows what all mankind is like. He loves His creation and looks forward to the time He's going to be able to love, or give His love, to others. On into the millennium, as far as the whole world is concerned at that time, though all won't receive it. And especially then in the Great White Throne, all those who have ever live to be resurrected, and their opportunity then at that time. But that's when He's going to begin to express His love to them, because that's God's purpose, that's God's plan. But He can't give that love to individuals, which is what grace is about. He extends love to us in His time. And so, before we're ever brought to baptism, He begins to give us of that love, He begins to draw us by His Spirit.

It's hard to grasp sometimes, in this human life, being in the world and then all of a sudden being drawn by the great God of the universe, through the power of His Holy Spirit because He works with the mind. He begins to draw us into an ability to receive the truth. Sometimes that might mean we have to go through different things, sometimes we have to go through some very hard things to be brought down to a point of great humility before He can begin giving us that, whatever it is. He works with us in different ways, depending on where we were, or are, at the time He calls us.

And I know for me, I had to have a four-by-four splattered up here against the forehead several times before I finally some sense got knocked into me enough to where I was humbled enough to that point where I'd began to listen. Because if those things that I went through hadn't happened to me, I know I would never have listened. I would have thought, anyone who said the things they did: “You are a religious fanatic, you’re stark raving mad!" And yet God brings you to a certain point where He begins to reveal certain things about himself, reveals things in the mind that you couldn't see before and then you have the choice to address it.

It's an awesome thing, truly is. And then the choice is up to us, whether we want to continue with that calling that He's offering us or not. And then if we do, we have to make the same decisions the rest of our life. This is what we have to decide, “Is this what we want?” We have to decide, “Am I going to fight for this all the way until it's over?” Meaning to my death. So be it, whatever. God and God's way of life is the only way of life. It's the only thing that can continue on.

I love the way Herbert Armstrong so often expressed these things. He had a way, a gift from God, to be able to express things in a very plain way. That's why I love the name of the magazine, *The Plain Truth.* He had that ability then to communicate those things in a way, that, it's just like when you have God's Spirit drawing you, it's like, that's pretty simple. God's way should be to us, the more we grow; plain, simple, in the sense of what we see. Before that we can struggle. This is a subject that a lot of people in God's Church, in times past, have struggled with, grace, how it works, how God really works in our life, what it means, every moment in our life, and from that moment on, from the time of our calling.

Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened, just means *made alive.* It's a new kind of life. It's a new, different kind of life than what we had before. We have carnal, physical, selfish, human life, and then when God's Spirit begins to draw us, and especially if we have the blessing then of baptism, laying on of hands, the impregnation of God's Holy Spirit, then, at that moment, we are made alive with a new life. It's a creation that God begins to work in us. That's an awesome thing to understand! That God Almighty, the great God of the universe, begins to work with us, begins to work with the mind, and we read scriptures like Romans 12 that tells us that we come to a point then where our minds can literally be transformed into something different, no longer fully selfish, that we're to combat that selfishness and grow more in the mind of God, in a unity and a oneness, and to know that's only accomplished by the power of God's spirit that we need God all the time, because you can't do it on your own.

And too many, and times past, even within the Church, they've tried to do far too much on their own and their own ability. And that's where pride comes in, the wrong, the worst kind of pride really, because when it's mixed with the truth, it doesn't mix, and people are deceived. God has patience and gives time for growth and for change in those things, but at some point, things have to change. And if not...

So even then, we come to a point where God **has made us alive together with Christ.** It's something we receive by belief, and we live by it as a matter of faith, that we understand we can be in the Body of Christ if, *if* Christ and God the Father are dwelling in us. And so, we have to cry out for that because that can come to a screeching halt because it has to do with the flow of God's Spirit constantly being in our life.

I love those scriptures that talk about, what he spoke of, on the night of Passover, the day that he was going to die, and he spoke of those things that he was able to do. “If you see me, you see the Father.” If you understand, “if you receive those things, you're receiving from the Father. And it's not of me, but its God, the Father, who dwells in me.” Then he goes on to say, “We can have the same thing. I am coming. I am coming.” Not a matter of coming again in a second coming. He wasn't talking about that. He's going to come in the flesh. “I'm coming in the flesh” in our lives. Awesome.

…has quickened us together with Christ. There is no other way to come through this process except that we are with Christ and he's with us, in us, on a continuing basis. **By grace you are saved.** It's that word that encompasses everything about how God works with us, with agape first, His love, and what that means. He brings us to the point of being able to receive forgiveness of sin, and then it's cleared when we make the choice to repent of sin. Then the process whereby He gives us favor, the intervention He gives us in our life, all the relationship that we're able to have with God has to do with the things we receive from God are a matter of grace. God working with us.

Even He has raised us up together. Raised us up together. We understand what that means. It started when we buried self under water and raised us up in newness of life. We had hands laid upon us immediately after that and received the impregnation of God's Holy Spirit, and that's where it all began.

He raised us up together to now be with Christ. Because all power, everything has been given to Christ for the Church. We are the Body of Christ. God the Father has given all that power to Christ to mold and fashion us, to bring us into unity and oneness with his Father, and until everything is brought into subjection to God's way of life. Awesome to understand that!

Even He has raised us up together, and made us to sit together, it says **in heavenly places,** but that's not a good translation either. It just means *in the heavens, in the spirit kingdom*. In other words, it's a beginning. We started a process that's a beginning. We don't grasp it yet. We're still physical, but we have this in the mind that is an essence of God. The impregnation of the great God of the universe, and how we yield to that, how we want that, and that power that continues to feed that and transform the mind we have, well, that's what it's about. Awesome. But it takes work. Not work from self but work that we understand is from God. The power of God to create something within us.

God shows us, tells us how He is creating His Family in us, in our minds, and in our beings. And there are things then that we have to do, and we come into agreement with, that this is the *process*, the *work* that we must be engaged in if this is going to happen. We have to be engaged in wanting to repent. That takes a different kind of work. We have to be engaged in acknowledging that we are sick by nature in the sense of self. It's a selfish nature. We have to work at fighting against those things. It's a spiritual fight. Everything is spiritual. That's why we have to have God's Spirit. That's why we cry out to God for the power of His Spirit to work within us to accomplish these things. That's the work then of God's Spirit to change us. It's a beautiful process and a beautiful relationship, it truly is.

...has made us sit together in the heavens, or in a spirit kingdom if you will. It's the beginning stages. Again, I love how Herbert Armstrong was given to express that. We are an embryo; we are not yet born into the God Family, but we are an embryo. And not all births come to fruition, just as in physical human life. There are miscarriages and there will be multiple miscarriages on a spiritual plane because of human choices in God's kingdom. That's really what it comes down to, to understanding. That just because we're impregnated with God's Spirit, which was kind of a concept of time's past, “If you have God's spirit, if you die, you're going to be born into His Family later on.”

It's like that young man I've made comment about who for two weeks had been baptized, killed in a car wreck, and people talking about the comfort they had knowing that they're going to see him in God's Kingdom. That was shallow. We didn't grasp. The Church didn't grasp at that point. No, you can't be in the Church of God for two weeks and conquer and overcome self. You don't have time for this mind to be transformed and he will not be resurrected in the 144,000! He has yet another time he'll be resurrected with a great start in the Great White Throne. He'll have a head start over most of the populations who will be resurrected at that time because he had a start in the truth. He grew up in the Church. He knows a lot of things that others have no knowledge of. So, they'll all, in that respect, be behind him. He has a great start, a great beginning, but he will not be a spirit being until he goes through

that hundred years and lives and works on the very things we have to work on now. Everybody has to go through the process.

...in Joshua the Christ. It's all accomplished in Christ. And if we're not *in* Christ, which we talk about it in different ways, you have to be *in* the Temple. You can't be out in the courtyard playing games. You can't be out in the courtyard doing other things that you know are not of God, that you know are against God's way of life, against the truth, and expect that everything is okay. Because I'll just tell you, my experience in the Church of God is that far too many, far more, have been out in the courtyard and playing those games, ever since I've been in God's Church. Ever since 1969, that's the way it's been, far too many.

And what a blessing we have, because we're unique to be able to have that history and that knowledge and even that experience, in many cases, because many of us experience that. But you have the ability to know about that. That's a blessing, an awesome blessing. Because you can be molded and fashioned in a unique way, in a unique purpose, for whatever it is that God is preparing you for, but it's awesome.

It's unique, and it's unique to you. An ability to see these kinds of things, to know these kinds of things, and to learn from these kinds of things, to understand the history of 6,000 years of God working with people, and especially in the Church of God for the past 2,000 years, and understand the seriousness of God's calling, and how many, through time, quit fighting. Where was the conviction? Where did it change after baptism? It can't change. It's either there and you fight to continue to have it all the way to the end, and that's a blessing to know that, to become convicted of that, to see that in a way that people in Sardis definitely couldn't see it. Thyatira didn't see that, and others didn't see it to the same degree and the same level that you're blessed to see it. Is that a blessing? You think that's an awesome blessing to have, to carry on into the Millennium or into that first resurrection?

That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Joshua the Christ. We can't even begin to understand that one. Now for the Church through time, and especially in the last, well since Herbert Armstrong and especially the things that God has given since that time to see better, have a better picture of the plan and purpose, because that plan hasn't always been known as far as what the Holy Days picture and not to the degree. I think about what's in the Book of Revelation, to grasp and comprehend some of the things, even to know that there's going to be 144,000, to have a concept of mind that this number is going be in The Great Resurrection, but even there we didn't grasp it in Philadelphia. We still thought there's going be a gigantic multitude on top of that and make, you know, the 144,000 much smaller, but anyway, we had to learn in God's time, when God reveals it.

That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Joshua the Christ. So that's a history for the Church, but it's also what it's preparing us for, God's plan of His desire to give us so much more. This, what we're receiving, is such a small amount, but

it has to do with knowledge, it has to do with the mind of God and understanding, coming to understand God more, to love God more, to grasp and understand how He works with us, and that which binds us together, draws us closer together with God. It's an awesome thing, truly is, to understand how richly blessed we are and then to have a hope for something that's going to continue on once we're out of this body, once we made it, once we're no longer in, or have any kind of selfishness coming out of us. Great change has to take place. We have to be spirit for that to happen, and God dwelling in us always, then, from that point on, in full, not in partial like He does now. Because God doesn't deal in us full all the time of our calling, fully. It varies.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, it's amped up. It's amped up. More is given to us, and then we go back out in the world, and we know it's amped down! We know it, as soon as we've left. And if you stay there another day and, and you get up that next day and you go back out and most people are gone and it's like, you know right away, the Feast is over. Everything has changed. The spirit, everything is different.

Every Sabbath we have the opportunity of God dwelling in us more, of having a closer relationship with God on this day. Awesome! He gives more power on that day, on this day. It's just available to us. It's an awesome thing! Then to grasp what's beyond that, to be inheritors with Christ of everything? You can't grasp that. How do you inherit? Our concept of inheriting something is “This portion is mine,” “this portion of an inheritance, it's all mine, to use ever how I want. That's what the document says.” But to understand something that God is offering, *everything*, we really have a difficult time grasping that, to inherit all things with Christ. There's a lot out there, plenty to inherit. God's going to give us part in all of it, ever what that means, I don't understand it.

Then it goes on to say, **for by grace you are saved through faith.** So, this thing of the ability to believe, the fact that we can see certain things, a truth comes along and we're able to see it. I’ll use 2005, the Feast. All of a sudden, we saw things that we never grasped before about God, about Christ, things were addressed. Awesome! Then we see that truth and then we change our lives and our thinking about God. We correct the things that we misunderstood. We work on those things, and we begin to see God in a different light, and a closer relationship than we had before. We are actually able to have, after that point, a closer relationship with Yahweh Elohim, the great God of the universe, after that point, than we were able to have before that.

God just pouring out more of His life, of His Spirit, of His truth to us, and the more that happens, the greater that relationship, the bond can be. A *bond to grace*, understanding what we're given, the ability to believe and that we start living by that which is what faith is because we believe God and we hold on to it. We work, we work at whatever is given to us. We don't do it ourselves, but we understand it takes God's spirit and we cry out to God for help to drink in of that and to live it, which is what faith is.

And that not of, which I like the Greek better here, it literally means *out of*. **And that not out of ourselves.** It's well put because that's so much of the story about works and grace. If we're doing it of

ourselves, we don't need God. If we can rely on ourselves and our ability to live this way of life that God has given to us, in the whole history of the Jewish people and of Israel in times past, was that they couldn't keep the law. Even with all that they had, all the ceremonies, all the rituals, and everything else they had, they couldn't keep, they couldn't obey God. Especially not in Spirit, let alone physically, carnally. It takes God's Spirit. And so later on, God revealed that to us, helped us to understand that, the Church.

And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Grace. Everything that God gives to us is a gift. It's not owed to us, but it is a gift, *if* we respond to that calling. *If* we choose God! *If, if, if,* we choose to work at what God tells us we're to work at. *If* we will fight against our carnal human nature and fight against things that we know are not in agreement with God that need to be repented of. **It is the gift of God, not of works.** We should know by context here exactly what it's talking about. Yes, we have to have works, but no, we can't have works that are from self, of our own abilities. Because if it's of our own abilities, we're always lifted up by pride. "What I can do." This is addressed in scripture, "I fast twice in the week." Well, what does that mean? "I can pray before God five times a day, go before God..." Like some do, you know, what does it mean?

Without God in the picture, if God's spirit isn't in it, it doesn't mean anything. It's just a routine, a ceremony that someone goes through to feel better about themselves, to feel better about their relationship with what's in their mind about God. That's not what this way of life is about. That's what happens in the world. People want to feel a little bit better about themselves, so they wear a cross on their neck because "I'm religious. I'm religious, and I want people to learn what I've learned to just say, 'You accept Jesus.'" And it's shallow. We learn that's shallow; it has no meaning to it.

Not of works, lest anyone should boast. Because pride cannot grow. Pride has to be conquered, has to be fought against constantly in our minds and our lives. Not to be lifted up. Whenever, whenever we see that in others, we should be put off by it, but the blessing and the key is to see it in self. Things are so much easier to see in other people, but if we can see it in self, this is where it has to be conquered. You can't change anyone else. You can only work, you can only work to change self, with God's spirit. That's where the battle is. It's in the mind.

That's why we should loathe, that's why we should get to a point where, when we see within ourselves anything that resembles pride and haughtiness and wanting recognition, wanting others to see us, wanting to be lifted up in a certain way, wanting to be seen as we live, if we're living this way of life and we're drawing closer to God, if we're a part of the Church, we should know! We should already know! We have it made, and God will raise us up! And most of that's going to take place later on, but He'll help us to grow too, and He'll raise us up. He'll give us favor. And the more we rely on God and get rid of self, the more God will lift us up. Awesome!

For we are His, His **workmanship.** We have to yield ourselves to that. We can't do the work. Isn't that an amazing thing? We, meaning self, can't do the work. But we have work to do because we're in unity and agreement with God. We do that which God says we're to do. We grab hold of that, we seek to repent. We see to conquer sin. That takes work, the right kind of work. It's making a distinction between our work and God's work. We are His workmanship because you don't change on your own! You can't grow on your own! You can't become one with God on your own! You can't be transformed on your own! It requires a relationship with God and the receiving of His Holy Spirit. He does the work.

We are His workmanship in and through Christ. That's how it's accomplished. It says that, **created in,** through if you will, **in Joshua the Christ.** That's what God's given to us, in the Church of God, in the Body of Christ **unto good works.** There are bad works and there are good works, and if it comes out of us, it's just bad works. It's selfish. But if it comes because of a relationship with God and because of crying out to God for the help to conquer and overcome, to be strengthened in spirit, then we understand it's being accomplished by God. But we have to ask for it. We have to want it. We have to choose it. We have to choose to fight against self. We have to choose to repent. We have to choose to ask God to help us to see the things that we can't see where we need to repent, to be drawing closer to Him. **For we are His workmanship, created in Joshua the Christ unto good works,** the work of God, **which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.** And walk, may not seem like work, but its work. You've got to choose to walk, walk in this way of life.

Verse 11 - Therefore remember, that you being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands, so that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens. He addresses these things constantly because this is the way the beginning was. There was this concept from Judaism, Israel, and the things given through Moses and the Old Testament in circumcision, especially in Judaism, in their minds. And so, he's having to deal with these things and to begin to teach, in time here then, that all this that's about the flesh has no meaning, has no purpose, has no relationship with God. It's about that which is spiritual that is of the work of God, "...a circumcision," as it says later on, "made without hands." Because it's accomplished how? By God's Spirit. It's of the mind. It's of the mind, of the heart. It's the circumcision of the heart, the mind, spiritual thing.

So that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. So, as far as the gentile world that Paul was sent to, as a whole, most were gentiles that he had to deal with, to work with, he's helping them to understand things about history of the Old Testament, obviously, which you've got to know. You've got to know the teaching. There are certain things in there obviously, but to be able to see the difference, to understand the spirit of it, requires God's spirit and something then that He was teaching on a spiritual plane.

He was saying, “You were aliens, you weren't able to be a part of what God was doing, the great God of the universe, but now you can have.” **But now in Joshua the Christ you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.** So, it's a spinoff of what was said in Joel, in the book of Joel here. Again here, talking about part of this, that, of what God's going to accomplish in His time, that those who are afar now are, they’re made near because of God’s calling, and because of being able to be called because of being impregnated with God's Spirit, and because of being able to be in the Body of Christ.

Verse 14 - For he is our peace, speaking of Christ. That's where our peace begins. A peace that the world doesn't have, doesn't grasp, and can't have until they're called. Because all they have because of the carnal, selfish, human, physical life, is what it produces, drama. Drama. Only peace comes from God and God's way of life that's accomplished on a spiritual plane, in the mind. **For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.** That's why I love the example there of that curtain in the temple there and it being split open, if you will. And showing here that now the way into the holiest of holies is made visible, in the sense of that which is spiritual that God has accomplished in and through Christ because it has to do with being able to be forgiven of sin, having a Passover. That’s where it starts. That’s why I love it, that it's not a Holy Day, but it's before the Holy Days. And you can't start that journey into the meaning of God's purpose and God's plan and being a part of it, except that it starts there. Then it has to be held onto throughout that journey. Our Passover, the ability to go before God and be forgiven of sin through the blood of Christ.

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. So now we're talking specifically here about rituals and so forth, things that are in the Old Testament, the Levitical system and on and on it goes. That all those things, yes, they were done away with. This is where the Protestant world gets so screwed up because their desire is to do away with a law. Why? Well, most of all because of the Sabbath, because of the weekly Sabbath. If you acknowledge that that's still in effect, if you acknowledge that God's law hasn't changed one iota and that we're to live by it, then you have to address that, if you're doing it on the first day of the week, not on the seventh, anyway. That's been the primary battle through time in the sense of churches in the world and so forth.

It's showing here, again here, that, **Even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make himself of one new person of the two, so making peace.** This ability to become at one with God with Christ and God the Father and to have a relationship of something that does save, that does change, because going through the rituals and the physical rituals that were there before didn't produce anything. It didn't take away sin at all. **And that he**, speaking of Christ, **might reconcile both,** in this case, speaking of Jew and gentile, so this middle wall of partition, both Jew and Gentile, and he talks about this. **...unto God in one body.** Both have ability to have a relationship with God in one Body, the Body of Christ, **through being nailed to the pole, having slain the enmity by it.**

He goes through a long process here of explaining a lot of these things, but again, this is new to him. This is new to a Jewish world. He was very much involved in that Jewish world, and he's able to take what

they had to this point in time, basically the Old Testament and all the stories and all the things that are written there, but with new understanding now on a spiritual plane, that Christ came and began to reveal the *spirit* of the law. And to do it, and their battle at that time, especially because of Judaism, was to do away with this saying, having to do with works that people felt good about doing themselves, to feel better about themselves, in a relationship with God.

It's like those who would go into the temple and make sure that they had the coin. They didn't have the paper. They had coins to make sure it hits the side of the container when you put it in there so others know that you're giving, so it rings, so it makes a noise. All the other things when it talked about fasting. It says, “Don't do it like things of others you've seen where they want to be seen and recognized for what they're doing.”

I think of these prayer booths we used to have at Ambassador College, little closets all along walls. You'd go along this corridor and there'd be little closets up and down one whole side, at least where I went, and anyway, you could go in that closet, shut the door, and it was like some wanted to make it well known, you're in there. And you don't want to come out too soon. Because there's some pressure there, some peer pressure there. These are things that people had to deal with. Because if you come out too soon, its like, “Oh, you really didn't, you didn't stay in there very long. You were just, what? In there three minutes, 10 minutes, what's wrong?” After a while, you hear some snoring. They'd go in there, take a book with them when they go. Very religious when they came out though because “I've been in there a long time.” Some who would pray out loud, and we're told not to do that, but I think of one, you couldn't be in there, in the whole corridor if he was in there because he prayed so loud. He wanted everybody to hear his prayers. He was righteous. Anyway, this is just carnal human nature that has to be conquered and overcome. We do that in so many ways as human beings. That's what the world does. It's a matter of being seen by, feeling better about yourself and so forth. God's way is not like that.

So having come, Verse 17, and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near, so those who were near at this time, in that respect, started in Jerusalem with the Jews and those who were far off. The gentiles, to whom Paul was sent, that's what he's telling them, talking to them about, **and that through him,** through Christ, **we both Jew and Gentile, we both have excess by one spirit unto the Father.** It's the same spirit! One is not better than the other. We both need it! The Jew needs it and the Gentiles, you need it! **Now therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints.** Now, the Church and the twelve apostles had a battle with this. All of them did! They had a battle with this. They had a battle with this thing concerning the gentiles. They had a battle with being able to sit down and eat with gentiles. They had a battle with this matter of circumcision because this was so deeply ingrained in their minds, growing up in Judaism, that it was difficult for them to separate this thing of works and what it is. That it's not about the works that you can do, it's not about physical things and routines, it's something that's of God.

That's what Paul, over and over again, to all the different books we're going through, discusses and presents in a different way. And yet even within the Church, there's been difficulty in grasping these things that are really quite plain and quite simple when you understand the story, especially something as simple as, “There are works. There is a work of God,” and we're to be engaged in that. There are other works. There are good works and there are bad works. We shouldn't have to guess where the good ones come from and are accomplished by. They're accomplished by God; you can't do it on your own!

Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Everything has to be built in the same manner, but it's a spiritual one. **Joshua the Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building is fitly framed together.** What a beautiful thing to understand. Again, we don't know how we're being fit into place, what we're being fit into. We just fight for this way. We continue to desire this way, we continue to desire to draw closer to God and Christ, to be more at one with Him, to be of the same mind, to be in that battle, to fight against the carnality of self. And wherever we're being molded and fashioned, it’s awesome! It’s awesome to be Elohim, to be in Elohim. **...himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building is fitly framed together.** Everything fits perfectly in other words. It's what it means, “fitly framed together.”

If you've been in construction, this has good meaning to you. There are certain things that have to be put in a certain place and the more, just as lumber, to cut to something that's exact and you want it to be square, or you want it to be at an angle or whatever it is, and you have to cut it a certain way and you have to know what that is and the reward and the blessing of that on a physical plane when it fits! When it works! That's why they say, “Measure twice, cut once.” Anyway, because it's so easy to make mistakes.

I've got to tell you, I'm sorry, I've got to throw this in there. Very early on, while I was going through college, I think it was in my junior year, I signed up to be a carpenter's helper. I didn't know enough to just be the carpenter, to be put in charge of anything, obviously. So, they had carpenter's helpers they needed. A lot of customs of people sometimes, in measuring something for a long distance, they would cut a foot. Because if you read the end of the tape, sometimes the thing there it doesn't fit in, so they would measure it starting at the one foot mark. Does that make sense? You would measure from the one foot mark on out, always remembering that one foot. I was involved in working in this one town and building a mall. And they had laid this whole thing out, and when they started working on the inside and putting up the walls, they were finding that the rooms, they never came out right. Something was always wrong at the one end. Because what had happened is from one end to the other, they were a foot off when they laid the foundation. And so, everything that we're trying to fit to being exact and square inside wasn't working. Anyway, just goes to show you have be careful when you build. Fitly framed together, something fits great, that's wonderful. **...building is fitly framed together, growing in a holy temple in the Lord, in whom also,** or in **whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.**

We've been given so much to understand this thing of being in the Temple and that we're able to dwell in God and God is able to dwell in us, and how we understand that in a way that in PKG that hasn't been understood in God's Church before, candidly. Never has, because the time God began to reveal it. We're the recipients of that. That's why, if we grasp and comprehend everything that God has given to us, we are so incredibly blessed to know what we know. And we're very small. But it's all for a purpose of where you're going to fit and what you're going to be able to do and what God has put in you, molding in you, that makes you different. Because all the pieces, all the things in the building are not the same, they're all different.

Now, well, I'll just stop there on that part in Ephesians since we're toward the end of that anyway, instead of continuing on. Let's go over to Galatians chapter two now. Back to the book of Galatians. We were there earlier in chapter five in the first part, or maybe it was the second. But whatever it was, we're going back to Galatians. Galatians chapter 2. Because he talks about this in a little bit different way than he does later on in the chapter that's unique.

Verse 1, Galatians 2 - Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also Titus with me, now I went up by revelation… Now, a little unclear fully what this is about, but it seems to be in context of what said later, but it may mean that, in other words, God just revealed it to him that he was to do this at that time. Or it may have to do with the revelation of what God had given to him of the truth, which seems to be the case in context. But it says, **now I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that good news which I preach among the Gentiles.** The things he received from God, God revealed to him, Christ revealed so much to him when he taught him, directly for a period of three years.

But anyway, going on here, **when I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation,** a little awkward language here and how it's written and especially when you get into translation sometimes. I think it's Peter that makes a comment that Paul's writings sometimes are hard to understand. And yet, it wasn't just hard for Peter or others to understand. It's tough sometimes to understand what Paul is saying. So can you imagine when people are trying to translate it, if they don't know God's plan and God's purpose. That's why some so, so messed up in here, in scripture, because they don't know God's purpose and God's plan. And if you don't have it in that context, how can you translate something properly? Anyway, really messed up. But anyway, this word here "of reputation" is often used in terms of what others think, and so often what they think about themselves, how they see themselves. It seems to be that Paul was dealing with some of this.

But it goes on to say, **lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.** So, his desire was being able to teach what is true and that everybody received it. That's wonderful, but as time goes on, come to find out, it doesn't work that way. There are those who are going to turn from it. There are those who are going to preach against it. There are those who are going to try to pull the Church away and so forth, which happened with Paul later on anyway. It goes on to say in **verse 3 – Yet not even Titus, who was**

with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. So again here, they're being confronted with this, and it's a hard transition because the Jews that were in the region and the Jews that came out of Jerusalem at different times, in the beginning of the Church, this was pushed a lot. People thought that they had to do this too, because they related it to Judaism, if you will.

Paul, over and over again is telling them, "No, no, no, no." And especially those traveling with him and so forth. It says here, let's read it again: “Yet not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." In other words, after he had shared with them what had been revealed. **Moreover, that through false brethren who secretly sneaked in to spy out our liberty,** so they had this continually happening where different ones would come in amongst them, pretending to be of them or whatever, but having a different mindset and really wanting to themselves preach something different.

This has happened in the Church of God a lot. I hope we're not oblivious to that. Of course, if you haven't had experience with it, you may not know it, but it's happened a lot in God's Church. People who've come along and their motivation, their desire was to teach. To teach what they felt needed to be received, which means that if it's different, if it's something different than what was given through God's apostle, anyway. We have a crazy history, we truly do, that we hopefully have learned from very powerfully so.

Moreover that through false brethren who secretly sneaked in, to spy out our liberty that we have in Joshua the Christ, that they might bring us into bondage. In other words, they had something else they wanted to present to bring them back into, and really, that's spiritually what's happened over and over again through time. If you leave the truth, if you go away from the truth, you're going back into bondage. You're going away from God. You're going to lose what you had and you're going to be separated from God. So anyway, this is a part of what it’s talking about, what was taking place there. People were coming in and teaching something else. And primarily in this context here, it was this matter of circumcision.

To whom we gave no place for subjection. In other words, we didn't yield in submission. **No, not for an hour, so that the truth of the good news might continue with you.** In other words, he had to fight this fight continually, continue to preach these things. They weren't going to back off one iota, in essence, they were going to confront it all the way. That's basically what he's saying.

Verse Six - But to those who seem to think somewhat of themselves, whatever that was, it made no matter to me. I love the way it expresses this. It's like, “They think something of themselves, I don't care, I've got a message, and I know this comes from God.” He's going to fight the fight, whatever it might be. **...for God shows favoritism to no one for how they see themselves.** In other words, it's not because of how we see ourselves or think that we are religious or doing certain things that somehow we are religious. **...in conferring,** in other words, what someone else might say in their viewpoint about something **...added nothing for me.** In other words, whatever they have to say is of no value and he's

not receiving it. He's not going to even deal with it, in essence. **But contrary-wise, when they saw...** and really there is no other choice when it comes down to something where there's a difference.

I think of going up to Minnesota, I think of going down into Arizona when these two groups of different people in the Church, from different backgrounds and whatever, different ideas, wanted us to come and talk to them. So, at that time, I'm pretty sure that it was all about Passover that I was talking about. And this thing of building of bridges and letting them know, “You can't build bridges in the Church of God. You can't, you can't move away from something that someone else is teaching different and move toward that and somehow have a relationship with them.” And this is basically, on a spiritual plane, what Paul was working with.

It's an age-old story. And the reality is, what you have to do is what he did. You just have to tell the truth. And who will receive it, will receive it. And others, if they have some ideas about building a bridge and coming in with Pentecost, something different about Pentecost or 14th,15th doesn't mean anything to me. It’s not going to have an impact on me; I’m just going to keep fighting against it. Anyway, that's basically what he's saying here.

But contrary-wise, when they saw, so he's talking here about some of the others, who were being worked with by God, who were yielding to God's Spirit. I believe that's what we're getting into now. **...but contrary-wise, when they saw that the good news of the uncircumcision was committed unto me...** So, in other words, he's going to keep preaching, "and those who will see," and that's what he's talking about here now, “will see it.” You tell the truth and with God's spirit, that's what happens. People will see it. This is basically what was taking place. The others or the apostles, if you will here, some that were gathered together, **when they saw that the good news of the circumcision was committed unto me, as the circumcision was unto Peter.**

In other words, those who were in Jerusalem, he's talking about this and talking about even of the apostles, he said, “They were able to see.” It’s very clear to them that God was working with him to the Jews, primarily. They came to see. What he's saying here is, “They came to see that God was working with me” to the gentiles, because it's God's Spirit. God's Spirit is doing it, and if you're in the Church of God and you're close to God, you're going to see what God's doing. You're going to recognize it as God's Spirit. You see the unity and the oneness, just like when you come to understand the truth, like when Herbert Armstrong addressed Pentecost being on a different day.

Those who waited and had no trouble waiting for that year to pass, it wasn't a big deal for people of that mind because he already said he's going to take a year to study into this. And then when the year was over, by that next Pentecost, that's when he let everybody know. Those who were in the Church, those who were seeking to be closer to God, that's just the way it was. Others were all over the place. Some said, if he goes that direction, “He's gone too far.” If he doesn't go fast enough, “He's taking a year,” they found fault. We see the division there; it's not from God. That's what God is going to clean up. He’s going

to get rid of both sides. What's left are those who are following God, those who are listening to God's apostle. Then when he gave the things about Pentecost, with God's Spirit, everybody was in agreement. Those who weren't, bye-bye, and good riddance.

Anyway, so Paul is dealing with this, so this is the way the Church has always been. Having to deal with things like this because it's a part of the process of our growth. It's a part of the experience of something we have to experience so that we can understand it. The human mind and carnality and selfishness has not yielded fully to God. And to be encouraged by, and strengthened by, what it means to strive to be at one with God and the power that's there then, to keep moving forward. It says, **For He who was working in Peter**, speaking of God, **for He who was working in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was working in me toward the gentiles.** And those who were listening, those who were led by God, could see it. That's basically what he's saying.

So even when James, Cephas, surname of Simon, **and John, who were esteemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.** So those, those individuals, they saw it. They were being led by God's Spirit. That's what it shows. They were being led by God's spirit and they got it, they understood. They extended them, they saw this as a God. What an awesome thing because they had some incredible battles they went through back then in the beginning of the Church. **...and that we go unto the gentiles and they to the circumcision.** That's how things were divided up. It became very plain. Peter and the other apostles, they were to work primarily with the Jews, with the circumcision, with those who were being called out of that. And Paul, this wasn't a small thing in the Church. They went through some tough things, they went through some divisive things, but with God's Spirit, they came to the same conclusions, those who continued forward because of God's Spirit and because of being led by God's Spirit.

Only they wanted that we should remember the poor and the same thing which I also was eager to do. In other words, there were times, they had a period of time here, especially when there was famine in the areas of Judea and the Church was known for, and Paul, I think it was Corinthian, I think it was the Corinthians especially, I may be mistaken there, but I think they were the ones who rallied behind this more than the other of and sending help and sending of their goods in that direction. He's saying here, “Where there is need within the Church, we want to help out too.” “If it's those of the circumcision, we want to help out,” that's what he's saying. He's saying that basically they were encouraging him, “Please help us when we need help too.”

Verse 11. Because they went, they had to go basically separate ways, because Paul was the apostle to the gentiles, and they understood this is what God was doing. They saw how God was working and Paul to accomplish that, and those who were ministers with Paul. They saw then and understood full well that they, and their background, there was a reason why God was working with them to the Jews. It took a while to get there. But they got there because it's God's Church. God would lead them at different points here, teaching them different things in His time. These were big changes being made, huge changes. And

with Judaism, as far as the Church was concerned, and its huge changes for the gentiles, drastic changes for them. If you know the history of Corinth and the Corinthians, you see why he had a lot of things to deal with that were pretty tough in the beginning.

Now when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him face to face… That means there was some contention here and they had to be direct with one another. Paul was being very direct with Peter, and he tells why. It's good to hear the history of some of these things, and how things are resolved with God's spirit. **...because he was to be blamed,** or was at fault, in other words. Paul said, "This is wrong. You've got something here you need to address." God was working through him to help Peter to come to see this. **For before the coming of certain ones with James, he was eating with the gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.**

So again, it's worrying about what do the people think. Not of doing what is right before God. So great lessons to learn in some of this. This is how we're to be. If you're seeking to do what is right, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, not even in the Church. Because if it's right, it's right. And prayerfully in time, others will see that. That's how our relationships are, sometimes with one another. You give time. If someone doesn't see something clearly that you know and are convicted of, it's true. But you have to be careful how you use that. You have to be absolutely careful that you know its right before God. A desire then that they will come in their time, as God reveals it, because we're all in the Body of Christ. We're all in the Church of God. We're all in the same boat and we should have that same love and desire for each other to come through all this, and we all have problems to conquer and overcome.

So, he says, **fearing those who were of the circumcision.** We should be able to see that to do something that is proper and right, we shouldn't have a fear of what others think about us. **And the other Jews acted hypocritically likewise with him, in as much that Barnabas also was led away by their acting hypocritically.** So even, he says Barnabas, "Barnabas has been with me, Barnabas has been traveling with me, he's been hearing this, but even Barnabas had a battle here." He was more concerned and went over with them to set it a different area.

My experience has been, within the ministry, and how there were things very wrong within the ministry, "We don't sit over there. We sit up here on a higher level with better utensils, with better plates and with service from others because we can't get off our, whatever, and go and get our own food. The rest can, but not us." Now, you know, it wasn't hard to learn, but you have to give time. And in time, God has brought all that to the surface and helped us to see it. It's like, this isn't right. This, this can't, his isn't of God. This isn't the way God's spirit works. We have to go through those kinds of things in life. And so here it is, he's addressing something and then we can grow through it. Those who come through it, wonderful. Those who don't, well, they'll have their time later on to learn to do what they should have done then.

Verse 14 - But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, that's what we have to be convicted of. We're going to do what we're convicted of doing. And if we don't see it, then we don't yet have that ability, and hopefully, in time we'll come to that by a right example and maybe by, in some cases here, standing face-to-face, which is what he did with Peter. He took it directly to him. **…I said to Peter before them all.** I hope you realize this wasn't a small thing. This is pretty tough. I'm sure it was tough for Paul to have done, but he was convicted, and he knew that this needed to be addressed, so he wasn't backing down. He did it in front of everybody, so that everybody could hear, because others were troubled in the same way and doing the wrong thing, not according to the good news.

So again here, **Verse 14 - But when I saw that they did not walk up rightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of the gentiles and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the gentiles to live as do the Jews?'** In other words, *to Judaize* is a common phrase that was used back then, or even in things that are written about it. In other words, adopting the ways of the Jewish customs, "Why do you do this?" **We Jews by nature and not sinners of,** or from out of, **the Gentiles know that no one is justified by the works of the law, but by,** or through, **the faith of Joshua the Christ. Even we have believed in Joshua the Christ that we might be justified by,** or from out of as the word is, **the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law.**

He's relating something to them that they already have been given that they already grasped. They already are teaching amongst the Jews, but when confronted with this matter of the gentiles, there's still a battle there, and they're not fully comfortable with it yet. They still haven't worked through it yet on a spiritual plane, **...but by**, or out of, **the works of the law, no flesh will be justified.** He's driving this thing home again about circumcision. You cannot push these things. You cannot have this matter of not being able to, this same thing then, if you understand that, then you understand that you can't do this thing of separating yourselves and not being able to eat with them because that was forbidden! So now here they are, and if we are of the same belief, then why are we setting this example? Why would anyone then get up from these tables and go over and sit only with them because you're showing here a disagreement, something by your actions. Anyway.

But if while we seek to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners. Is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I rebuild on the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. He's reasoning with them on a spiritual plane and showing within the process they've had to go through, and what the Jews have had to go through in coming out of Judaism, and this cleansing of the mind of those things that are done by the Jews, on a physical plane, that have no value as far as works and the kinds of things they did. And they need to be fully balanced in all of it, so he's showing this even in a matter of eating with others. **For through the law I did die to the law that I might live unto God.** So, again, he's just reiterating, on a spiritual plane, the things that they really could receive that they had been given instruction in but weren't able to piece together fully yet. He's just showing here

that there is nothing within the law, speaking of the law of the Levites, the law of customs that they had and so forth, that that's not what this way is about at all. We know that, that's what he's telling them.

He says, **I am nailed to the pole with Christ.** Their reaction, a unique way of saying this, “I am too." That's what their response would be. "I am too." Yes, we are. **Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me.** So, he's talking to them on a spiritual plane and with God's Spirit, they'll see it. **Even the life which I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God.** And by saying things this way, they have to be of a spirit in the mind with God's Spirit to say, "I don't either." That's what it's about. It's a very unique and powerful way through God's Spirit to say these things so that they would be able to say, "Me too. I'm with you because this is of God." They could hear that because of God's Spirit.

But if righteousness is by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. And so, they understood. They were able to go through this and see this and recognize they were wrong in what they had done. It doesn't mean it's easy to change sometimes from a custom and a way that you had. They had already addressed things, Peter had already addressed with them long before things about the circumcision, the dream and so forth and all of that. So they understood that portion, but there were still those of different areas that were still trying to push that, but those coming out of Jerusalem, those of the apostles especially, when they're together and the rest of the Church there, of a Jewish background, they need to come to see the same things that you can't be uncomfortable around those who are the same Body. We're all the Body of Christ. We all, and what he said here about Christ, “We're all in this together, through the power of God's Spirit.” We should be able to be together and not seeing someone else as different or beneath us or whatever because of not understanding this change that’s taking place from Judaism to the Church.

Anyway, let's go over to 1 Peter now and see what Peter has to say on some of this in the same subject about grace and works. We can go back and read a story like this and maybe not fully grasp that this was a battle for them, but so many things are from time to time. It takes time to get comfortable with the truth. Whatever truth it might be sometimes. It can take some time, especially if we're used to doing something in a different way and so something has to be addressed. I can go into some other things, but I'll pass it.

1 Peter 1:1 - Peter, an apostle of Joshua the Christ, to the foreigners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. So again here, whether this is speaking then about those who have been dispersed, whether it be Judaism, which most had been, because even when they came together in Acts, in Acts Chapter 2, all these different regions that came together, they were Jews coming back to observe the things that they knew that they needed to do in Jerusalem, on a physical plane, and that's when so many of them were called at the very beginning when the Church began. So, again here, a lot of Jews dispersed all over the region there, or whether speaking of, somewhat of Israel, I don't know. There's been some beliefs on both sides, but definitely there was a dispersion of Jews all over the place.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. He's addressing those with whom God is working. There were a lot of them that began their journey during Pentecost of 31 AD. There were a lot of individuals who were there from all these different areas. When you hear the story about speaking in tongues and what was taking place and their asking, "How is it we're able to hear in our own language?" that's because people were coming out of all these different areas down to Jerusalem. So here they were and those who had come on into the Church, God had called them, and they had their beginning and went back into those areas in the Church of God.

So, he's talking to individuals that are part of the Church, **Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit**, so set apart by God's Spirit, **for**, or into, **obedience and sprinkling of the blood.** In other words, in order to repent, it gives us the ability to repent **...of Joshua the Christ: Grace to you, and peace be multiplied.** So again here, this desire for them to be able to receive what God was wanting to give to them, and it's coming through what he's preaching to them and what they have learned.

Verse 3 - Blessed be God the Father of our Lord, Joshua the Christ. It's more of a way of saying, "Thanks be to God," because it's understanding how blessed they are because of their calling and this is a response then, and it's not a matter of their blessing God, or wanting blessings to be upon God, but they come from God. God is the source of blessings. But the response is one of thankfulness, one of gratefulness, if you will, for all that God has given.

Blessed be the God of our Father and of our Lord Joshua the Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Joshua the Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. So again, just reiterating the basic things we learned in the beginning, which God wants us to think about those things and to even pray about those things from time to time to understand our calling, to understand what we've been given, to understand a relationship that we have with God in a very unique way.

Again here, this inheritance that God wants to give to us; there's nothing greater than God's way. It's the only thing that's ever going to continue on is God's way. **...incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept**, not "by" but "in," **who are kept in the power of God by faith.** So, beautiful expression if we understand it, because we understand that we're accounted as righteousness, as righteous, because of faith, because of believing God and living what He gives to us. We hold onto what He teaches us, what He gives to us. And because of that choice, God counts that to us for righteous, being righteous. We're not. We know we're not because we have to continually repent of sin. But just doing that, God counts that to us for righteousness, that we believe it and do it through the blood of Christ. We want to be forgiven. **…in the power of God by faith into salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** So, when is it fully revealed? When our change comes. When we're in Elohim.

Verse 6 - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by difficult trials. Well, does that ever happen? We go through a lot; we go through a lot! This world isn't trying to do what you're doing. They're not trying to change self. They're not working. They're not acknowledging what their nature is like and seeing themselves for what they are. No, the world justifies who they are and what they are. That's what selfishness does. It has to make self look good. And then sometimes, sadly, people become so disillusioned with the life they're living and the things that are taking place and the things they've seen, they can't deal with it anymore, like what we've seen recently.

So, what an awesome thing that we understand what life is about, what the purpose of it is all about. **So in this you greatly rejoice.** We're thankful for, that's what we thank God for. That's a matter of rejoicing in it, being thankful for it. And the more thankful we are, the more we're able to rejoice in what God gives to us and what He's placed before us, no matter even though we know we have to go through hardship, trials, hardships. You just keep going. God will help you through it. It might be a long one. You just keep going until you're through it. The thing is you have God! Nothing's greater than that.

So that the trying of your faith, being more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tested by fire… These are awesome scriptures to understand spiritually and personally, each one of us. What God's given to us, what it means to go through hardships and trials and things not going well in life and learning how to navigate it with God's help. Learning how to navigate it with the mind that is able to receive help from God to deal with it.

Because we live in a horrible world; confused, messed up, screwed up world that we were a part of. And yet God's blessed us to come out of that and begin something new, and because of what we're fighting, the world doesn't have a great deal of love for us obviously, and so we have to fight battles there as well. The fact that you keep doing it and realize, "This is hard." No, there's no trying to make this look, you know, put frosting on it, if you will, make it look like it's a cakewalk and easy. It's not easy; it's a battle! Sometimes it gets deep down inside and that's good because it's deep down inside that we can address things that can bring about change in how we think. That's how God works with us. **Though it be tested by fire, might be found unto praise, honor, and glory at the revelation**, or the appearing or the manifestation, **of Joshua the Christ, whom, having not seen, you love.** Isn't that an awesome thing?

Never seen Him, never seen God, but we come to love them. It's in the mind. It's in a relationship of things we know of a relationship that God has nurtured with us, if we respond, and we continue to respond. There's that bond that becomes stronger and stronger through time. **Although now you do not see Him yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable**, or inexpressible, I guess it should be, **and full of glory.** So again here, there are things that we have inside in a relationship toward God and those feelings that are different than just human nature. There are some things that are hard to express and how we feel about it. But to thank God for it?

Verse 9 - Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul. We know that we continue at it. We have to continue at it, and one day, it's over. And for some of us, it's going to be sooner than later. It's just the way life is. We get to a point where you've lived your life and how we live our life then, it's our choice. When we're called into the Church, we want God's way of life. If we want to fight for God's way of life, and we realize that it's in the fighting and you just keep fighting. It doesn't matter what obstacles are in front, God will help you through. No matter how long they are, no matter how difficult they are.

...of which salvation the prophets have inquired and carefully searched. So, talking about all those in times past who wanted to see more, but couldn't. I think of Daniel when God told him, “Just shut up the book Daniel, go your way.” Can you imagine? He gives you all this and “What does all this mean?” These different things that God gave to him, and God just told him, “It's not for your time, it's for the end. It's for later on. Just go on, live your life, live right before me, and this is for later.” But they wanted to know more, and we're still in that condition. I want to know more! I don't think that ever changes for anyone that God's ever called. We want to know more, and yet when we look at it, we realize, "I have been given more to know...” You have been given more to know, you can say that, “than anyone who has lived before.” More than God's apostle, Herbert Armstrong. You've been given more to see and to understand. Did he want to see more? Yes. But it wasn't for that period of time. We always want to see more. I want to see a lot more; I have a lot of questions! I have a lot of things I want to see! You should too, and I'm sure you do, especially as we get closer and not knowing... “We really want to know more about that,” and it's like God shut the book and said, “Just keep going, you'll get there,” you know. Anyway, so God works with us all in different ways, and it's an awesome process we go through.

...which salvation the prophets have inquired and carefully search, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you. So again, there are things they wrote about that they didn't fully grasp that they wanted to see more of, that they wanted to see at that time. They wanted to see the time of the Christ. They didn't know what that was going to be. They didn't know that Christ was going to come, and he was going to die even though Isaiah wrote about it. He didn't know what that was about. He didn't know it was about Christ, but he wrote things about the Christ and then grasped it fully, and there's so many things in the Bible we don't know until God just gives it to us in the mind, and when it's our time and God's time to give it, He gives it.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating, that he testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow. They wrote about those things and didn't understand it, what it was going to entail. Had no idea the kind of life that Christ was going to live. And to not be Christ right away, in other words, not be the Messiah right away. That there's going to be another 2,000 years past that when he did come because He had to come first to be the Passover, and they didn't know those things. They couldn't put it all together, but they wanted to see more about what they had written about.

That's why I say, “Can we grasp how awesomely blessed we are that we see those things, that we are living these things and especially at this time?” We really, we really don't see it, but we need to strive to see it more, and appreciate it more, to grasp what we have been given. The stark reality of change. So, that's what he's telling them: “Look, look at all the ones who've gone before you and look what you're receiving now.” That's exactly what he’s telling them: “Look what you've been given now. Look what you can see that we have. We see Joshua the Christ.” We see what he did and all the prophets before who wanted to see. They don't. Anyway.

Verse 12 - To them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things, which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things which angels desire to look into. So even the angelic realm, they like to hear what God is giving. They like to hear what's being given in the Church. They have for the last 2,000 years, as more and more has been given, in the angelic realm. They have a desire to know, to see, because they haven't known. God hasn't revealed those things to them. They only see what's taking place as it takes place, as God gives it, as it comes through Christ to give to the Church. Awesome!

Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, it's our choice, **be sober and hope fully on the grace that is brought to you at the revelation of the appearing of the manifest.** We know that's what we're looking forward to, and we know that we're extremely close. The world has never been this close. We're almost there. **...as obedient children, not conforming,** in other words, **not fashioning yourselves to the former lusts of your ignorance. But as he who has called you as holy, you also become holy in all conduct.** What an awesome thing to understand that we can live better. No matter what stage we are in the Church, we can live better. We can draw closer to God. We can receive more of God's Spirit. We can grow more. Growing never stops. If it does, we're in trouble.

Because it's written, **Become holy, for I am holy.** Become like God. I don't know, how much does it burn inside you that you want to be in agreement of the same mind as God, to be in absolute agreement with God, to agree with everything He's given, to understand? And the more we're given to understand His purpose and the process and everything else, that's the process of knowing the mind of God, of wanting to be in absolute agreement with God. **...and if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each ones work,** the right work, the good work, **conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.** In other words, the soberness. That's why it's said to be sober because the reality is we should have a fear of ever moving away from the trunk of the tree, a fear from losing any of the truth that God has given to us, a fear of being pulled by something in the world away from what God has offered us. A healthy fear, in other words, and a confidence that's not going to happen. Because your choice is to keep drawing closer to God, to keep repenting whenever you can, to even cry out to God to help you to see the things to repent of that you don't even understand yet.

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like gold and silver through your vain conduct handed down by the tradition of your fathers but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a

lamb without blemish and without spot, He indeed was foreordained, speaking of Christ. In other words, foreknown by God, **before the foundation of the world.** What an awesome thing we just understand that. His being, his existence, everything was going to be done with him and through him, was determined by God before anything else existed incredible. **...but was manifest in these times for you.** Millions, maybe billions of years, we can't comprehend the time, and then now we live in a time we're witnessing. This thing taking place this that exists now on earth that God has looked forward to all that time to build up to here, and we're just a little way away from what He predetermined all those millions and billions, or whatever it was, years ago, if we talk about earth years.

We're almost there because 1,100 years is going to go by just like that, and then it'll be nothing but the Family of God, Elohim, and the angelic realm that has been faithful to God. Everything else that opposes it, destroyed. Then things on into the future that have been predetermined that we don't have the foggiest idea of yet, that will be even far greater. I think, "How could that be?" And yet it will be. Choices, choices, choices.

… but was manifest these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God, seeing you have purified your lives in obeying the truth. We believe it, we obey it, we live by it, in faith, **...through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren,** has to be there, love of the brethren, **love one another fervently, from out of a pure heart having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.**

Verse 24 - Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls away. Now, when you get older, that means a lot more. You know, you understand. Yes, the flower may not be there very long, the grass may not be there very long, and then when you talk about human life, it really isn't there very long. Because you wonder, "Where did it go?" It's in this frame that we have to make choices. The choices and the responsibility for our choices, it's just ours. No one else's. Awesome! And to think what God's given us to have the choice we have? Crazy! **And as flower falls away, but the word of the Lord,** or the eternal, **endures forever.**