

Last Sabbath, we began a new series entitled *Truth About Grace*. Today is *Part 2*.

Last week, we looked at the subject of works, in part, because they go together. And the reason we're going through some of this in part, even though we had a couple of sermons on the subject at the end of December, and I think one or two in the beginning of the year, we're going at it a little bit differently this time around. The main thrust of some of this, and perhaps in some other sermons coming along, is that as people begin to go through some of the things they're going to go through in this world, this is one of the subjects that oftentimes comes up.

We need to be able to understand it, the more we can understand what it's talking about. Because you really don't know what it is talking about it unless you know the context. And that's the primary thing, you have to know what it is they're discussing. The world of traditional Christianity doesn't have a clue about it. They just don't understand because they've been fed a certain diet, if you will, about the subject, and just like so many things, things are so messed up out there in this world as far as religion and everything else.

So, today we're going to go toward grace a little bit more in talking about what it is.

If you want to turn over to Ephesians 2, we're going to go back to there and catch up a little bit with that. **Ephesians 2:1—Also, you were dead in trespasses and sins.** Now, last week I mentioned that there was one minister that I learned under, that I learned some good things and I learned some bad things. This is before the Apostasy. So, kind of a mixed bag, but he had a very strong talent and ability of being able to explain scriptures. He did that by making people or trying to get people to think about various aspects of the context, what is actually being said.

Because in times past, as I mentioned in the different clubs that we had, Spokesman's Club and Graduate Club, during the topics session, someone would get up and ask a difficult scripture, and then people in the audience would hold up their hand and they would reply. But so often, people would give what we would refer to as the "inspired margin" answer. So, a lot of times people would hear sermons, we'd hear sermons, and we'd buy the wide-margin Bibles. People don't even know what a wide-margin Bible is anymore. Don't even know what a Bible is except in the book, on the iPad, or wherever it is. But we would have these wide margins, and we'd write notes in there as to what something was being said about a particular scripture.

Anyway, the minister had a knack for being able to come back with other questions to the individual afterwards and saying, "Well, what does this mean in what you gave as an answer?" And so often, they couldn't answer it. They didn't understand what was actually being said. They had the pat answer; we

can have an answer to something that we've been told, but it doesn't mean we understand it or that we grasp what's really being said in the context.

Anyway, I found that a marvel. It's helped me a great deal over the years to develop that. And I was very appreciative for that ability to learn that because it is something you have to learn over time.

But just like this question here now, or this verse here **...also, you...** The Bible has it here, "**has quickened who.**" That isn't even in the scriptures. When it's in italics like that, they're adding to what they think the context is, and I don't like that as a whole. A lot of times, you pick up things that if you read past that and don't include that, it gives you a better sense of what's actually being said, even though it might be in the context in part later on, which is what they try to do.

...also, you were, it says, this is what it literally says, **also, you were dead in trespasses and sins.** So, what does that mean, "you're dead in trespasses and sins"? Well, we all understand that. It's a matter that if you're dead because of trespasses and sins in the past, it's because of the death penalty, the second death. And those are the kinds of things—that's an easy one—but those are the kinds of things that we can get more out of scriptures, oftentimes, if we'll just ask the questions, "What is this talking about?" Not reading it as a story flow but striving to understand what it's actually saying in the context. That becomes really important when it comes to this matter of grace because the only way you can know what it's talking about is by the context. Otherwise, you can read wrong things into it.

Verse 2—whereby in times past you walked according to the course of this world. Just like everyone else, not understanding the truth. I think about this quite a bit when writing this book now, and I'm excited about it because we have this opportunity to put something out there that brings things up to date even more so since the late 60s, 70s in Worldwide, because of all that God has given in the sense of new truth, if you will, and making things a lot clearer as far as God's plan and God's purpose is.

So, to simplify some of those things in the best way possible, when God begins to work with and draw people, it's going to be easier for them. That's something we really need to grasp. You know, during the Millennium it's going to be so incredible because the ability to help people is going to be magnified so many times over in a way that we can't even begin to comprehend.

If you think about a world that only has one government, it's going to take time to get that established to where everyone yields to that process, one Church, because there's still going to be a lot of people who are going to hold on to their beliefs, whatever that is. It doesn't matter what it is, whatever they grew up with, they're still going to hold on to those things even though Christ and 144,000 are on earth. It's just human nature, and it's hard for people to give up something that they've held dear all their life in the sense if they're serious about it. And a lot of people are in different religions, let alone traditional Christianity.

So, it's very hard to admit that you're wrong, or that you've been wrong, or that the world could have been wrong. That's one of the hardest things out here, especially in the last 50, 60, 70 years, when technology has taken a leap forward and far more has gone out in the world in the sense of what is available to people.

In times past, we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. You know, what an incredible thing for what was given to Herbert Armstrong to understand some of these things, what this is talking about, an ability that we haven't understood as well until technology came along. The radio. That had a tremendous impact on God's Church. It was called the Radio Church of God for a long time. We were trying to figure it out the other day, and I think we came to the early 60s, when it finally changed. Somewhere in there, '64, whatever it might have been. I didn't really look it up. We were just talking about it, people we knew, and changes that took place.

Called it that because of the power that was there. People could turn on a radio, hear something several hundred miles away, sometimes well over a thousand in the evening, and you could pick up this voice. The power that God used at that point in time for Herbert Armstrong to be able to use that tool to be able to reach out into the world was incredible. And a lot of people heard it, heard what was true.

And to understand this, then, when it says **...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience.** It's very hard sometimes for people in the world, let alone even sometimes in the Church, for us to grasp and comprehend that there are beings out there, and a specific being, who broadcasts to the mind thoughts and ideas. And especially for him, it's an easy thing because he knows human nature, he understands human nature, he understands selfishness; he is the author of it. He understands then those things that can tempt people or draw people to different thoughts or ideas or to intensify wrong thoughts and wrong ideas. It's out there.

And so, if that being is around, or the beings that do this are around, they can broadcast to the mind, and they can intensify an already bad attitude or bad thinking that people have in their mind as they begin to act upon something. So, they stir things up. That's the way they operate.

I mean, what a perversion. They want to see people have unhappy lives. They hate humans. That's incredible to understand. That there are so many of them out there. Satan hates human beings. He hates God. He hates God's way. He's been fighting against it for we don't know how long – long before mankind was ever put on the earth. And then, as soon as mankind was put on the earth, he was right there starting out in the Garden of Eden, and then mankind ever since, striving to make things miserable for human life. Incredible! Tried to kill Joshua early on. Incredible, to have such hatred inside of you to want to see people destroyed, to want to see people suffer, to see people hurt.

So, anyway, it talks about this **...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh.** It shows that base nature of selfishness and what that's like, and the lust that's there, "lust of the

flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” That’s what these beings try to stir up and make worse in a person’s life.

...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath. It’s a constant battle in the human mind if people are fighting it (not constant once you’re in the Church for a time and you begin to conquer and overcome various things, and that becomes less and less). But there is a mind and a way of thinking. When we’re called, we want to change that. We don’t want to react being selfish all the time. Because that’s our natural inclination. So, we have to learn that over a long period of time because we fight it.

And so, it just talks about some of those things in a different context, “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” the things that pull people away to act wrong, to do evil, to do bad, to do what’s bad.

...and were by nature the children of wrath. And whenever that word is used, I don’t like it, personally, in scripture, especially in the Old Testament when it talks about “the wrath of God” and so forth, because there is this concept that God is wrathful, and He’s looking for fault in human beings, and that’s not God at all. He knows full well what we’re like and what we do and what motivates us as human beings.

Whenever you see that word, “judgment” needs to come into your mind. It’s about judgment. Because eventually, everyone is judged or has judgment upon them, and they have to answer for it. They have to answer for their lives and their choices in life. The ultimate of that is what happens in the Great White Throne, on the Last Great Day. You know, we understand that.

What an awesome thing, that by the time the hundred years is over, there are going to be those who refuse God into the possibly billions, millions, and that’s their choice. But what is referred to as the wrath of God, it will be an execution of judgment. He’s told mankind from the very beginning the cost, the payment, what has to be paid for sin is death. That’s the penalty.

The Protestant world tries to water that down and deny that or put things in a smoother-sounding way, but that’s the bottom line. We have to pay for our sins, or Joshua the Christ can pay for our sins as our Passover. That’s where it all begins. So we can be forgiven of sin because he paid the penalty.

But for those who don’t believe or won’t believe him, won’t look to him as their Passover, won’t use that opportunity to cry out to God for forgiveness of their sins and help to change, well, ultimately, there is a wrath in front of them. It’s called the second death. Everybody has to die once.

What an awesome thing that we understand that, that you know that. Herbert Armstrong was given that, to comprehend that. So incredible to comprehend that human beings can live twice in a human body, to understand what that hundred years is all about. Because those things weren’t understood by the early Church. They understood judgment. They understood that everyone was going to be judged.

They understood that there was that ability to come under judgment and to pay for that. But in the same manner, and what was going to happen, they didn't comprehend.

So again here, "and were by nature the children of wrath," meaning judgment is in front of us. Because we live the way of sin. "Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," that's what it's saying here in these verses. **...even as others.** God blessed us in being called out of the world. That's what is being told here by Paul. It says, "You have the opportunity to do different. You have the blessing of living different." But that's the way we were. We were just like everyone else in the world. We didn't have hope. We weren't able to fight self and change.

Verse 4—But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love... And that's what it's based upon. It's based on God's mind. God is not a wrathful God. God, like any parent, wants to see their children succeed. At least, that's the way it should be in family. It isn't always that way in the world where parents want to see a child succeed. But as a whole, normally, by nature, a parent wants to see their child succeed, and frankly, do better than them. Awesome!

How much more God Almighty, the kind of love that God has? That's the way God is. God is, it says, "God is love." That's His mind. That's His thinking. Human beings, we still have selfishness. Even in the best of families, we still have selfishness as human beings apart from God. We can only begin to work on that and change that with God's help, to have a different mind, a different thinking. So when it says here, "He is rich in mercy," well, it's about love. It's about the good and the graciousness that God wants to give to us.

...for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins. So, it's taking us all the way back to what it started out here with. We're the children of wrath. The second death was awaiting because we lived ever how we wanted to, we weren't trying to live God's way of life. We live like everyone else in the world. And then God gives us a calling, and He blesses us in starting that process of coming out of that kind of life, where we can change, and our mind can be changed.

And so, it shows this great love that God has for us to bring us out of that because He has a plan for us. I think about writing about some of those things right now. To me, this is awesome that we see and understand this entire process that God has given.

"Wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins." So, He knows what we are as human beings and He looks forward to the time that He can call everyone, that He can draw everyone, knowing full well that not everyone is going to receive that, though, and that's the hard part. It's almost unimaginable that human beings, especially during the Millennium and the Great White Throne, wouldn't all one hundred percent say, "Yes! That's what I want! I want to live that way. I want that kind of life." But it won't be that way.

...even when we were dead in sins has quickened, or this word here meaning “make alive”; that’s what it means here, “to make alive,” **to make us alive together with Christ**. So, we have the ability of having God’s spirit within us—that’s what it means to be made alive—and to have a life within us. Not to have that wrath waiting, but to be able to be forgiven of sin and to be able then to have that life with Christ, to share with Him. That’s what our desire is.

“Made us alive together with Christ.” So, it’s a spiritual thing. We’re able to be in the Body of Christ. We’re able to be in the Church of God. We’re able to have God the Father and Joshua the Christ spiritually live and dwell within us in our minds, to communicate their will to us and for us to respond, to change, to want that, to desire that.

... **(by grace you are saved)**. So, by its very definition right now it’s telling us just before this, this is grace, this is what grace is about. It’s about how God works with us. It’s about how God knows us. It’s about how God knows all mankind and that everyone has a death penalty hanging over them until they can be forgiven of their sins. It tells us more about God and His grace that He gives to us because He gave us a Passover so that we could be forgiven of sin, so we could have a relationship with God, so that we can pray to God, so that we could have a confidence when we do pray to God that God hears us.

What an awesome thing! To know, not just to hope. You know, people in the world, they hope that God might hear them when they’re in trouble, when they’re going through something. And so, last-minute thing, they’ll throw up a prayer or something because they know this is beyond them, whatever it might be. Like the old story of someone in a foxhole and, you know, they promise God, “If you’ll just save me from this, I promise You ‘this’ and ‘that.’” And then when they’re out, they go back to the same old life.

But God has given us everything whereby we can change and become different. And so again here, it’s all about how we go through this process of being able to be saved.

Verse 6—Even He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in... I hate some of these things, **heavenly places**. Different translations you might have, but it’s about God who **has raised us up together**, together with Christ, having that life able to live within us, **and made us to sit together in a spirit realm**, if you will, **in a spirit world**, as it were. We’re physical, we’re carnal, but we have the blessing of God’s spirit in us, and we have this relationship with God, with Christ, with one another in the Church that binds us together in a unique way.

So it says here, **in the heavens, in Joshua the Christ**. And every time it says something like that, what does it mean? “Raised us up together,” **made us sit together in the heavens or in the spirit kingdom**, if you will, **in Joshua the Christ**. Well, again here, it’s about Passover, it’s about the ability to be forgiven of sin, it’s about how God can dwell in us and we can dwell in God. That’s how we’re able to sit together in such a thing on a spiritual plane.

...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 again, it's showing the whole process here of how this works in our life and referring to this as God's grace – the whole process of being called, the whole process whereby we can have this relationship with God.

For by grace you are saved through faith. So what does that mean? "For by grace, you are saved through faith." Now, I read last week how that there are certain quippy sayings that the Protestant world comes up with, where you're saved by grace and not by works. You know, it's true, but only if you know the context. But the way they teach it, it's totally false. I hope we understand what that means.

Everyone has to work. Everyone works at whatever it is in their mind; whatever you do in your life, it's because of what you have in your thinking. And if it has to do with God, with religion, with anything of that nature, you're going to have things that reflect what you believe. If you believe in Easter, you have works. If you go to Sunday morning worship, or if you talk to others and you believe in that and you put out the eggs and have children come around and gather them, whatever it might be, if you believe in Christmas and you put up a tree, it shows what you believe. Those are works.

And so, to me, it's a sick thing when they come across and try to blame or tell people in God's Church, "You're just trying to be saved by works because you keep the seventh-day Sabbath." They don't see themselves. "Well, do you go to church on Sunday? Do you believe Sunday is the right day of worship?" Because if they do, that's their works. You can say, "Well, you're trying to be saved by that." "Well, no, that's not what it's about."

I hope we understand what it's talking about here when we're talking about grace then and works, and what it means.

For by grace you are saved through faith. Which means you believe something, God's given you the ability to believe what is true, and you live it. If you believe in the Sabbath, that's what you're going to be working. Actually, you're not going to be working on the Sabbath. That's your works. But you strive to keep it in a way that God says to keep it, by not working, by coming together on the Sabbath. It's just a matter of desiring to obey God and live His way of life. And you're able to do that because of God's grace because He's called you and helped you to see the Sabbath is the correct day, the Feast of Tabernacles is the right time to come together to observe that, whatever it is, Passover, that when you keep Passover, that's why you come together on Passover night, those who are baptized. So, God's blessed us with that.

For by grace you are saved through faith and that not out of (as the word is) yourselves; it is the gift of God. So again, God gives us the roadmap. He shows us the way to go through this entire process when we're called until this is all complete.

...not of works, let anyone should boast. What does that mean, “not of works lest anyone should boast?” You are saved by grace through faith because of what you believe. You’re not saved because of how good you are or how well you do everything, and you’re not trying to.

That’s what the Jews tried to do. They still do. They keep the Sabbath, they keep certain things, and the better they can do it, the more that they feel right with God, and sometimes that happens or has happened in God’s Church. The more people can do various things they can feel like, “Well...” We should strive to do what is right, but that’s not how you’re saved, by striving to do what’s right. It’s just your reasonable service. We read that last Sabbath. It’s how we should live. We should strive to live what is right before God because we want to obey God. We’re not trying to be saved by that; we’re doing it because we believe that’s what God says we should do. He tells us not to do certain things, we understand this is from God, and I shouldn’t do it, and so, we ask for help to obey Him. And so, this is a part of the requirement.

If you live by and have received grace from God, you have to work. You have to work at what you’ve been given. You have to work at trying to conquer and overcome self because you believe you have to. You can’t just think anything you want to think every day if they’re wrong thoughts. If they’re wrong thoughts toward others or about others or whatever it might be, you can’t do it, let alone do it. If it’s in the mind and you’ve already done it there, Christ said that basically then if you’ve thought it in your mind, then you’ve already done it. That’s the spirit of it.

So, if there are certain sins and you think about them and you dwell on it and you fantasize, whatever it might be in life, then we’re disobeying God. And so, if God has given us the ability to fight that, which is what grace is, what’s the first thing we have to do? What does grace give us? The ability to have Passover. The ability to go before God and say, “Father, forgive me. I don’t want this in me. I don’t want that kind of a mind. I want a kind of a mind that’s clean and clear, that thinks right toward others, not wrong.”

And so, that’s a part of a process, and it’s up to us. So, we are given this opportunity of grace, and it begins always, always, always with Passover, meaning you have to repent of your sins and ask God for help to conquer and overcome whatever it is you’re battling and dealing with. And everybody has sin. Amazing. Everybody has sin. It’s the way of human life. There is no perfect human being. There was one who lived righteously before God. No other human being ever has or ever can. It’s impossible. But you should strive to do it because of what you believe.

God has given us the ability to believe what is true and what is right, and then it’s up to us to fight for it. And we’ll fight for it if we believe God, if we believe Christ, if we believe the truth they’ve given to us. That’s works. But we do it because of the grace God’s given to us because He’s shown us you can do this, and you can be forgiven. And it’s a battle to the end.

I hate it if people don't keep battling. We have to battle. We have to fight. We have to be convicted, "I want this, the self dead." Not in human life, but selfishness. We want God's way, God's mind to be alive within us, obviously. That's what the scriptures are talking about.

For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It doesn't come out of you. We have to receive help from God. We have to have God's help to do what we do. It starts with repentance and forgiveness, but then we have to ask God for His holy spirit. If you're not asking for God's spirit day by day by day you're missing the mark.

"Give us this day our daily bread" is not about sitting down at a physical meal and feeling like this is what makes us righteous before God, or to feel good about saying the same thing every day. That's why I've said the things I have about some of those kinds of things. Because that's not what it's about. It's the spiritual part of it; that we grasp, yes, we should be thankful for the physical things we have and thank God as we think about some of those things from time to time, but what we should be asking for every day, "Give us this day our daily bread," it's about God. It's about God's truth and God's way of life. That's what we should yearn for and want and know that we have to ask God for every day.

In this Western world, we are so blessed. We have so much it's pathetic sometimes, in one way, because people take it for granted. Incredible, the amount of food that's wasted. It's not like it used to be, where people were glad just to have a plate, let alone a full plate. You go into a restaurant now, and if you eat it all, you're not going to stay slender very long. It's going to be a battle.

We have too much, and we have things that are so processed and so bad for the human body; we have to fight that, too. We're just now starting to address some things that some countries addressed a long time ago, which they realize are bad for growth for children. Yes, it's bad for adults too, but it's even worse for them because their bodies are developing.

So, we have plenty. We have so much. That's the point I'm trying to make. But we don't have so much of God. And it's not owed to us, and it's not an overabundance of it unless you want it. And if you want it, then God will give it to you. If you cry out for it, God will help you. But it's up to each one of us to do that. That's grace, God's love. He wants us to pray to Him. He wants us to ask for His holy spirit. He wants to give us help to change. If you have a battle and you're fighting it, He wants to see you succeed. He'll give you the help.

It doesn't mean it's going to be easy. It doesn't mean you're not going to slip. It doesn't mean you're not going to make another mistake at some point, because we do as human beings, but the more you fight, the more you conquer, the more you keep fighting, the less you have to conquer. That's the way it works. This is a constant battle, this way of life, all because of the favor, the mercy, the patience, everything that God has given to us. It's all summed up in one word, grace. That's how the word is used. All the favor God has given to us, the blessings in life He gives to us, the kindness He shows us, the continual giving of

His holy spirit once we repent, giving us the ability to repent. It's God's love. It's God's grace to us. He wants us to succeed.

We can understand what a parent should be like in wanting to see their children succeed. Understand God has that, so much more than that, for us, it's not even funny. We really can't comprehend it to the depth of who God really is and that kind of love, that kind of patience, that kind of endurance. Because He's with us until it's over with. He wants to be with us until it's over with. Incredible! And we're to take that opportunity and run with it with all of our being.

And if we don't give up, He doesn't give up. He's faithful. Christ is faithful. Scriptures talk about that. Amazing! We're not, as human beings, but we can repent of that, and we can change. Awesome!

If we didn't know those things, where would we be? If we didn't have confidence in those kinds of things, where would we be? We have everything that's been given to us on a platter – silver, gold, whatever. We just have to do it. Works, they are required, with grace. But you're not saved because of how well you do those things; it's just what your duty is. It's what you should be doing. It is what we should be living. It goes together. It's a matter of faith.

That's why it says here, "by grace you are saved through faith." It's what it means. What a sad thing the protestant world doesn't understand this process. I look forward to the day they are able to see it and grasp it. It's everything.

Then it goes on to say, **it is the gift of God** (last of **verse 8** there), **not of works, lest anyone should boast**. In other words, we can't do this on our own ability in the first place. We should be so convicted of that, so understanding of that. It shouldn't be a problem to comprehend this at all in any fashion or form.

"Not of works." It's not by how well we do things. It's not by how often you fast, how often you pray. You should be praying. We should fast. I can't think of the group, what it was called, which one it was, but there was one that would fast twice a week as a whole. Twice a week. I don't fast twice a week. I don't fast twice a month, as a whole, unless it's during Atonement time, and it just happens to be close to that period. Then I might hit it. So, if you're doing that already, should you let down and do less? No. But I'm just being honest with you. We should fast. And if it's been a long time since you've fasted, if it's been since Atonement, that's not healthy spiritually.

So, we have tools whereby we can grow, but we don't use those tools in order to try to save ourselves and feel better about ourselves. I hope you understand the difference there. It's about grace, what God has given us the opportunity to have in order to draw closer to Him. And if you want to use those tools, they're there and they're available.

If you want to use the tool of prayer, which we'd better be doing, better be doing it really, all the time. God wants to hear from us. Maybe you repeat the same thing two days in a row or three days in a row.

Maybe you go through some of the same things you're praying. That's fine. But do it. And from time to time, try to put some other things in it. Think about other people. Think about situations. We learn that in prayer. It's not about self but learning about other people and the trials and things that people go through, being aware of people in the Church, and some of their battles. It's good to pray about those kinds of things, not just our own. But God wants to hear from you every day.

And so, we can't do it, in the sense of being strong enough. That's why Christ had to die – because we couldn't do it. We can't keep the law perfectly, and we shouldn't try to feel better about keeping the law and how well we can keep the law. That's why I said how often we fast and how often we pray, that's not what it's about. We do it because we want God because we need God, we want to draw closer to God. That's what it's about.

"Not of works, lest anyone should boast." Because that's all it does. It lifts people up. I've seen it a lot in the environment of the Church even, in times past especially. Of how people can strive to feel better about themselves. And that's not what this way of life is about, that we feel better about ourselves because of how well we can do something, or we're doing it more than others, or we're doing it better than others. If we're doing that, then it just turns into haughtiness and pride. We have a righteousness that's ours, not from God because of forgiveness of sin.

You know, that's where righteousness comes from. Because we believe God and do what He says, strive to do what He says. That's what He accounts as righteousness to us. That's an awesome thing to understand. It really is. To have a confidence in that. You keep fighting, you keep doing, fall on your face once in a while, do something stupid once in a while. If you didn't, you'd be a perfect person. None of us are. So, we ask God for forgiveness, and it's gone. You don't have to carry it anymore. You don't have to beat yourself up anymore.

...not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship. What does that mean? What does it mean, "we are His workmanship," God's workmanship? If we're doing what we're supposed to be doing because He's told us how, He's given us the truth that we're able to believe, and we're acting upon that – that's what faith is, that we're acting upon the truth that God has given to us and so we're striving to do those things – that God attributes that to us for righteousness just by responding that way.

He is doing the work. That's the whole thing. You have to have God's spirit to change. This brain, this mind, can't think differently, can't think right unless God is helping you. Where is the pride in that? Well, there shouldn't be any whatsoever because we know what we are. We need help all the time so we can think right, so we can respond right.

I have to ask forgiveness sometimes driving down the stupid highway because of the world and an impatience with the world, and people doing stupid things. And sometimes I know what they're going to do before they do it because I've done the same things, because you know what it's like. I wish I could remember what I was reading the other day here, maybe saw a program, and they were talking about

that very thing, and drivers, especially if you're out there on the highway a lot, you know what people are getting ready to do just by the way they're driving. You can figure it out. "I know what they're going to do." Then you step on the gas a little bit more so they can't get in. "Use your blinker and I'll let you in."

I've done those things, you know. Stupid. It's like me a long time ago. My wife caught me taking a little end of a net, in an aquarium, and these tetras were bothering some of the other fish, and I was whacking them on the side. I'd try to get up there to them and push them away, teach them. I can teach that fish nothing, you know. And so, it's like, if you're trying to do that in the world too, "Turn on your blinker and I'll let you in. Otherwise, you're just going to... You've waited this long." I don't even want to go there.

Human nature is really sick, it really is, and we have to be on guard in it. You know, some of the things that are some of the worst of things is you're coming up to an exit and you have heavy, heavy traffic, and people wait until the last second to get into a spot because the road comes to either an exit or a 'Y' in the freeway onto another freeway, and there are people who wait until the last second. I'm getting much better at that. I don't like doing that because it's dangerous.

But you can pick out when people are doing things. It's carnal human nature, and we are sick as human beings, and it's easy to pick those things up because we've done it. Anyway, if we can't laugh at ourselves little bit once in a while? And hopefully, we're changing as we're doing it. But human nature really stinks. It truly does. The way we act, the way we are, the way we treat others and if we see things. I use the highway a lot because it's a dangerous place, and people don't realize how dangerous it is sometimes and some of the stupid things that human beings can do. We have to be on guard. I don't care where you are, whether it be there, in a mall, in a grocery store, we've got to learn how to think about other people, because human beings aren't very good at that and there are times, we just have to ask God for help to fight against self and be more kind, be more patient.

I'll be candid with you, because I haven't had the patience, I have to ask for forgiveness right then and there because I realized I had a wrong attitude, wrong thinking. That's what this battle is about. It's about wanting to think right, and you can't do it on your own. If I'm not asking for help, I know what I'll do as a human being. We have to think in a right way, and we have to have God's help to accomplish that.

Anyway, I try to use personal examples of things that we're familiar with. Some probably think I'm the worst driver in the world, and I may be, but that's my battle. You have your battles, whatever they are. And that's what we have to recognize, what our battles are. And sometimes, it's a matter of just understanding that there are battles that we should be fighting in the mind if in any fashion or form we're not thinking of others. You should be running into that almost every day out there in the world.

Anyway, as I was saying, the primary thing is we have to understand that we have battles to fight, and we have to ask God for help in order to fight them. And it's by the mercy, it's by the grace, it's by the

patience that God knows our minds and our thinking. We just have to be honest with God and ask Him for the help to do the right thing, or think the right things, or repent of the wrong things when we recognize it's wrong.

I don't care if you're in a shopping mall. I don't care where you are, that you're courteous to people, a grocery store, or at work, and if you have a lot of people at a particular business, the more chance for drama, more chance for attitudes and people saying things to one another and doing things. You just have to realize that's the world we live in, but we shouldn't act or think the same way as others.

So, when I'm driving down the freeway and certain things happen, I use that example because I think a lot of people can relate to that. I know there are a lot of people who probably don't, and they're the ones who know that I'm a really bad driver. That's fine. But if we can see something else in our life that we need to work upon, whatever that might be, that's the point, in the little things in life. They don't have to be giant things, giant sins, because sin is sin, wrong thinking is wrong thinking, wrong attitudes toward someone or not being respectful to someone or showing someone respect, to me, is just as bad as doing something wrong oftentimes if we're not thinking about others and caring about others who are around us.

And so, when we catch ourselves doing something that we realize is wrong, or we said something wrong, or acted wrong, we have to ask for help. I have to ask for help constantly in this world because I'm a human being. You're a human being, and you've got battles to fight. They're in the mind. And if you don't realize that you do, well, I feel for you because you're carnal, your natural nature is one of selfishness. And if we don't see the things we're selfish in? You're being selfish if we're not giving way to someone else at times. Maybe it's a shopping cart. Maybe it's waiting at the door. Maybe it's in an elevator and letting someone else out first.

Whatever it might be, if we're not being courteous to others and respectful to others, of all people, we need to work on this. Because that's the kind of thinking we should have in our minds. It's how we think about others around us in this world. We don't have to be like the world. We kind of started out that way in Ephesians anyway. That's the way we were at one time; we were just like the world. In God's way of life and in the truth, grace is about changing. We have all the tools, and we can become something different. We can be respectful of others. I don't care who it is in this world, why can't we be respectful to everybody? But the world doesn't think that way as a whole.

So, it's about our minds. That's the only thing we have power over in that respect. You can't change anyone else's mind. You can't. It's why God worked with us as He does, made us free moral agents to live how we want, live with our own choices. I don't care how close you are to someone, you can't make them change anything. But you can change yourself. And that's the battle, changing the way we think, the way our minds work, working at that in response to all the truth that God has given to us. So, we

have to be able to see what it is that we have to change. And again, this is what grace is about and the work we do in response.

So, we have to be working on self. The mind has to change. It has to become different. And if we're not working on the mind, we're not responding to God in the way we should be. We need help. We need help all the time, every day.

For we are His workmanship. God wants to work on this, and He gives us the tools whereby we can accomplish that, but we have to ask. Because He wants to help transform this mind. So this creation that's taking place inside of us, a new creation, if you will, is on a spirit plane. The world doesn't have that help, but we do. And so, we can actually begin to think right. Well, we are. And the battles that we've gone through, those who are still here and fighting, you're responding to those things. But we can't ever let down. And if we can grow more, and if we can see more that needs to be changed, then we need to work on that.

...created in Joshua the Christ unto good works. And that's the key. There are good works and there are bad works. If you're trying to save yourself by what you're doing, then that's about as bad as you can get because God is left out of the picture. See, the truth is, when we understand it, we can only do it with God's help and that's why we pray. That's why we pray. That's why we fast. Because we know we need God's help. Because we know we're a problem. Selfishness, it has to change and become more like God with His kind of love, and it comes from Him. We don't have it. He has to give it to us.

So, "created in Joshua the Christ," because it starts with Passover, forgiveness of sin, repenting, and then crying out for the holy spirit, that Christ said, His desire was that it be sent to us. He's our High Priest. His desire is to live and dwell within us. Awesome! And so, we go before God and ask for that, that help.

...created in Joshua the Christ unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Beautiful! So, we don't have to live selfishly, though we have it and we see it in ourselves. But if we're battling it, we're going to grow; you're going to become more refined in these things. We see changes. Five years, ten years – what were you like ten years ago? Are you still the same? Hopefully, no one is. We grow. It's a part of a process.

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 of the flesh made by hands... So again here, he's speaking to a gentile world, as it were, and showing a difference here between the gentile and the Jew.

...so that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. So, things that they could understand, what it was like living in a Jewish area or whatever it might be, or knowing about Jews and how they lived.

...strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. So, just basically telling the gentiles, you didn't have anything. And none of us did either until God called us. No one does until God's called us. It doesn't matter whether a person is a Jew or not, or anything else, or of Israel at that time. It's immaterial. They all need help. Both.

But now in Joshua the Christ, you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. So, it's just explaining the thing here that the gentiles didn't have anything about God. At least the Jewish people had a basis here for certain knowledge, and that was a plus to them if they used it in the right way, but they didn't use it in the right way either as a whole, except for those who came in the Church. That's true with the gentiles who came in the Church. So, we can all be made one.

Verse 14—For He is our peace (Christ is) who has made both one. Jew and gentile, what an incredible thing, both needed help. Jews weren't any better than the gentiles, and a matter of fact, in some ways, they were worse because they had a basis of knowledge of the past.

...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. Some like to use scriptures like this and say, "See, the law, the commandments are done away with." That isn't what it said at all, but that's what they read into it.

...for to make of Himself one new person of two, so making peace, and that He might reconcile both Jew and gentile unto God in one Body through being nailed to the pole, having slain the enmity by it. So, the whole point that Paul is making here is we all need God, we all need God's help, we need the power of God's spirit for this life to change, for this mind to change.

So, having come and preached grace to you who were afar off, speaking of the gentiles, **and to those who were near,** the Jews, **in that through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.** Just saying the same basic things here as what we've been going through. We have access to God Almighty, all of us. It doesn't matter where we are, who we are in the world that have been called into the Church, and we have this blessing of being one Body—incredible—being of the same mind with God, unity with God, and that's the goal.

Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Sometimes we don't perhaps respond to God as strong as we should about understanding things like this, how blessed we are to be called, how blessed we are not to be in the world anymore.

You might go through hard times; you might go through difficult times. A lot of life is hard; a lot of life is difficult. Battles can be difficult. There's a lot of stress in the world, a lot of drama in the world. But we don't have to be of the world. We can be in it and be growing and have this mind be changed—awesome—but we've got to want it, we've got to fight for it.

...and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Joshua the Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. I read through things like this, and I think what we went through during the Apostasy and how people forgot these things. Even here, as it talks about, “the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” I think of all the ministry, so much of the ministry that began to look at Herbert Armstrong as a good teacher, “He was a good teacher.”

...in whom all the building is fitly framed together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord. So, what an awesome thing here to understand that God’s called us to be a part of a spiritual temple.

Laura was reading something here today written by Herbert Armstrong, a letter that he wrote a long time ago. 1981. And reading through some of the things where he was telling the Church, talking to the Church about that time where in a stronger fashion than he’d ever done, because he was learning some things about the Church or the temple, that it was the Church. It is a spiritual thing that God is building. There were people who were looking for certain things to take place at the end.

There are still some of the scattered groups out there looking for a stone or something to be pulled into Jerusalem someday, so they can start the temple or at least the altar there. And you think, that’s so shallow, because he already taught as God’s apostle, a long time ago, it’s the Church that Christ is coming to. That’s the Temple. Awesome!

“Joshua the Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building is fitly framed together.” That’s an awesome thing to realize that we’re all different, but God’s called us all to fit some place. That’s an amazing thing. To give us things we can’t even comprehend, to dumbfound the world that considers itself wise and intelligent, and whatever it might be. And yet God’s called every one of us to fit into a place within the Temple. We can’t even begin to grasp that, what that means. We really can’t. To understand that God is molding and fashioning us to fit into a specific place in His Family, in His Temple, with power? That’s hard to grasp. Really is.

...in whom you are built together for a habitation of God through the spirit.

2 Timothy 1:6—Therefore, I am reminding you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. So, whether Paul was talking to Timothy here as a minister and laying on of hands for his job, or whether it was a matter of baptism, not specific. But either one, it’s still the same thing for both. For all of us, when we have hands laid upon us and we come up out of the watery grave as it were, we’re baptized and we receive the impregnation of God’s spirit, we’re to stir up God’s spirit.

How do you do that? Well, we have the tools. We have the ability to pray. We have the ability to fast. We are blessed to go to Sabbath services week by week, have fellowship together with other of God’s people, keeping in touch with God’s people. Those are opportunities for drawing us closer together with one another and with God and with Christ, obviously. But you have to do the stirring because you

recognize the need: "I need God." And everything is there. That's what grace is about. Awesome! God wants you to take advantage of it.

Verse 7—For God has not given us a spirit of fear or timidity, as it is here. He wants us to be bold in what we've been given and what we believe, and especially in what He offers us.

...but of power. Just as I mentioned here, every one of us has been called to fit into a place and there's a mindset there that should be responding to that to recognize we have incredible power that God's already given to us of truth, of a way of life, of ability for this to be changed so that we can fit into that place, whatever it is, whatever it is He's offering us. Because you don't know, I don't know, but I know we'll all be together if we keep fighting and keep working through this and are able to be resurrected into that Family. We'll be together somewhere in the Temple, fitting perfectly in ways we can't even begin to comprehend.

Whatever you're doing now, whatever you're doing in life, is just a means to an end. It's to learn the lessons in that environment, whatever your environment is, to learn from it. We all have an environment that we live in in the world. And if we're looking to God, we can use that environment to our advantage. It's how we respond to the world around us in that environment. That's how we're molded and fashioned. It's really that simple.

And so, we have the opportunity for self to be changed in every environment we have in the Church of God, and God will use that if we're responding in the right ways, of crying out to Him for help to live in that environment in a way that's pleasing to Him. And we should know when we're not pleasing Him. It has to do with our thinking. Is our thinking right?

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, agape. We have a power there that we can ask God for help. If we don't see a need for more love in our life, we're missing the mark. There is not a one of us that has too much love, too much care and concern for others, too much willingness of sacrifice for others. Not a one of us. So, we can grow. It means we have room to grow. We all have room to grow.

If anybody feels relaxed and that they've grown to the point that they've needed to grow and they don't see a need to continue fighting, if they don't see a need for more of God's love in their mind, in their life, and aren't asking for that kind of help from God then we're missing an opportunity, an incredible opportunity. Because that's what this mind is supposed to be developing into, more at one with God. There can be nothing greater than to become more at one with God, in agreement with God in how you think.

...but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Think of today, and you watch things on the news and whatever, whatever it might be, and to think this world has such unsound minds. Is there any hope or help? Some minds are so far gone. Sick world.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings of the gospel according to the power of God. So again here, he's just going through and showing that we're going to have difficult times in life. We're going to have hardships in life, and things aren't meant to be easy. They're meant to be a battle if we understand because human nature is the battle. Your own human nature, my own human nature, that's where the biggest battleground is. It's in the mind. And you've got to be ready. You've got to be prepared. You've got to be on guard.

...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works. Not because of how good we were. There's nobody good enough to be called. But that's what God's grace is about. He knows what we are, and it's His time. What an amazing thing, to think we cannot really grasp what God has given to us. We really don't. Of all the billions of people on this earth and you have an opportunity with not that many others in the world at this time? Even when Worldwide was at its largest, it was still so small compared to the world around us. To have been called out of the world, to have the opportunities of changing and becoming something different, and being in God's Family?

...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace. We don't know what that purpose is yet. I'm just thankful that I have been called, have the opportunity now. I don't have to wait until some time in the Millennium or the beginning of the Millennium, or maybe the Great White Throne, resurrected to a second physical life. To me, that's like a horror story, knowing what I know. That's the last thing on earth I'd want to do as a human being, is to live in this body twice. Once has been plenty. When you know the truth, when you have God, when you have this way of life, who wants to live in this longer? But we live in this long enough necessary to conquer and overcome, so we can be changed – but that's what I mean, to that point in time.

...but according to His own power and purpose and grace which was given to us in Joshua the Christ before time began. What a marvel. Every time I read something like this I just marvel. You can't help it. To think so long ago that we can't even grasp the amount of time that God had a purpose and a plan for all this, that one day He's going to make human beings and allow the earth to become so large, to a certain magnitude, to a certain point of population, and then in time, that would be all that would be necessary from out of all that to be the size of Family that He knew would be able to be a part?

God's masterful, powerful, all-mighty in planning His own Family. And it appears, perhaps, that most will never choose God. That is still mind-boggling to me, to think that most of mankind, when it's all said and done, even in the Great White Throne, may well not choose God. It's almost hard to believe. Seeing what they're going to see but knowing what they lived before and who they are and what their minds are, I can understand that today more than ever before, because it's happened within the Church. If it can happen within the Church, it can happen in any era of time, truly.

So again here, **who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Joshua the Christ before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Joshua.** Can we even begin to try to think about, grasp a little bit, how exciting it is to God that we are where we are now? Something that was planned so long ago. To even wait until the time that the first human beings were finally put on earth nearly 6,000 years ago? That all that time before that there was still the expansion of the universe going on? We don't know, millions upon millions upon millions? We don't know, but it had to take so very, very long.

If it took six days to remold and refashion the earth and put life on it, that's just a little smidgeon of something that was done on a grand scale, of everything else that's out there, it didn't just pop into existence overnight. And then to wait that long before your Family could begin to be worked with? And then He offers it to Adam and Eve, and they reject it. One son picked up on it. One son was able to be worked with by God. Incredible!

And then later on, you go through the story of what took place with Noah. And after all that, all the sons, they weren't happy. Their world was destroyed. I can see it up here in the mind and how it would think. Their friends. "Why did God let this happen?" Not taking the blame. Not understanding it even. They couldn't. They couldn't comprehend themselves yet because they weren't called, they weren't given an ability and a mind to see it.

God just let mankind go on to learn lessons from the past and through time of what human beings are like, what we're really like. And to be able to admit it and say, "Yeah, that's what we're like. We're disgusting! There's got to be something better." Yeah, well, there is. That's what God wants to give to us, that which is better, obviously. The only thing that can go on forever is His Family. Choices, choices, choices in the midst of all that. What do we want? Do we want this?

"If you want this, you can have it." That's what God says. "If you want this more than you want Me," that's what God tells us, "you can have it. But you're going to live with the consequences of it." It's always the same answer. The second death. Well, think, what kind of a choice is that? But human beings will make it because they want this now, here, whatever it is or whatever it will be then that they see in their physical life, that they'll want it their way and not the way God says it should be done.

Because they really don't want what God offers. They don't want peace. They want depravity. They want drama. They like drama. They could just watch "As the World Churns" for thousands of years. You think, what kind of a life is that? Drama, drama, drama, drama. I hate it. I hate drama. I loathe it, and that's what we have to get to. "I hate drama! I love peace, unity, and oneness." That's where family is. That's where true family is, and that's what God offers. Awesome!

So, to grasp what God is offering us, it's hard to do as a human being. It really is. But to grasp how excited He is, we're now almost at the end of 6,000 years? To even understand what it was like, His own

son, finally after 4,000 years, His own son, born into the world, treated the way He was (knowing that would be the case), how that He had to pay the penalty for sin. And then, finally, the fruit of what that provided is about to come to this earth, 144,000. Christ, the first of the firstfruits, and then all the rest of the firstfruits. And then through the Millennium, so much more added, and then the Great White Throne, a lot more added.

But a lot that said no. Amazing. Choices, choices, choices. People ask questions sometimes, and that's what I'm thinking: "Choices, choices, choices. It's your choice."

...but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Joshua the Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. This is something precious that you see that the world just doesn't see yet. They can't see this truth. **...to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gentiles.**

Well, I'm going to stop there before going on into Galatians.

Anyway, it's all about grace. It's about the process of salvation that God gives to us. He's put everything out there for us to succeed, and all we have to do is ask for it every day, "This is what I want. This is what I've chosen. I want to change; I don't want to be selfish. I want to be more respectful of others around me because that's Your way, God," and that's the way we should be. "Thinking of others in a right way as though they were a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. How would you treat them?"

Awesome!