

Learning to Be Thankful, Pt. 1

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We are rapidly approaching the fall Feast season, and soon we'll be observing the highlight of every year, which is the Feast of Tabernacles, the opportunity to come together for eight days: the Feast of Tabernacles, seven obviously, and then the Last Great Day, and it'll be here in just a little over nine weeks from now. That time is going to go by fast, and before you know it, we'll be there, and before you know it, we'll already be heading home. It's amazing how fast everything seems to go, especially on those kinds of occasions.

But as we approach this Feast season, there is a subject that warrants being focused upon so that we can have a better Feast season, everyone, indeed. And if we really drill down on the subject in our lives, it will be a better Feast for yourself and for others.

So, today we're going to begin a new series, at least *Part 1* and *2* for it. But the sermon is entitled, *Learning to Be Thankful*.

We address this from time to time, and there are certain things that we need to zero in on, and this is definitely one of them, a spirit of thankfulness, a spirit of gratitude. It has to do with a certain way of thinking, what's in the mind, and it has a tremendous impact on our life if we think that way. That's why it's entitled "learning" because it's something we have to learn and learn to do better because it doesn't just happen. You can't just pray about it, and all of a sudden, it happens in your life. Now, you can pray about it and ask God for help in that, as long as we respond to it and are learning in the process as well to apply it more in our lives.

And what does that entail? Stop there. Just what does that entail? It entails catching our self when we're not in that spirit. And that's a big plus. That's really a strong area to begin focusing upon is when we're not thinking in that respect of gratitude, of thankfulness for everything around us, for everything we've been given, for everything that we have in life. If we look inward and we're selfish, we're not going to be thankful and that has a lot to do with it as well.

Are we being selfish in what we want, what we desire? We live in an age where there isn't a whole lot of thankfulness around, a whole lot of gratitude for things in life. We live in an age where people kind of expect. It's like this, "It's owed to me" attitude. And if we're not careful, that can get a hold of us as well.

So again, part of the reason for going into this, because truly, if we will strive to really practice this and do this between now and the Feast with a stronger focus than we normally would, to be praying about it between now and the Feast, you'll have a better Feast. Others around you will probably have a better Feast because it can spread, that attitude can spread. It shows. It's reflected in how we respond to things, how we think about things.

And again, the important part of that is to catch ourselves when we're not being thankful. And that's something we do have to pray about, asking God for help to see self when we're not responding as we should be to life, to everything that God has given to us. We are so incredibly blessed, we truly are.

I mentioned that last Sabbath, thinking about that hotel room we were moved to, 666. And we had a better room because I think they got turned down a lot. That's kind of the way they talked at different times with a couple different people we ran into that worked there. And anyway, it's one of those things you begin to think about when you get something like that because I wasn't really excited to hear the number. But then I thought, "It's a number. Who cares? There's no association there with anything like that. And if it does, it's their problem, not mine."

But as I was walking down the hall to that room, I couldn't help but think about what an awesome thing that people who have gone before us would love to have had a room like that. Air conditioning, a soft bed. They didn't have beds like we have today as a whole. They never heard of some of the kinds of beds and pillows we have today. MyPillow wasn't around. Awesome to think about those things because when you think about them then it helps us to realize what we have in this age, the benefits we have because of technology.

Because God has opened up a door for mankind in the last 150 years, especially, 100 years of things to continue to grow and mankind to learn. Things that they couldn't learn before because God didn't let them. That's an awesome thing to understand. God didn't let mankind go but so far in what they were able to see and understand. Some are still trying to figure out how they did certain things, like the pyramids, other construction of things that were done in times past, things that were built by mankind. But even at that, they could only go so far.

And to think of what's happened now and the speed at which those things are growing now? I shudder to think if we had another ten, fifteen, twenty-plus years ahead of us and this thing of AI and the power that's there and the misuse of it that will obviously be there by mankind. I hope and pray we don't have to experience that in this world because it needs to have control over it in how it's used, and how mankind thinks, and how mankind uses things. Because we're at that point, that breaking point of going too far now with it. Because God has allowed it for a purpose. We understand a lot of that, what it's all about. But to be thankful for it as well, the good that we receive out of it that makes life so much easier.

We get so spoiled. You drive up to your house, and you push a button, and the garage door opens up for you. And before you even get there, we have a little app, and you turn off the alarm, things that sadly you have to have in this world today, or oftentimes need to have, or feel more comfortable having. And on and on it goes.

How could we live without apps? It's insane. Apps galore! Tremendous ability that's been given to us. What would people do if they had to go back to flip phones? There are some people who would go nuts, to have to separate from being able to constantly be on there and doing the things with two fingers. I

don't know how they do it; you all do that when some of you go so fast. I can type, you know, but to do the other, my mind just won't go there.

Learning to be thankful, to be grateful to God for what we have, learning to be thankful for others, and to others.

I couldn't help but think today, coming into this room and just looking around, different people, different things. We've all gone through all kinds of things in our lives. We all have different things we go through and trials and hardships, but we are so blessed. Thankful for one another.

That's something to grow in and ask God for help in, to be thankful for one another, that we are a Family, and a unique Family that God has given us to experience. That's an awesome thing. Thankful, thinking how many that have come through Worldwide, through the Apostasy. How many in here went through the Apostasy? Look around. Quite a few in this room, comparatively so, to other areas. Awesome! And I am so thankful that we have that to share, that God has given us those who are still here, who fought those battles and have kept fighting ever since then.

That ought to be something that moves you inside. I get to the point I'm almost being choked up about it right now, thinking about it, that we have that with one another. Because it's been a long road, a little over thirty years now. You think, mind-boggling! And think how hard it was back then, of what we were experiencing, what we went through. God has blessed us to be here. Awesome! So blessed!

So thankful for one another, and thankful that at different times God has called different ones along; in some cases, maybe a lot of cases, to take the crowns of others who didn't cherish what they were given, who weren't thankful for what they had, who didn't grasp what they had!

Do we grasp? I feel like we do more and more, but sometimes we need to ask ourselves. Do we grasp what we have, what God has given to us that we're able to experience in His Church of so few through time have ever had the opportunity of experiencing, to know God Almighty? Incredible!

And then to think back of what some knew, and they knew so little. I think of Abraham. Even God Himself manifested Himself in different ways to Abraham. And yet that attitude and that spirit of Abraham, his desire that was inside of him, that burned with what he knew and what he understood. God was molding and fashioning him for so long before He finally told him, "Abraham, get up and move to another country, to another area of the world." And basically, one of the shortest scriptures, verses, or sentences, I guess: He went. He did it. He got up and moved away from all of his family, and took others with him then, those who went together, far away at that particular period of time. Incredible!

And he knew his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, Noah. Awesome! The impact that that had on his life. Because you can't go back and find others, many others, who you would think would have that history of having gone through a flood. Not even Noah's own children who were thankful and grateful that God gave them an opportunity to live on and to start and

build a new world. Not at all. Just Noah for a long, long time. Then God began to mold and fashion a different one that He was going to do something great through, Abraham.

I marvel and am thankful that we know these things, that we can look at his life and understand that God called someone—actually prepared him in advance—molded and fashioned him, that when He drew him and worked with him had a great purpose of what He was going to build from him. Awesome! The generations that passed, the hundreds of years that passed, and then finally, a nation Israel.

The things we know, brethren, are so awesome. How thankful are we? How precious are they to us?

Anyway, going back to this. It's good to reflect. It's good to do what the Feast of Tabernacles is about, the Feast of Booths. They were told to build a booth, this little place. Told them how to build it. They were to go out there every day and sit there for a time, whatever that time was. It wasn't stipulated how long it would be, but time enough to reflect of what God did in bringing them out of Egypt and the temporary dwellings. Forty years in the wilderness. Forty long years. And they were to reflect back about those things and to think about what they had there to that point in time.

Anyway, we'll talk about some more of that, obviously, at the Feast. I think I already did prerecord it, but anyway, you have to wait until the Feast, which, you hear it every year as a whole, that part of it because God tells us that's what we're to talk about. Thankful to hear things and be reminded of things on a continual basis.

Every Passover, almost the same words, same scriptures that should be very moving to us, and so thankful that we are able to keep the Passover. I'll tell you what, after writing this book and writing things about what happened with Judaism, and then by that time, obviously, traditional Christianity that got started, so messed up because it didn't even have anything to even build upon because they rejected it immediately. But you think what Judaism did and to think that we are able to have it, the meaning, so much that's about Passover, Joshua the Christ, the Lamb of God.

Incredible, what we have been given, treasure beyond measure. We can't grasp, you cannot grasp what you have been given. To be and have the opportunity to have God dwelling in you through the power of His holy spirit, Him and Joshua, that this is what we have in this body, in this mind. To grasp that. That we should cherish it, desire it, want it, and want to guard it and make sure that we don't corrupt it. Because we can corrupt the mind that God is seeking to transform. And many have who have gone before us, some who have corrupted it so much they'll never recover from it because they became set in something different. Horrible, to think that can happen.

And so much of this just having to do with what do we really see and whether we're really thankful, truly grateful for everything that God is sharing with us, has given to us, things that we have that are so far beyond what Abraham was ever given. And yet look at that incredible life and the example that God gives of it and the power that's there through generations and generations. Awesome!

Thought I'd go through and just reflect on some of these things.

This is a subject, again, that the world is progressively taking to new levels of absence in their lives. Just in large part, it doesn't even exist anymore – gratitude and thankfulness – because if it did, people would think differently toward one another and about one another and how they treated one another. We're so selfish as human beings.

More demanding, as I mentioned earlier, expecting more of or from others as though things are owed. Don't ever let that get a hold of you. Because every once in a while, that pops up, that something is owed to us, we deserve something. Look at what we've been given. What is it we deserve that we don't have? What is it we want that we don't have? What is the most valuable to us?

So, although many of these traits are parts of how mankind has always reflected ingratitude, it's getting worse and worse in the world around us, and that can rub off on us if we're not careful, truly, because of what we hear through here on a constant basis.

I think about some other words or ways that reflect such a spirit of those who are losing any sense of being thankful. This one here: inconsiderate of others. Inconsiderate of others. Should be a part of our thinking. And the key to so much of this is understanding whether or not we're thankful inside for others – even the world around us, who has no knowledge of truth because we look forward to the day that they're going to have the same opportunity we had so they can be in a new age. When Joshua the Christ returns and 144,000 and this world begins to be changed, thankful for those who are going to have the opportunity of coming through that, to establish a new world, who will embrace it, who will learn to embrace it, and have that opportunity that we've had.

A lack of appreciation of others, not valuing others. This world just turning more selfish. That's happening all around us. Every once in a while, I'm kind of amazed when I hear someone, a newscaster and different ones are talking in a group, and they show an appreciation or they speak of an appreciation of others (because that's kind of a rare thing), of people who think differently than them, of people who don't agree with them.

Too often valuing more of what we can get from others than what we can give.

Being thoughtless. It can happen, does happen, because one places greater thought on how self is seen or treated than on how someone is seen or treated by self. Too often, we take things personally about how someone has treated us or done us wrong or whatever, and we don't tend to think in the same way, well, what have we done towards others that we can change?

Taking things for granted. You can go through this for two hours, talking about things like this.

Colossians 3; let's turn over there. **Colossians 3:12—Put on, therefore, as the elect of God...** First of all, to realize how blessed we are to be able to be called the elect of God, the select. He selected us. He's

called us out of all people. And even within the scattered Church, if we can grasp that, of what happened, and we have the blessing as being as small as we are, of still here, holding on, hanging on. God has given us that opportunity to even grow and build.

So, a lot of the attitude here depends on whether we even see this very beginning of this, the elect of God. How blessed are we? How many have this?

...**holy**. Because God set us apart for holy use and purpose. That's what this word is about. Holy because God has set us apart to be different from the rest of the world. He's given us the opportunity, the ability to repent, to receive of His holy spirit, to change, to be transformed in our thinking.

But we have to work on that thinking, and this is a part of it, learning to be more thankful, grateful. To God, yes, obviously. The more we can think that way, the more we should think about His Family and how much do we cherish each other? Truly.

We can look at the negative, we can look at the faults. We all have faults; we all have weaknesses. But to focus on the things that God is working with, that God has made us a Family; to be thankful for that. There's nothing greater. Wherever God is dwelling, wherever Christ is dwelling, how awesome is that? And do we see that? Do we strive to see that in one another?

Do we look beyond the human frailties and weaknesses? Because we all have them. And if we're not careful sometimes, we can begin to zero in on those things too much and become unthankful, ungrateful for one another, in the sense of cherishing one another because we each belong to God. We belong to God. We're God's. And so why wouldn't we embrace that and love that with all of our being and desire the best for one another? Want to see each other succeed, want to see each other make it, want to see each other fight the battles that are out there that are hard in this world, and keep moving forward?

That's why I love what I see today. When I see people, when I see brethren come together in different areas, that's what I see. I see people who keep fighting! Because that's what it takes. Persevering, Israel, spiritual; that's something you have to do on your own in order to be here. And so, I know that you have because you're here and in different areas where people are meeting today. Persevering. How thankful are we for that?

I hate to see people go by the wayside. I hate to see people make wrong choices and hurt themselves and hurt the Body. Because it hurts. It hurts to see people go. Every once in a while, just visiting different areas sometimes, it's a challenge sometimes, in a sense, because I think of all the people we've known. And some that I totally forget about because it's been so long, and they were with us for such a short time. But they were with us at one time. But they made choices. I wish they wouldn't have, but that's their choice.

And so, I am that much more thankful when I see those who keep fighting and persevering. Because that's what it's all about. To be in God's Family, to be in God's Kingdom, we can do no less. We have to persevere. And then to understand, to believe, to think? I'm grateful for every person that does that.

How do you think toward every person? In this room, every person that you know in the Church? A desire to see them succeed? A desire to see them conquer and overcome? People have been called out of some pretty hard things. It's the way of this world. And I'm pleased because I know God is pleased. And if we have that spirit, we can't help it. To see that fight, to see that perseverance, that attitude of people who go through things, hard things, difficult things, and bounce back sometimes when things haven't gone proper. That's a joy.

Anyway, how do we think about one another? Thankful? Grateful? Because that has so much to do with our fellowship and how strong it really is.

Put on therefore, as—because that's what we are—the **elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies**. Graciousness toward one another, in essence. Thinking, that's the mind of God. That's how He's treated us. And if we recognize that's God, and we learn to love Him because of how He's dealt with us in our life, and we are in awe sometimes, then, maybe oftentimes as we should be, that He's had such patience. Such patience.

And shouldn't we have that toward one another? Should we do any less? Shouldn't we strive to follow that example? Because that's what grace is all about, that we've just gone through. It's what it's all about. It's learning the attributes that come from God, of how we have been dealt with, that we want to think that way toward one another. It shouldn't be any less. We have to ask for help to accomplish that.

...kindness. Toward one another. Most of this, when you read about things like this, is about a context of the fellowship of God's Church. Yes, we should strive to exercise those kinds of qualities in the world to the degree we can, but you can only do that so far. Because here is our Family on the spiritual plane, and here is where we are required to exercise that.

...humility of mind. Not trying to build ourselves up. Not trying to raise ourselves up in importance or anything of that nature but having humility of mind toward one another. Not trying to be greater or more important than someone else. Because if we really get it, we need each other. That's why I love what Paul said, "Different parts of the body can't speak to the other parts like you don't need part of it." No, we need each other.

And especially how God has constructed us and brought us together and worked with us to this point in time. And if some don't want to be a part of that Body, then God will take care of that. But as a whole, on a spiritual plane, we really need each other.

Every Sabbath, when people have opportunity to come together, there are a lot of people who can't like we do here, especially like in Cincinnati. There are some areas where it's harder for people to come

together. What a blessing. What a power there is in fellowship. Sometimes it takes us time to learn that, that we need it. We need each other. We need to be around that. It stirs us up spiritually! It helps us spiritually! Beautiful.

...humility of mind, meekness. Having that attitude toward one another. This is about an attitude in how we deal with others around us. There's a balance in this. This is not just about ourselves but a willingness to listen, to hear what others are going through and what their lives are, and just drinking in that life in that respect.

...longsuffering. God's been longsuffering with us. He has been with me, and I expect with you. Because of that love that He has He called us for a purpose. He set us apart for a purpose. It's His joy to see us grow, and conquer, and overcome. We're His children. Awesome. Longsuffering.

...forbearing one another. That means, in large part, too, that we have to watch self so that we don't have a wrong attitude toward someone else. We're thankful for one another, forbearing of differences, allowing for differences. That can be a tough thing to do for the human mind, allowing for differences. Why is that? Because we think our way is right and best in almost all situations of life. I mean, that's kind of how we think. And the reality is, that's not good thinking because we need to give that opportunity of difference to others.... being different, enjoying the differences.

What a horrible thing if we were all the same. I would hate it if you were all like me. Or if we were all like you. Because that wouldn't be good. The differences, the zest and flavor of life. Awesome!

...forbearing one another and forgiving one another. It can be a big challenge. But actually, the more thankful we are for one another, I hope we understand or can learn, we will be more forgiving of one another. Allowing for differences, more patient, of more of a humble spirit, because we're not trying to raise up self above others.

And if anyone have a quarrel, a complaint, to place blame against any, **even as Christ forgave you, so do the same.** That's what we're supposed to do. And so much of this, if we begin to see it more, comes down to thankfulness and gratitude toward one another, towards God's children.

Verse 14—And above all things put on God's love. Because we don't have it by nature. It's not in us. We are selfish by nature. Our love is selfish by nature. It's just the way we are. And so, we have to cry out to God for help to have His kind of love that comes through the power of His holy spirit dwelling within us. That has to do with how we think toward one another then.

...which is the bond, Greek word here "that binds together just like glue; that binds something together" **that completes.** Completes. Completes us indeed in what God is working.

New King James uses the word "of perfection," that matter of perfection, but is "that which works to make one complete." And so again here, these are the kinds of things that work to make us complete,

and that's what it's talking about here, the binding together. We don't have that kind of love and this kind of thinking in our minds, then...

The reality is none of us are complete yet, so we have work to do. Always work to do. We can always grow. We can always draw closer to God. We can always draw closer to one another spiritually.

And let the peace of God... Peace, I love that word. Candidly, in the last several years, I have grown to love that word more. And the reason for that is because I've come to hate drama more. The more you hate drama and see drama, hear drama, know of drama, the less you want to be around it, the less you want it coming into here. Because it's everything that agitates and stirs up and causes problems and causes bad attitudes and causes or is, candidly, a fruit of selfishness.

Drama is a fruit of selfishness. It really is. Peace is something that God can give because of His way of life that isn't selfish. It's totally the opposite. What a wonderful thing to latch onto. Jerusalem, the City of Peace, so important that God chose that name to have such great meaning of what He's building, of what He wants. The opposite of what mankind produces. The opposite of what selfishness produces.

Peace, it's a beautiful thing. I hope you all love it and are thankful for it and embrace it more and more. And the more we embrace it, you know what that means? The less drama we'll have. I hope you're learning to hate drama.

I learned to start hating it more while I was in that place. We'll just call it "that place." I refer to it as a camp, whatever, prison, whatever. I didn't know men could have so much drama in their lives. It was horrible. In that environment, in squeezing people together, especially that particular nature together, it intensified the environment of drama to where people would get so selfish over the smallest of things, their little area. I mean a little area because you don't have a whole lot. Incredible.

I just got to where I hated it more and more and more and began to see more and more the beauty of peace. If only! And yet God, that's what God wants to give us, and it starts here in His Church. Peace.

So, let's get rid of drama! Get it out of your lives! Get it out of your conversations! Truly, learn to get away from it. Because it stinks. It's hideous. It really is. And until we start thinking that way, we're not making progress. I hope you understand what I'm saying. You've got to hate something that is wrong before you can really embrace and love ever more so what is right. It's the way it works.

Things that are evil, things that are bad, things of the mind, that come into the mind, whatever it might be, you've got to hate the wrong. And the more you hate the wrong that interferes with God's way of life, the more you can actually embrace and love what is right. It's a process. It's a process of transformation in the mind.

And so much of this has to do with gratitude, thankfulness – thankfulness that we can actually do that, that we have the ability to change our minds and the way we think, and the way we talk, that we can do better. Awesome!

And let the peace of God rule... There's a reason why certain words are used like this. ...**rule in your life** or **in your hearts**. It means power to control, in essence. Rule. So, what's ruling our life? Things that are a spinoff of drama? Is that what we're focused upon? Is that what takes up the mind and the space in the mind? Or is it peace that comes from God that rules in our heart? Because then that will rule in the mind, and it'll rule what comes out of us.

It does. Because it all starts in the mind. And if we can have that greater rule and power working up there, then self will change. Our thinking changes. We become more thankful, more grateful. Hmm. More at peace. I love it! And we have to love it in order to receive it, in order to experience it more.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. And so only each one of us can ask, is it, does it, do I let it, do I want it? Because it's something that you have to have help in that comes from God.

...to the which also you are called in one Body. The Church. That's why I said earlier this is about relationships, how we think within the Body, within the Church toward one another, how we think about each other. So important that it be done God's way. That's what we're being told here, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one Body." A unified Body. There is nothing more beautiful than peace within the Body, oneness of spirit, oneness of mind because God's first.

...and be thankful. Because that sums it up. That's the product that comes out of it. If we're thankful, if we learn to be thankful, these are the things. Because it's an attitude of mind, it's an attitude of thinking. And the more we can see what God is doing and offering us in life, the more that He's offering us within the Body, to be thankful for that, the more we see what is needed, the more we embrace that one Body, peace within the Body—awesome—and the things it produces that came just before this.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. This is a matter of wisdom that comes from God that we have access to. Which I love that in scripture, when in Proverbs we come to learn, have come to learn and see and understand, when it speaks of wisdom and what it says about wisdom, when wisdom speaks, it's about God. It's about the word of God. That's how it's expressed later on, the word of God was made flesh, that mind. Because it's about the mind of God.

True wisdom that comes from God, it's about the mind of God. And then that word, which is a matter of wisdom, was in Christ. It was Christ. And then we have access to it, and it begins to help shape and mold our thinking and our minds, and our minds begin to change from things like drama that's automatic in human life, and selfishness, to that which is a matter of peace. God and Christ told us clearly we're to be peacemakers. Well, how do you do that? This is the process we're talking about, to be peacemakers.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” That’s up to each one of us how it dwells richly, because that has to do with gratitude, thankfulness to God Almighty that we have ability to have it, and we can cry out to God and pray about it and ask Him to help us to grow in it and see it. See it more in our life, see how we can embrace it more. You have to ask for it. You have to ask for help to love one another more, to love the Body, to see God in one another, to see that each person that remains faithful is of God, has a measure of God in their minds, in their being. We want to see that measure grow and grow and grow until a change can come. Who wouldn’t want that for one another? Who wouldn’t desire that for one another?

Forget about the weaknesses and the shortcomings and everything else because that’s what God does. He puts them far behind. And if there is sin, God forgives—awesome—through our Passover, Joshua the Christ. Awesome!

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. This is so misunderstood. It's a spiritual matter of how we think, how we think about one another, how we relate to one another. It doesn't mean we all get together and decide we're going to meet someplace and we're going to start singing songs. “Okay, let's turn over to page 49,” and somebody starts leading a song and singing to one another in these spiritual songs. That's not what it's about. Would that be a bad thing to do? Well, you don't want to go there because right now it would be.

What an incredible thing, “teaching and admonishing.” It's by how you're living your life that we have the ability to have an effect upon others. Teaching by example because of what we're doing. That's what this is about. It's about something that's spiritual, that's working in us, that's having an effect and ability to help others. Not participating in things that are wrong, even in speech and what comes out of the mouth, but learning to have greater control and ability of that control in our lives.

“Admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” The things that are a part of that, which is of the power of God's spirit working within us to change, to have this fruit that we've already been discussing.

...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. So, an excitement, a joy, a happiness in what God is doing, a thankfulness in what God is doing and what He's doing in us if we'll yield ourselves to it. Thankfulness for what God's doing in one another, gratitude, appreciation, respect. Respect. Respecting one another.

You're here. You've had to fight to stay here. Every one of us have. You've had to fight, first of all, self, and the world around you, and pressures from the world around you to do otherwise, and things that pull at you in the world around you, and learn to say, “No.” “No!” Because it cuts off God's spirit if we indulge in those things. It hurts. It leads people away.

Whatever you do in word, what comes out of the mouth, and action, **do all in the name of the Lord Joshua**. Because they're always there, always there, always seeing us, desiring to mold and fashion us, desiring to answer our prayers, desiring to give us help. Always there. We just have to call upon them regularly, continually. A lot of that's about repentance on our part.

...**giving thanks to God**. These aren't words just to skim over. They are things to learn to do, to practice and so much of it continually goes back to this mindset of gratitude and thankfulness to God. That means thankfulness for what He's doing.

You are the work of God! You are the work of Joshua the Christ as you yield yourself to it! And how much do we love that in one another, that you're yielding yourself to that work? I am. Moves me oftentimes. When I'm in a different area, that's what comes to my mind, "What an awesome thing, fighting, still here, still fighting."

And sometimes some not there. What a shame. What a horrible decision and choice to have made. To throw away your life, to become unthankful...unthankful for the sacrifice of Joshua the Christ. How...? That's almost hard to comprehend. It's about that mindset of thankfulness and gratitude. Because the more thankful we truly are inside, it affects how we think, how we act, how we react, how we treat, and how we talk. Awesome.

...**giving thanks to God and the Father through Him**. Awesome!

Let's turn over to Ephesians 5. So, we have an opportunity to place thankfulness the greater priority in our life right now. We truly do. When God gives us opportunity of things to focus upon in sermons and so forth, it's a beautiful thing if we can hear the message, learn from it. And so much of this, again, has to do with having a better Feast this year.

Ephesians 5:8—For you were once darkness. So why bring that up? Why focus on this? Because God lets us think about what He's given to us. Are we thankful? Are we thankful that we're not in darkness anymore? How thankful are we? What kind of an impact does that have on us? It should, the more thankful you are that you're not back there in darkness and in some of the things in the past, even between this period and that time when darkness began to come your direction and you had blessings and help from God to conquer, to fight, to overcome, and you're still here because you're reflecting the name that God gives to us, offers to us spiritually, Israel. Persevering. Beautiful.

And how much do we respect that again in one another? That has to do with how thankful we are for one another, then. Truly, what does it mean?

For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. So, we are so blessed to have such opportunity that we can be different. How often do you think about some of the things you've come out of? Of the past, what God called you out of?

I did this morning. I had a little journey. Thinking about the kind of life that I was living before, and all of a sudden came to see things that I'd never known before that weren't a part of my mind. Things that God was revealing about Himself and His plan and His purpose. Awesome. And then from then on, my journey brought me all the way to today because I'm kind of reflecting on 50 years plus. Came in in 1969, baptized in September. Incredible journey.

We have no idea where we're going in the sense of what we're going to experience in our lives once we come into God's Church, what God's going to do in molding and fashioning our lives. And this is such a small part because it's about Elohim and being in God's Family and what awaits us there. To grasp and comprehend what it's going to be like for those who are going to be part of the 144,000, we can't grasp that. It's so far beyond our comprehension, the awesomeness of it, the joy of it, the fullness of it, the glory of it. But we begin to experience it now a little bit as we go along, and God blesses our lives immensely.

How much has He blessed you? Where do we count the greatest of blessings? I count them in the mind. The blessings of the truth, of knowing the truth, of being able to become more deeply convicted of the truth, and having the ability then to practice it, to live it, and fight the fight. Because we have to fight until this is over with. Anyone who doesn't have to fight, well, something's going on that's wrong. Because we all do.

“Walk as children of light.” So, we're reminded of that. Children. Every one is God's children. You look around, do you see that in one another? Every one is God's children as long as you keep fighting, stick together, seek to be at one, unity with God first and foremost.

For the fruit of the spirit is in—in—all goodness and righteousness and truth. God gives us incredible truth. I so often marvel at all the truth we have. I marvel of the first 4,000 years when there wasn't much truth out there, and God worked with individuals personally because there weren't that many. And then the Church began, and God began to work with a Body of people through Joshua, our High Priest. Powerful.

And to realize what's happened in the last 2,000 years. So small. 144,000 out of 6,000 years. Mind-boggling! Tell that to the world and you're stark-raving mad because there's this concept that God is madly trying to save the world. And you think, "How blind. How short-sighted." But they can't help it. If that were the case, very weak, very weak. We do not serve a weak God. Almighty God. He's chosen to have a certain amount that He's working with. Awesome that we're blessed to be a part of that. Thankful, thankful, thankful, grateful, grateful, grateful. It has a lot to do with other things that happen in our life.

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. We do that, we understand, by what we live. We live something for a time, and we realize this produces good fruit, this produces fullness, excitement.

Obeying God, the Holy Days, coming together at the Feast of Tabernacles, it's good. It's exciting. It's inspiring.

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." So, so much of that then is by doing it we become convicted. That's what proving it is, of how great it is. And what should come out of that? Thankfulness. The more we do this, the more we see this opportunity that God has given to us, the more grateful we become. It affects our thinking, broadly so, within the Church. "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Proving that it's right, that it works. We don't want this world!

Again, writing some of the things in that book and seeing what this world has chosen, what it does, you think, "What a horrible thing. What a horrible thing to give up any of this and go back to that. What a choice is that?" Insane!

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove. That's a word that means "to expose or convict; to become convicted of." We are able to go through that process to become more convicted of what is right, and more convicted of what is wrong, and why it's wrong, and the hurt and the suffering that's there because of it.

For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. In this world human nature is so ugly, it's so bad. It really is. The more we see that, the more we hate it. Because we have to, to see it in self, to see what selfishness is like and what it does. It wants its own way. We'll have a temper tantrum. We'll get upset, we'll get mad, whatever. Is a result of selfishness. It's so evil because it's all inward. It's about self and what we're getting out of something. Totally lacking anything having to do with thankfulness or gratitude. That's out the window.

But all things that are reprov'd, exposed, convicted, if you will, **are made manifest by the light.** It takes the power of God's spirit. That's why we have to stay close to God every day, asking God for help of His holy spirit to live and dwell within us, which means if we grasp and understand it, that if we know there is any sin, anything that's done that's a matter of sin, or that which was in the mind that is a matter of sin, that we repent of it. First and foremost because we realize God will not be there and give us the help we need if we don't repent first and foremost in life when wrong takes place in the human mind, or actions.

But all things that are reprov'd or made manifest by the light. It takes God's spirit. That's what this is about. The light comes from God.

...for whatever does make manifest, in other words, made visible, **is light.** So, we understand that on a physical plane that we turn off the lights and can't see very well. Same thing spiritually. The more that God is there, the more truth is there, the light is there, the more we're able to see the wrong. Then we have choices to make, to reject, to run from.

Verse 14—Therefore, He says, Awake, you who sleep. God's desire is that no one go to sleep. And I think of what happened to an entire Church era. All went to sleep. God allowed it to teach some of the greatest lessons that mankind can ever learn and learn from. Awesome. That just being in the Church is not enough, going to Sabbath services is not enough, going through the motions is not enough. It's what we live day by day and how we think toward God, whether it's true or not, whether it's genuine or not, or whether it's about self.

And wherever that exists within the Body still has to be gotten rid of. This isn't over. That's the hard part. Still not over. And so, that should be a sobering reality and a sobering truth to us to understand that God is going through a process right now of making sure that the Body is cleansed. It has to be that way because of His Son, who's coming. It has to be prepared and readied on a spiritual plane to be right with God. And where it isn't, it's being gotten rid of. It just has to be that way because we're at the time we live in. So, we want it to be genuine and true before God in every way.

Awake, you who sleep and arise from the dead. So being asleep is on a spiritual plane is akin to that in large part. I look forward to the time that so many of those who were a part are able to be shaken in such a strong way that hopefully and prayerfully a lot are going to repent. But I don't know to what degree that will be true or how great that will be. It's a desire because we have a lot of fond feelings, memories of things of the past with people of the past, a lot. Into the hundreds, if not thousands, the longer you've been around.

But the reality is, and the truth is, not all will change, and not all will choose to wake up when they're shaken, spiritually. Because you can go into a room and you can wake up someone from sleep physically. But in this case, God has to do the shaking, and some are going to choose to stay asleep. Incredible!

Awake, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. That's God's desire, to give us every opportunity. He called us all and has called through times past everyone to have opportunity to repent, first and foremost. That's why Joshua died, so that people could repent, so that God and Christ could dwell in us. Because God won't dwell in sin, so sin has to be forgiven. What an awesome thing we've been given to see, to understand those things.

Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. See that you walk circumspectly. It means "to be determined with precision, exactness." That's what this word means. It doesn't just happen. We can't just go by it flippantly. It's something we have to focus upon and pray about.

...not as fools but as wise, remembering the time, because the days are evil. So, it doesn't matter what period you lived in, whether you were in the time of the early apostles or the time of Paul in the gentile world or the different eras that came since that time and then all the way through Philadelphia, Laodicea, and now. It all applies. The days are evil. 6,000 years. Because that's the way of mankind because mankind has chosen not to live by God's laws. They fight and resist it.

Again, I'm excited by what's in the book. And when God opens people's minds to some of those things, to see what happened in Judaism, to me, it's mind-boggling what they did, blatantly so. Blatantly so. Scholars, supposedly. Educated people, highly educated, supposedly. But made knowing choices. Incredible.

"Because the days are evil." So that's what God's called us out of, a world that's evil, and we have opportunity to begin changing self. Not the world yet. That only happens after Christ comes, once He's established as the Messiah, the King of kings over all the earth, established as God's government on the earth. Then an opportunity for the world to be changed.

Therefore, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit. I love this verse, the way it's put together there. Because it's making a contrast here, again, showing you can have too much of something on a physical plane that is a detriment to you, but the point is, of God's spirit, you can't have too much. Beautiful. "Drink all you want." That's what God is saying. "Not only that, but, wish you would drink more!" Drink in of it more, of God's way of life, of the truth, because that's a matter of choices and decisions we make and how we think and what we're praying for on a daily basis. God says, in essence here, "Drink up."

...speaking your own self... The words "to yourselves" is not right. "Okay. What? Yeah." That's speaking to myself. If you start listening to yourself, you're in trouble. Anyway. **...speaking your own self** is how this is translated. **...speaking your own self in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.** In other words, it's by how you're living, again. It's not you going around singing songs and psalms and being, quote-unquote, religious.

...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. It's how you think inside. And why would you do that? Because you're thankful, grateful to God. Do we do that from time to time? I hope so. Things that are moving in our lives, things we can pray about in our lives that are moving to us, and we share it with God, we pray to God. God wants to hear. He knows how we're thinking, but He loves it when we express it in a praise and a thankfulness, in a gratitude to Him. Because that has to happen. It's about the mind. It's about our response. God is so pleased with that, truly.

...giving thanks always for all things. All things that are good and right that God has given before us as human beings. Things in this physical world to think about from time to time. Do we? When we're in an area and in a setting, thank God that we're able to drink in of certain things that we're able to see, that we're able to experience and able to enjoy of a physical world around us that He's given us ability in. Thank Him for His creation. Animal, plant life. We think about those things and thank God. When it says, "Stop and smell the roses," we need to do that more on a spiritual plane, to drink in of the beauty of things that God has given and to thank Him.

Do we do that? Well, we should be. Thank God for the beauty of what we're able to experience. And you know what? The more thankful you are for those things, the more you're going to enjoy it, the more it's going to be in here. Awesome.

...giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Joshua the Christ.