Learning to Be Thankful, Pt. 2

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Last Sabbath, we had the first part of a series entitled *Learning to Be Thankful*. Today will be *Part 2*. And since we will be at the Feast very soon now, the fall Feast, this is a good subject to go into, to be thinking along these lines in our life. And especially while we're at the Feast, all the more so, because it has to do a lot with how we think and how we relate to people, how we think about people, treat people, and everything else.

And so again, a good sermon in that respect, subject matter to go into at this particular time, and asking for help to keep that as our focus between now and the Feast, and especially during the Feast this year.

So, let's pick up where we ended last Sabbath and read those last few verses again in Ephesians 5, and we'll begin there again. **Ephesians 5:14—Therefore, He says, Awake, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light**. So, most people don't realize when they get to this state that this is actually what's happening to them on a spiritual plane because that state is, and that's what it's talking about here, it's about a state of mind, a way of thinking that candidly is extremely dangerous.

The entire Church went through that during Laodicea. And it's not something that you're able to easily recognize, obviously, that's happening to you. But it's something we should consider, think about, and pray about from time to time, and asking that God help us to be alert. That's the opposite of being asleep or going to sleep. Being on guard, watchful. Those things are the opposite. And so, that's a state that we should ask for help in being able to have in our minds and in our thinking toward God's way of life and toward how we're living our life.

So “He says, Awake you who sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." So, this is our desire, is to be in the light, to have those things revealed to us that we need to see and understand.

See that you walk circumspectly. “In a determined manner with precision” is what the word means, “exactness.” **…not as fools, but as wise**. Again, as we talked about last Sabbath, as I talked about last Sabbath, the matter of wisdom and understanding where it comes from. It comes from God. And knowing that it's about the word of God that we have access to to live in us.

…redeeming the time. That means buying up the time that you have in front of you, using it in its wisest way, making sure that we're striving to do what we should be doing and not omitting things that we should otherwise be focused upon.

…redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. So, those are things that we're to be focused on. What is God's will when you go through a particular thing in your own life, as to having to make a certain decision or decisions, or in

thinking about other people and how we relate to them? It's a matter of always understanding what is God's will. What should I be doing? How does He want me to handle this?

And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit. So, the desire is there always to desire God's holy spirit. Something we should crave, want, and desire every day of our life. It's something we should ask for every day of our life. It isn't something that's just automatically there because we're in God's Church. It's something you have to ask for. It's something you have to want. It's something you have to know that you need.

Just as I've made comment about "Give us this day our daily bread," it's about the word of God, the wisdom that comes from God, that that's what we should want in our lives. We should want and desire God's spirit to strengthen us, to lead us.

…speaking to yourself in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. So again, it's about an attitude of mind, heart, the heart and how we think toward God in a relationship there.

…giving thanks always. So, this was the main thrust of all this, of what was said here in Ephesians 5. "Giving thanks always." So, not only should we be praying every day asking God for help, guidance, and direction, to be watchful, to be alert, to be filled with His holy spirit, but in that process, thanking Him. Every day, there should be a thankfulness and a gratitude on our part toward God, for things He's given to us, for things He offers us, for the opportunities we have in front of us.

And it's a matter of getting your mind focused, too, to realize what we do have. If you don't think about it, if we're not praying about it, if we're not thanking God about it, what are we thinking? Where is our mind? Is God our focus, indeed? Are these things that we want to have in our life, to do things better, to try to catch the things that we do that are wrong, to be aware of them so that we can repent of them?

…giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of the Lord Joshua the Christ. So, the access again, being reminded of always how we have access to God the Father through Joshua, first of all, because we can be forgiven of sin, so that we can have that access, so we can pray and know that we're being heard.

Let's turn over to 1st Thessalonians now and continue on from where we left off last Sabbath. **1 Thessalonians 5:15—See that none render evil for evil unto anyone**. It's about a reaction when things aren't going our way, or things aren't going well, or something happens and directed toward us, whatever that might be. Not to respond in like manner that others do when they don't have control of themselves. So, those are things we have to catch and try to catch, indeed, when they happen or are happening.

“See that none render evil for evil.” Getting back, whatever it might be, the normal way of human thinking. **…but ever follow that which is good**. So again, that which is good comes from God. So, it's a matter of keeping focused on God and trying to keep a check on self.

…both among yourselves and to all. Rejoice ever more. Again, rejoicing has a lot to do with being thankful if we understand how they're connected.

…pray without ceasing. Not letting up, not letting down, not going without, but making sure we're doing it. “Pray without ceasing.” Doesn't mean you're constantly praying. It just means day by day, we better be praying.

…pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks. I don't know how anyone can pray without somewhere in the prayer thanking God. If we're thinking about God, if we're thinking about the blessings we have, the opportunity we have of coming before Him, if we're thinking about our lives in a relationship with Him, how could we not at some point mention things, speak of things to God Almighty in gratitude and thankfulness for what we have?

So, that's a great place to focus upon in thinking about this subject matter. Do you do that every time you pray? I don't know how one can't. It should be kind of an automatic thing. And if it's not, then ask God for help in it. Ask God for help to have a mind of thankfulness, of gratitude, and of mentioning it. Not just taking it for granted that God knows.

God wants to hear from us what we have to say, how we are thinking. He knows how we think. But the fact that we verbalize it or do it from the mind in prayer toward God reflects what God desires. He wants that from us. That's what prayer is about. It's about a conversation. It's about going before God in conversation with God and praying to Him about whatever it is that we include in our prayers.

“In everything, give thanks.” You're going to be there a long time if you do that. So, from day to day, we should be able to think of different things. We should know of different things to be thankful about. Again, it's hard, I would think, not to be thankful.

But we're not always like that. We don't always have that in the forefront of our mind. And there are times we do go before God, and we don't mention or include in the prayer that which we're grateful for. But we should…we really should. And if we're not, there's an area we can work and ask for help to accomplish more. And it does something amazing up here in how we think. Truly does.

…in everything giving thanks; for this is the will of God. I was thinking this morning, thanking for all the trials and the hardships because this is still a little bit after the 50 years, and not the trials and hardships in the marriage (because she gave me this look, and I know that look), but it's about the fact of how long I've been in the Church, and the few years before that when I was called and all the opportunities leading up to that point in time of finally meeting her.

You know, incredible the things we go through that mold and fashion us, because this is what makes us who we are – the hardships, the trials. Because of thinking about things that people are going through in the Church right now. But there are different times when people go through different things, but when it happens on a larger scale in so many places, it's even more of a concern in the sense of thinking about the struggle and what goes on when people go through tests and trials and hardships.

And yet that's how we grow. Isn't that an amazing thing? It's through the hardships and trials. And I've mentioned it many a time, and I mean it with all my being. I wouldn't give…I wouldn't have given up any of those trials and hardships for what has been developed, because it's a tool whereby God can mold and fashion us. If we're responding in a manner and seeking to grow in a manner, God's always there and He'll help us through those things, and we're to learn from what we go through.

He doesn't just take them away. What an awesome thing! God doesn't just take our trials away. So often we have to live it. And some of them last a while. They're not over with overnight sometimes. They're not over with in a week or a month, and sometimes not in a year. Sometimes it might take three or more.

Awesome, what they can do for you. They make you, they help you to focus on things in a unique manner. And if we use them properly, to become even more thankful for when things do go well, for when you're handling things well, and asking God to help you keep on guard, keep alert, and not knowing when the next one might come along. Because they come along in this physical life.

And the older you get, they're going to come along. Things are going to happen just on a physical level, just because of getting older in life. How often do we think about how often God has intervened that we don't even know about to prevent us from having certain kinds of accidents or whatever it might be, or hardships in life? Because God does.

It's one thing I've always been amazed in, how blessed God's people are, as a whole, in the Church, from some of the horrible kinds of things that happen to the population as a whole. Doesn't mean He keeps us from everything. But from so much, He truly does.

So, **pray without ceasing; in everything giving thanks**. So, that means… You know, it's easy to be thankful for or think about something that is maybe out of the norm and special, and a special thing that might take place in your life or whatever, and you're excited about it. But to be thankful for the things when they're not going well, when things are happening toward you in a bad way, and you have to deal with them? It can be a little harder sometimes to be thankful. Shouldn't be.

Thank God that He's there, that He's listening, to know that He's there to give help, and you will come through it. To know that you're going to come through it. I don't care if it even comes to a matter of death. You're going to come through it! If you're in God's Church, in God's hands, you're not even going to know. You're not going to be aware of anything. The next thing you're going to know is awesome.

Awesome! Whether it be in a physical resurrection – still awesome—or in a spiritual one. They're awesome. They truly are.

We don't know all of God's plan and how He does it, and where we fit. “In My Father's House are many dwelling places.” And we don't all get put into a specific place at a specific time. We're not all going to be a part of the 144,000. Some are going to have to die and be resurrected later on into God's Family. Some may experience a portion of their life as they're living within the Church in this age and die in this age and be resurrected in another age to continue their growth, because just perhaps for whatever reason, that's what's best for you. And perhaps that's the primary way that you're going to be able to become part of God's Family.

God knows us. He knows our minds. He knows how to work with us. He knows how to mold and fashion us. And so, we can't try to decide what God should do. But to be thankful that we're in His hands. He'll place us wherever we need to be, whenever we need to be, in what is best. Awesome! Because the goal, the desire, is to eventually then be in His Family, whatever it takes!

So, when you think about different things, trials, you think about some of that, and pray to God about that. Whatever I have to go through, please let me go through it so that I can be molded and fashioned whatever it is.

Because sometimes as I think about and pray about different ones in the Church, I kind of paraphrase some things or put it in a different approach because the desire is, is to seek intervention and help, unless—Unless!— this is what is going to benefit them, to help them to change, to grow, to mature more spiritually, to draw closer to God, to be able to be molded and fashioned by Him more. If there's a need to continue on in that suffering or whatever it might be, that hardship, so be it! Because God knows what's best.

So, we can't always just pray that God intervene, and our desire is and our only response and answer is is that they must be perhaps healed right now or soon, or go through something and have intervention in it, whatever that is in life. Because there are many things that can affect our lives as trials and hardships. And so often the best thing is not that He intervenes, if we look at the entire thing that God is doing in working with us and molding and fashioning us.

Sometimes the best thing is that we go through it with Him and Joshua up here in that relationship, and what is being built as a result of that, and what comes as a result of the learning and the things that can happen through a hardship, whatever that hardship might be.

Because our natural proclivity is, is that God remove it. That's what we really want. That's what we generally want first and foremost. We want relief. When you ask for anointing, isn't that what you want? “First and foremost, I want relief,” you know, “I want help. I want…” And that's fine. But sometimes that isn't what is best for us. And that can be a difficult thing, even in that area. “In everything, give thanks.”

So, the next time you're going through things and you're thinking things are hard and difficult, and maybe depressed and down because those things—that's just the way of the human mind—to begin seeing it from a different vantage point and asking God to help us to learn whatever we can learn from it and grow in whatever we can grow in. Whatever needs to be seen, help us to see it so that we can change, so we can have this mind transformed and become more at one with Him. Because that's what it's all about, becoming more at one with God.

But it always comes, as a whole, through suffering. Isn't that amazing? As physical human beings, we have to suffer. This has to suffer in the sense of the mind and the thinking.

I think of the Apostasy. I don't think that there's anything that I could compare with the mental suffering we went through, I went through at that particular time, than anything else in the Church that's ever happened to me. It was horrifying up here. Not a physical thing, not a hardship physically, not something that was hurting me physically, but it was up here. And those are some of the greatest battles of all. Truly are. And what can be learned from those kinds of things—awesome—when God is there doing the molding and fashioning. To be thankful for that. I hate that it happened, but it was part of God's plan. I'm thankful. Awesome.

In everything, giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Joshua concerning you, or **Joshua the Christ concerning you**. It's part of God's plan, part of God's purpose. To learn to be thankful in all things we go through in this human life. If we're in God's Church, begotten of God's holy spirit, this should override everything. Awesome.

Do not quench the spirit. See, because we might want something a different way than what God is working in our lives, could this be a result? Beginning to quench, choke off the power of the holy spirit, not utilizing things in the manner that God has designed for us and given to us, to learn to be thankful in all things, which involves an attitude concerning everything else that's being addressed here.

Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophesying. That which is inspired that God gives.

I think of when Covid came around. Because there were those who despised what was said. And there, a little bit left over—I won't go into it—but of there is thinking, there can be thinking, there is thinking that can be there at times when even about wearing a mask and say, “Well, you chose this side, you chose that side.” No, I didn't. “You made this choice and this decision because of something said over here that someone else made comment about,” or “You took and decided that the shot was good for everybody to be taken, and you didn't listen to blah blah blah blah blah.” I've had some of those accusations come across, especially from one who went off in left field because of all this.

And the reality, no, I was plugged in somewhere else, and it was about the Church. It was about God's Church, and it was about seeking God's will and what is best for the Church, and how can the Church in this world, in this age, best deal with this at this time? And so, a decision was made. And if it be no more

than a matter of whatever God binds on earth, He binds in heaven; there's power in that. There really is. And all the more so when it's led by His holy spirit. But we learn through it. And some had to go through different things. And they learn from it and handled it well, even when their mind was on the other side of it all. Some didn't.

That's how God refines us sometimes, what's really in us, and He sees whether it'll come up, the dross, and whether or not we'll work to get rid of it, or whether or not we'll let it start sinking down again, and then we become polluted. Choices, choices, choices.

Prove all things. This scripture, I'm sorry, but I can't help but talk about how it was used in times past by most of the Church. It's like we all had the ability to prove the truth or lies, and so, sermons would be analyzed sometimes and dissected by people because they have their Strong's Concordance, and they've got pretty good at it. And this attitude of being able to judge everything that's being said and determining whether or not it's right or wrong and proving to themselves what is right or wrong. That's such a bunch of malarkey.

They didn't come into the Church that way, but they sometimes went out that way. A lot of people, not just a few. When it says prove all things, it doesn't mean you have the ability, I have the ability, we have the ability, of and by ourselves to determine what's right and wrong. It has to come from God. And if we understand how God works, then…

It's about the simple old thing of going out in the field and trying the oxen when you finally… Or that giant tractor or that great big combine or whatever else it is in life, the big machine you wanted to have to produce more in your factory. Whatever it is that people… And they want to see it working and producing and to see. To prove it. To put it to practice.

And God wants us to do that with His way of life and what we're instructed in, what we're guided in, by doing it, by being there to do what He's shown us to do and how to do it that it works, God's way works. The more we apply it, the more we apply being thankful into our lives, we're going to learn how it works in the mind. Candidly, truly. The more thankful we can become in our thinking, it affects so many other areas of the mind and our ability to truly do what God commands us to do, even at the Feast, to rejoice. The more thankful you are, the more ability you have to rejoice on a spiritual plane before God. Truly, it's how it works.

It has to do with gratitude and thankfulness to God Almighty and to one another. Like I mentioned last Sabbath, to be thankful for one another that we're here. There was a time, the first 4,000 years, God worked, as a whole, one-on-one with people. And where did they have to go to fellowship, to talk to others who believed the same way they did, who were as strong in their convictions as they were? There weren't very many. They really weren't. Some in families, to a certain extent, to a certain point, and that was it. What an incredible thing that we have so many, and yet even at this time, when we're so small.

…hold fast that which is good. That which comes from God and how God works in life.

Verse 22—Abstain from all appearance of evil. Even what might be seen as being evil by others in their judgment. There's a balance in that because you're never going to please everybody. But to make sure to strive to set a right example, to be a right example to others.

And the very God of peace… I love how often that pops up. It's important when it does. Peace. Jerusalem. It's what God desires. Peace. The opposite of drama.

…the very God of peace sanctify, sanctify you wholly (completely), **and your whole spirit, life, and body be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Joshua the Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it**. So, God gives us the ability to do what we do because He's doing it all. He's the one who's transforming the mind. What an awesome blessing, that God works with us to transform the way we think.

I'm so thankful that we have the ability to change, that we can work at getting rid of carnality and selfishness, and how we react to different things. Doesn't mean we're not going to slip, do stupid things. But to grow in that ability of not doing those things? Awesome.

Let's turn over to Psalms. A lot is said in the Old Testament here about thankfulness and gratitude. Because when it comes down to it, it's one thing to do it within the Church. It's one thing to do it toward God, to be of that mindset toward God. But you know some of the primary ways we learn it? Just in our normal, physical, everyday life toward others. Thankfulness on a physical plane. And if we don't practice these things on a physical plane, how on earth are we going to do it on a spiritual plane and it be genuine and true? Because if we don't know how to do it on a physical plane…

And we live in a world that doesn't do very much of that on a physical plane anymore. It's getting worse and worse and worse out there. And that can affect us if we're not careful. And so, we need to think even about those things amongst ourselves within the Church as a whole, and think about others, to be thankful, to be grateful for them. And you can add a lot to that, then.

Psalm 103:1—Bless the Eternal, O my soul. How do you bless Almighty God? "Bless the Eternal, O my soul." God has everything. God owns everything. Everything belongs to God. The entirety of the universe, all this world, all belongs to God.

So, what does it mean to "Bless the Eternal, O my soul?" Well, it's about a response we have toward God. It's how we respond to God in things. It's about how we live toward God and what He's doing in our life, and what He offers us. Because He desires to work with us, to mold us, to fashion us, to change us. And the blessings He's given to us, it's our response in the right way, in yielding to that process that honors God.

And so much of that has to do with thankfulness, gratitude. That's how you do it, in responding to God. And then, in a sense, the ultimate of that is thanking God for it all, thanking God for those things. Because that's the full circle. God gives us the blessings, the fullness of life, the opportunity to potentially become part of His Family, to become part of Elohim. And as we respond to it, and then to thank God for those steps along the way, and the things we go through, and the hardships we even go through that help to transform and change the way we think, to be thankful for those things.

Bless the Eternal, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy name. It's about thankfulness. It's about gratitude because we see it, because we grasp what God has placed before us and what God rejoices in. Some of that will be mentioned at the Feast. It's just a response to God. How do we respond to God? How do we think toward God? What is in our heart, in our life, in our being, in our mind toward God Almighty? A lot of that better be thankfulness, gratitude.

Bless the Eternal, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits. Blessings. It's about thankfulness and gratitude again. That's how we do it. Do not forget. Because if we don't think about them, we are forgetting them.

I think of so often about writing the book right now, and some of the things that Israel did, and the mindset there, and the carnality of human beings. And even there, when God gave them so much. But they couldn't see it, they couldn't grasp it because it requires God's holy spirit.

But we have that access, the benefits, the blessings of His holy spirit working in our minds to transform this, the greatest of His creation, of what He can create – His Family. And we have opportunity of that, and we're being changed not to be like the world but to be different, to be an example to be used to serve in the world.

Do not forget all His benefits. So, it's not a matter of thinking about what we don't have and letting those things bother us as human beings, which so often happens. It's focusing on what we do have. And we are rich. We are so rich. We are so blessed. We have so much. Sometimes hard for us to grasp that as carnal human beings.

Who forgives all your iniquities. When's the last time you thought about that? Thank God for that. "Thank you. Thank you for what Joshua did, for Your Son who gave Himself so that I could be forgiven of sin, for all the sins that have been in my life." Awesome.

To forgive us. Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases. Afflictions, sickness, pain, suffering. And sometimes the carnal mind can think of this in a negative manner. "Well, God hasn't done that. I asked for anointing; I didn't feel any better. Still had to suffer through it. So, what does that mean? Who heals all your diseases?" It's very short-range, selfish thinking. It's not grasping and comprehending what God has placed before us and has given to us.

Even if something leads to death. And eventually, for human beings, you know what's happened over the past 2,000 years in God's Church? Everybody's died up till now that went before us. They all got sick. They all wore out, and their bodies quit. And you think they didn't ask for anointing? It's a part of God's plan. It's a part of God's purpose. It's a part of the experience we have. Thankful for that, to learn from it, to grasp that?

How do we think? How do we think toward God? To do otherwise, in a wrong way, is to find fault with God. That's the worst mistake can be made and is made and has been made by so many in God's Church in times past. Hopefully, less and less as we continue to grow.

So, if we understand the scheme of things and what God is doing in our lives, and how even through these things we grow and mature, they will be taken care of. He does heal us. We will be so healed that it's so far beyond anything we can grasp and comprehend. Because God is leading us into His Family to have spirit life for all time! God has a plan to take care of all this. It's just not the way we think as human beings sometimes. We want something and we would like it now.

When I was going through this with my neck and the spasms, I kind of wanted help right now, you know, but it didn't happen right then. And then I had pain for quite a long time afterwards. Matter of fact, today is one of the better days. It's taken that long to get over some of this. And you think, awesome, blessed. It's about God's plan.

What are we focused upon? Being a part of His Family and how we get there, and the road that God has placed before us to be able to do so. Awesome. Thanks be to God for such an incredible plan. We think… We are so limited and so short in our thinking sometimes.

I think sometimes old age can be a benefit in that, to be able to see it more clearly. As you get older, some of those things, although you may have glaucoma coming on, and other things bothering your eyesight, hopefully, the eyesight of the mind and God's way of life is becoming sharper. Because that can actually be a benefit. It's a part of life.

Who redeems your life from destruction. So, we think of right now of destruction, of things that can happen. Well, this is about God's plan and His purpose and our calling to become part of His Family.

I'll tell you what, I don't know how we can't be thankful. You think about some of these things and you think how long—it's mindboggling—how long God has planned for and prepared the things that He has for us to eventually become part of His Family. And all the time that has gone before – as it were, almost an eternity in itself. If you understand time, it is a long, long, long, long time that we can't really grasp, and yet that's all gone behind, and this time is so exciting to God.

These past 6,000 years have been so exciting because God has worked with different ones who have responded to Him, who have been molded and fashioned by Him, who are going to be part of the firstfruits, that first great resurrection being readied to soon come back to this earth.

And we can't even grasp the impact of that, what it's going to be like to have people who've lived throughout 6,000 years that we're going to have opportunity to get to know and to learn from and to do the things that are going to be done to enforce one government, one Church, one truth on the earth, and to expose everything that's wrong, everything that's evil.

Who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. God is incredibly merciful to us, truly. When He calls us, begins to love us, takes a while for us sometimes. But eventually we grow, and we develop in different areas, and He molds and fashions more of His mind, His being within us. We become more at one with Him. What could be greater?

Who satisfies your mouth with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. Again, it's how do we think. What are we looking for? What are we looking forward to? Because we don't get younger.

The Eternal executes righteousness and justice, or **judgment, for all who are oppressed**. So, it's just a part of life. We have to go through certain things in order to become part of God's Family. And how thankful?

So again, here, thinking about all the times Israel forgot about God's intervention. You talk… You talk about forgetting God and being incredibly selfish. Israel exemplified it in a very powerful way. It's just that God had revealed Himself to them as a nation, all the other nations going off to do whatever they wanted. But you think surely, surely they're going to respond in certain things in a positive way toward God. And yet they were incapable of doing it.

That's why I marvel they went through the Red Sea and right away start murmuring and complaining and griping toward Moses, toward Aaron, toward God, and what was taking place. And it's like, surely, we could do a little bit better.

Let's turn over to Psalms 95.

We're just selfish as human beings, and those things help to expose the selfishness, what we want, how we want it, when we want it. And life doesn't work that way. But most discomfort, most dissatisfaction, most unhappiness, most of those drama comes from that kind of a mind, comes from that kind of thinking, which is, in the Church, wrong thinking.

Selfishness is evil. It's why I marvel how God gave us a mind like the being who rebelled against Him – one that is selfish. And that's such a hard thing, even within God's Church, for people to come to see and understand. I think of different…even ones close to me in the past who quit because they got tired of hearing how bad they were. Because that's all they could hear. They heard correction that was being given.

How can we be in God's Church without it? How can we grow without it? How can we change without it? How can we…? But it's this refusal of the human spirit sometimes to let go, to realize, yes, I am selfish,

yes, that is our base nature, that is our instinct and our natural response. And God wants us to have a different one. And we grow in that, and sometimes we're able to exercise it better than others. But we have the access to God's spirit, God's mind, God's life.

So again, ingratitude, it's evil. Being unthankful, it really is evil. And so, we have to think about things like that, even in our relationships with one another, because it has to do with how you think about others in the Church, what they do, and how they live. To be thankful, to be grateful, got to think about it. It'll have a lot to do with how you judge as well. On and on it goes.

Psalm 95:1—Oh come, let us sing… The word has to do with… It is like "a ringing cry as a declaration or verbal expression of real joy." It's what the word has to do with here that comes out of human life at different times. And it says **unto the Eternal**.

So, for us, it has to be, should be on a spiritual plane. There should be that within us at times, it just…it's like what more can I say in prayer, in thankfulness and gratitude? But we're supposed to say it. He wants to hear it.

Let us make a joyful noise. I think of the songs we've sung in times past, and the Psalms like this, that these verses are there. And make a joyful noise, it's not necessarily just… It's not about a noise per se, it's about what's inside of us that comes out of us. And so much of that is a result of gratitude and thankfulness, because if that's not there, how can that come out of us? What do we have? What are we rejoicing about? What are we thankful for? Yeah, there you go.

…to the Rock of our salvation. **Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving**. So, when we pray. You know, I think of thank offerings that were given before God. There are sacrifices that were made to thank God. Well, we have prayer. That's the kind that God wants that comes out of us and that we're willing to offer up before God from here. And so, there are things you have to stop and think about.

So, this following week, everyone just do it. Every one of your prayers, let them focus more on things you have to be thankful for, the good and the bad that have happened to you, that are happening to you, whatever it might be, and see what God is doing and placed before you.

"Let us make a joyful noise." Prayer to God Almighty that's filled with joy for the good and the bad of life, because with Him, if we grasp it, it's all good. Because we have God, because we have that life that's living within us, and a perspective of the mind of what God is working with to mold and fashion our thinking

…to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. It's a spiritual thing.

For the Eternal is a great God and a great king above all gods. Beautiful, if we understand it.

In His hand are the deep places of the earth. The strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down. It's about praying before God. It's about our thinking, the way we think toward Him, then, when we do this.

Let us kneel before the Eternal, and our maker. And so, how often do we thank Him about the fact that He is our maker, that everything… He has made everything and given us opportunity in it to become part of His Family. Awesome!

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice. I think of Hebrews and how it speaks of those things there. If we will hear, listen to the things that God gives to us.

Verse 8—Harden not your heart as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. So, it uses that example so often about them coming out of Egypt. And for us, it's on a spiritual plane, what it means to come out of sin, the struggle, the battles, the hardship, the being in the wilderness, to being there and in a world that isn't God's, that isn't turned to God, a wilderness, and how we live then in that in that world, looking to God, seeking God's help.

…when your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, and said, It is a people who do err in their heart. So, it's not just a story, it's something we're to learn from – how much we need God's spirit, how much we can't do these things without His holy spirit. Because that was their problem. They didn't have it. They didn't have access to it, and what the result was then. It's just the way we are.

And if we're not careful, this happens in the Church. And I've seen it a lot since I've been in the Church, since 1969. A lot. People who err in their heart, in their mind, in the way they think toward God, toward God's plan, toward God's purpose, toward the way that God works in the Church.

And they have not known My ways. Why? Because they couldn't live it, they couldn't prove it. They weren't able to because it takes God's spirit to live His way of life. Basically, just being unthankful to God. You know, the first thing they should have done when they came through the Red Sea is drop to their knees and cry out to God, "Thank you for delivering us! Thank you for saving us from that army that was coming to kill us and destroy us!" They knew what was coming.

But that wasn't their attitude. You think on a physical plane, surely there's something like that in there somewhere to be thankful to God, that to do something like… I mean, that's hard to think of on a physical plane. You see water come apart. That doesn't happen. You see dry land where water had been. That doesn't happen; that's not normal. And you get through to the other side, and you look back and you see an army swallowed up in a sea? If that can't make you drop your knees even physically on a physical plane…?

Well, anyway, some things are just hard to grasp, how hard-hearted they really were, how hard-hearted human nature can be, how hard-hearted, if we're not careful, we can be. Because it has happened in the Church over and over and over again. Anyone who begins to think differently begins to move away from truth that God has revealed to them, becoming incredibly hard-hearted inside, not thankful, not thankful for what God gave them.

Sometimes those things are just hard to grasp, the human mind, what it's capable of. That's why it's a fight. And that's why, if thankfulness doesn't come out of us, then something's wrong with our thinking. If we get to a point where we're not able to be thankful for everything that God has given to us and placed before us, where are we, what are we?

“Harden not your heart.” Don't let it happen. Because this isn't over with yet. That's hard. It has been… That's probably one of the hardest things in the Church, seeing people go, make choices, go by the wayside, and to know that it's not over with. It just continues on, continues to happen. As I so often make comments, one Feast to the other. If that doesn't hurt you inside?

Yet there are choices. And that's another hard part of it, because the reality is we can't make anyone change. We can't make anyone choose. It's individually each one of us's own choice. And depending on how we think, gratitude, the thankfulness for everything God's placed before us, and the willingness to embrace it, the ability to grasp and comprehend, we are so rich, we are so blessed. What else in life would we want? Therefore, why give in to any of those things, but instead to fight against what's wrong, the things that are wrong. Choices, choices.

And then the ultimate of all that. And I hope you know what it is. It's to understand that in God's Family, there can only be, and must only be, unity and oneness with God. And anyone who does not make that choice should not be in that Family. That becomes our judgment, that we are in agreement with God, that we understand God's judgment in such matters. It's hard. It's difficult to deal with. But a reality to understand what is best for God's Family, that His Family is at one, has unity of mind and judgment.

Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, as the day of temptation in the wilderness when your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people who do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways. Again, why? Basically, unthankful for what God has given and placed before them, unthankful because they can't see it. If we can't see the riches, the awesomeness of what God has placed before us and given us, we can't be thankful. It's impossible. But if we see it, we want to see it, we grasp its value because we embrace it, and because we recognize the riches that are there, then we're going to be able to have more of that kind of a mind that's just naturally thankful to God.

Unto whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest. That's God's ultimate judgment. If the choice is made, it's not wanted. As painful as it might be, you think it's more… It's far

more painful to God to see those choices made than it is to us because His love is so exceedingly greater than ours. But the bottom line is it's an individual choice. That's why God gave it.

Psalm 26:1. "A Psalm of David." **Judge me, O Eternal, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Eternal; I will not slip**. Well, right away, we ought to know that something is wrong with the translation there. "I have walked in my integrity." Now, what are you missing? Little puffed up? That's not what he… David wasn't like that. It is not what he's saying at all.

Sometimes I get so frustrated with certain translations and how people saw it, but they couldn't understand. They couldn't see anything spiritual in the first place. And so, the context of what they read is on a physical plane so often. What an incredible thing that the Bible can be written the way it is, and He gives us the ability to see it on a spiritual plane. That's what makes all the difference in all the world – to be able to grasp God's purpose and God's plan. It's incredible! It really is. Thankful? You bet!

So, it's a great Psalm, but a poor translation. Definition here of this, "strong moral principles and uprightness." And he wasn't bragging before God or anything of that nature, so how can someone say that they walk in their own integrity? Well, obviously, it's not a matter of their own. If it is, it's really of no great value at all.

I'm going to read here part of what I've written down. It is far more proper to understand this as meaning that this is what one should strive to do. This is what he's striving to do. That's basically what he's saying to God: that this is what he wants, "I want to walk…" Not "in my…" You know, a lot of these words are just added in there. It's a desire to walk in integrity. He wants God's help. He knows he needs God's help to do so. He's not puffed up, and proud and haughty of how great he is, that he has such great integrity before God. I mean, that's about how Job was, and Job had to be knocked down a few pegs. And he was.

So, it's about walking in integrity or completeness, as the word indicates here. We want to be complete. We want to be filled with God's way because that's how we receive it. Another meaning of this Hebrew word, "and to know that this is something that comes from God." That that's what was in David's mind. He knew where it came from. He knew that the right way of living, the right way of thinking, came from God.

So, it's about God's integrity, if you will, His mind, His being, and he wants to walk in it. That's what he's saying before God, that he wants to walk in that integrity, that which is upright, complete, truly moral, as the word means. So, he was bold in that in asking for it.

I want to look at a couple of places this is used. You don't need to turn there. I'm just going to read it to you. **Proverbs 10:9—He walks uprightly**. It's the word "integrity." **He walks uprightly, walks surely; but he who perverts** or, in other words, **twists his ways shall be known**. So again here, it's just a matter of

showing here it's about being upright, walking in a right way, and to know that that only comes from God. And that should be our desire. And the opposite of that is to twist and distort things.

Another one here in **Proverbs 10:29—The way of the Eternal is strength to the upright**. Again, the same word “to those with integrity,” if you will, “to the upright,” to those who are seeking to be complete in God's way of life. But it comes from God.

So again here, **to those who walk in integrity, but destruction or ruin will be to the workers of iniquity**. So again, it's about how we want to live our life. It's very basic, and again, David wasn't bragging before God or being puffed up and lifted up and saying how great he was before God. That would be the height of insanity on a spiritual plane.

Anyway, again here, **Psalm 26:1—Judge me, O Eternal, for I have walked in integrity** or **I've walked in completeness**. In other words, he can say this in a bold manner. This is what he strives to do; he wants to do. He is a man after God's own heart. He's made choices that he's… But he knows, he understands this comes from God, it's not of him.

And so, these truths that he's able to understand, that he's gone… that have been revealed to him over and over in the Psalms, reveals this attitude he has toward God Almighty. And this is how he has chosen to live, even when he sinned great sins, and God came to him and let him know “This is what you have done.” I think of the one example here where… There are so many in scripture, but where God has had to reveal to him in ways that was the only way he could come to see himself. And then he saw what he did, and he abhorred what he did. He was able because of God's spirit working in his mind, and then he repented.

And that's what it's all about, being able to come to see things that are done wrong and then being able to repent. That's how we grow. And this is how we're able to walk in that which is complete in God's way, becoming complete.

So, he says, **I have trusted in the Eternal.** That in itself. So, he understands where it comes from. “I have trusted in You.” He knows where this kind of mindset and thinking comes from, and he's wanting to live it. God knew that about him. So, he's just reiterating that, talking to God about it, that he understands where it came from, and this is what his choice is.

Isn't that what our choice is, that we want to walk in that which is complete in God's word and God's truth? That this is our choice? It's my choice. It has been since I was baptized. That's the way it should be in all of us. We made a declaration to God Almighty that we belong to Him. We're not our own anymore. And it is insanity to think that we'd ever go back to what we were. To choose to leave God and everything He's given to us, all the truths that we have?

That's why I marvel sometimes at what happened in time because of the Church slowly going to sleep in Laodicea, and what happened to so much of the ministry that they could get to a point that they forgot

how they came into God's Church, and of the truths they learned. And that Herbert Armstrong then was looked upon as only a great teacher. “He was a great teacher, and I learned a lot of good things from him.”

Want to get me riled up? That's the one. Think how stupid, even on a physical plane, that is. Insanity! They learned everything through him. Everything as a foundation of truth that God had given, the present truth at that time, that's how they learned it. They didn't know diddly squat before that, and they lost it. Incredible!

I have trusted in the Eternal; I will not slide. “I will not be shaken.” Is that our… We know that we don't have the ability to do that, but we have chosen that, and therefore, we fight for it, and we don't want what this world has to offer. That's a solid choice that we have made.

Examine me. So, he's asking for help. “Examine me. Look into me. What is it that still needs to be changed?” We all have a lot that needs to be changed no matter where we are in the matter of the scheme of growth, if you will, in our lives spiritually. There'll always be something to change and to be worked upon. We're far from perfection or being perfected. And it'll be that way until we die or are changed from mortal to immortal. Because that's the way of the human mind, first and foremost. The natural, normal reaction will always be selfish. And then we have to fight against that at different points and different stages, even if it's coming to a point of having to go and make it right, to be a peacemaker, say, "I'm sorry.”

Examine me, O Eternal, and prove me. So, in His way of life, in God's way of life. That's just crying out and saying, "I need help, and I want to see the things that need to be changed.”

…try my mind and my heart. That word literally means “refine; to smelt.” He was asking for help even if he had to go through trial and hardship and fire. Smelt. “Smelt my mind.” That's what he's saying. “Let it be heated up. Let the dross rise to the surface so that I can see it, so that I can get it out of here.” And so, there are prayers like that, that we have to ask God for help, knowing that we're not there until we're there.

For Your loving kindness is before my eyes. Thankfulness, gratitude. To be able to see God's loving kindness in our life? That takes gratitude to be able to see what God has given, to see God, to see the blessings of God before us. And because of that, then, to have that response of thankfulness, of gratitude, because we can see it. What a blessing! To thank God for that.

For Your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. We can all say that. That's what our heart has been. That's what our desire has been. That's why we're here. We've made the choice to walk in God's truth, and we want to keep walking in it, whatever it takes.

I have not sat… That means “to remain” or “to dwell” **…with vain people.** “With the way of vanity” is what this is about, the way of vanity, self. But instead seeing that this is what needs to be changed, the self.

Nor will I go in with hypocrites. In other words, hiding what they really are. Sometimes this happens, and it still happens, that sometimes, if we're not careful, we get into this mode or thinking of trying to project to other people something different than what we really are. And that's not good. It's the wrong approach. If that's our motivation, if that's what we're striving to do, to raise ourselves up to be seen by others, we're going down the wrong course, and it will destroy. It will destroy if it doesn't stop.

And so, there's some of that out there in the Church. And that kind of stuff is so dangerous. We have to be ever so careful. It's a matter of striving to be of a humble spirit and of not trying to raise ourselves up to seem important, to be important. What we're being molded into is what's important. And this has to change in order for that to happen. And thank God for that.

“Nor will I go in with the hypocrites.” What a horrible thing to not be true to who we are. Just be yourself. Easier said than done. Not to project something different. Just be yourself.

I have hated the assembly of evildoers and will not sit with the wicked. So again, it's this mindset here, especially, I can't imagine being maybe the only one at certain phases there being worked with by God and not being able to share with others what they knew, what they believed, what they had.

“I have hated the assembly of the evildoers and will not sit with the wicked.” So again, it's this mind that has made choices to hate things that are evil in the world.

I will wash my hands in innocence, and so I will compass, or surround, or **go around Your altar, O Eternal, so that I may hear with the sound of thanksgiving and tell of all Your wondrous works**. So again here, this attitude, it pops up over and over again in the Psalms and throughout scripture about this attitude of mind, this thinking, and how we respond to God. But it's about thankfulness and gratitude and how we have to learn it.

Verse 8. We're going to finish this chapter and stop here, or continue on with the next four verses, five.

Verse 8—Eternal, I have loved the habitation of Your house. Beautiful. “I have loved the habitation (the dwelling) of Your house.” Now, didn't fully understand all this, what it was all about, but in what he understood to this point in time, even on a physical plane, reveals to us that which we can see and grasp. Because that's why they were written and that's why things were recorded, and how God worked with, because we're to learn from the physical things that were done what it means spiritually.

“I have loved the habitation of Your house.” The dwelling. That we have the opportunity of God dwelling in us and us dwelling in God on a spiritual plane. Awesome. How much do we love that, the fact that God dwells in us, that we're not cut off from His holy spirit, that we're able to be a part of His Church, to

dwell in the Church of God, to dwell in God Almighty and Joshua the Christ. Because they're dwelling in us on a spiritual plane, therefore, we're able to be in the Body of Christ, the Church of God, not outside looking in.

I have loved the habitation of Your house, in the place where Your glory dwells. So, if we see the glory of what God has given to us, the holy spirit that lives within us, this… We can know it, but to sometimes really grasp that and know what it means in our life, the impact that God Almighty lives in us, a portion of God's being, His spirit dwells in us, that can be up here always? And as long as we're yielding to His holy spirit, always working in that spirit essence that's in our mind to give us a different mind that we're able to grow from Holy Day to Holy Day, sometimes from Sabbath to Sabbath, although those are smaller increments. We can oftentimes see Holy Days to Holy Days in a better way.

I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells. Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood, in whose hands is a wicked device, and whose right hand is full of bribes. Basically, talking here about the way of give. I think of Herbert Armstrong talking about this, the way of give and the way of get. And this is about that which is motivated by get. What can we get out of it? What do we gain from it? It goes back to some of what was mentioned here a moment ago, of this house of the hypocrites, that we not try to raise ourselves up in being something that we're not.

And why try to project something that isn't true? We're human beings. We all have weaknesses and faults, and yet we're able to have a oneness and fellowship within the Body of Christ that's beautiful, wonderful, exciting to have. So, why try to raise ourselves up of being more important within the Body?

But as for me, I will walk in integrity. That's what we want to do, in that which is complete and whole. We want to become whole.

Redeem me and be gracious to me. My foot stands in an even place. That's what God offers with the truth, “in an even place.” Said well.

In the congregation or **the assemblies**, as it was or is, **I will bless the Eternal**. So again, within the Body of Christ, within the Church of God, the ability to thank God for what we have as a family. Awesome in itself.