

Today, we're going to continue in the sermon series entitled *Learning to Be Thankful*, with this being *Part 3*.

Again, as we approach this fall Feast season, it's a subject matter that we're focusing upon for that purpose, that we be able to have a better Feast. And so much of it has to do with this attitude, this mindset, of being thankful. And certainly, if we'll do that, it's going to be a whole lot better Feast for everyone than if we didn't do it. Something to consider in the weeks to follow here because it's coming fast.

We're going to pick up today in **2 Corinthians 9:6—But this I say, Anyone who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly**. This can be applied to this, as a matter of fact. What we put into this as a matter of being thankful, we're really going to receive that much more back because of the mindset we have and because God blesses us with His holy spirit. This is about God blessing us. This is what He desires of us; He desires us to have that mind toward Him and to see Him in that above all things. And as we do that, He'll bless us in it, we'll enjoy it more because it has to do with, as we mentioned last Sabbath, all the different characteristics of things that create happiness, ability to rejoice, which God tells us, commands us to do at a Feast of Tabernacles. All the time, but at the Feast of Tabernacles especially.

So, if we put more into it, again, we're going to sow bountifully as it goes on to say. **...and anyone who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully**. So again, it's a matter of what we put into it. This has to do with spiritual things, spiritual matters. This is what it's getting to.

Each should give as they purpose in their heart, not grudgingly or of necessity. So, whatever it is, this is a more of a narrow subject that Paul is addressing at this particular time, but it's something that can be applied in so many facets of our life spiritually. Again, it comes back to why we do what we do, what we put into it matters, and as it says here, **not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver**. So again, it's that mindset of why we want to even do this, as a matter of fact.

It says, going on here, **Now, God is able to make all grace abound toward you**. That's, again, a matter of His favor, His love, all the blessings we have that come from God, that have made possible this way of life for us, the calling we have, and responding to it.

God is able to make those things abound to us, grow, be strengthened in these things, even more so **that you, always having all sufficiency**, or, really, the word here is "self-sufficiency," but it's a sufficiency. We have what we need. **...in all**, as it says here, **"things"** (but the word's added), **may have an abundance for or abound toward every good work**. So again, God gives us the ability to do even more, and again, it has to do with that which is good, which comes from God, if we understand it.

It goes on to say, **As it is written, He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor.** That's not a good translation because the word "poor" isn't even a proper word here at all for the translation. It's a word that has to do with "the work for one's daily bread," basically, is what it means or "one who works for their living." So, it's a matter that God has provided an ability to do these things. That's getting to the quick of it.

God has made it possible for mankind to have all the blessings that we have in life, whether we look at especially physically, but this is looking about things that are spiritual as it goes on. But it says, "God has dispersed abroad." He's made an ability throughout this earth for mankind to have plenty. It's awesome, the great blessings God has given in so many facets of life that you want to look at. And it says, "He has dispersed abroad," made it possible, in other words. He's given for the ability for people to work for their daily bread, as it is, for their living.

His righteousness endures forever. Now, He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, so, it's building upon the same thought, **supply and multiply your seeds sown.** So, for the Church, it was a matter of the bread of life. This is what Paul is basically telling them. There are physical things we can relate to, but we're to learn from that that which is spiritual that God has provided for the Church. He is dispersed abroad within the Church; He has given abundance in people's lives to be able to grow spiritually, and this is a part of what he's talking about.

It's just like this matter of (I think I've mentioned this several times now in the last few weeks), "Give us this day our daily bread." It's a matter of understanding that it's not something we're seeking physically. God has given us that ability in life in abundance, especially because of the promise He's given in this country and so many other countries as well. But especially this one here toward the end-time, how incredibly blessed we really are in the abundance we have. But it's much more about that which is spiritual, "Give us this day our daily bread," the bread of life. We understand that this is something we need every day of our life to fight the battle we have before us, trying to overcome self, fighting against self, and that world that's out there, and also a spirit world.

I think of a spirit world right now that's really stirred up, and more so before a Feast of Tabernacles than I've seen in a long time. Most of the time, in many cases, it's before Passover, in that period of time. But it also happens in this season of the year. But this year it seems to be more intense. And again, God can use that, even though it's a spirit world He allows to do some of these things. It isn't more than what we can bear through.

As a matter of fact, God will use those things to help us become stronger. That's an awesome thing to understand about God and the things we go through. The hardships we go through in life are things that can actually strengthen us, something that Satan doesn't understand.

Now, He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, the bread of life, supply and multiply your seeds sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. So, that's what he's getting to. It's a matter of how we use the way of life that God has given to us for good, for what is right. God has made it possible for us to grow, to produce fruit. As a matter of fact, if we don't produce fruit, we're in trouble. He wants us to do that. That's why it talks about in John 14 in the manner that it does, in John 15 and going on through there, but it talks about some of these kinds of things, that God, you know, has made it possible for us to produce fruit. And if a tree doesn't produce it, we're in trouble, because wherever God's spirit goes, it produces fruit. So, the more that that is in our life, the more we're seeking that help in our life, the more strength, the more fruit we can produce. It's an automatic thing.

So, it says, **in everything, increase the fruits of your righteousness.** In other words, this is what God wants. And it isn't a matter that we are righteous, but we actually through time, we do become more righteous in our life. But it's not a matter of ours, it's a matter of what we receive from God because we're living that way of life because we believe God and we're fighting that fight, and we're striving to live what is right, and He gives us the help to accomplish what is right, and we grow, we grow spiritually. And because we believe God, we understand that part of it, God attributes it to us for righteousness, but we do grow in righteousness, in how we think, in how we live, in our attitude of mind, if we yield ourselves to that process.

...in everything being enriched for all, the word really is "**singleness of heart.**" It's not the word "liberality" at all. **...and being enriched for all singleness of heart.** In other words, that's what it takes. It takes a focus in life. If we want to grow, if we want to yield ourselves to God, if we want to produce fruit in our life, we have to have a particular vision and focus.

Just like in this subject matter of thankfulness, it's something we have to think about, it's something we have to pray about and try to apply it in our lives on a physical plane and on a spiritual plane because they go together. If we don't do it physically, if we can't see certain things around us and have an attitude and mind of thankfulness for those things that are physical, how are we going to have it spiritually? It doesn't work that way. We have to start with the physical world around us – in other words, toward people, toward other things that perhaps come our way. A spirit and an attitude of thankfulness. And if we can see that and do that, that will grow spiritually as well, if that's what we're striving for.

It says here, **in everything being enriched for all singleness of heart, which causes thanksgiving through us.** That's a beautiful expression. Because of that, that's what happens in the heart or in the mind, it's our attitude and our response then. It even changes our outlook toward other people, especially within the Body of Christ, within the Church of God. If we can have that mindset toward others and towards the contribution that others make, whatever that is, just the fact of fellowship is an incredible blessing, being able to spend time with one another, getting to know each other better, sharing together. It's an awesome thing.

Some of that was being discussed here before services, that we are so unique in that. We can meet someone for the first time in God's Church, and it doesn't take very long, and there is something unique. And it's God's spirit, and it's the truth that's in us. But there is something unique there that just binds us together—powerful—that comes from God. We see Family. That's what we're to see, and we're to be thankful for that. And if we have that attitude toward others, we're going to receive people in a better way as well. We're going to think upon people in a better way as well and want the best for them as well. That's a part of this spirit of thankfulness.

...which causes thanksgiving through us, or as it goes on here, **working through us, thanksgiving to God**. So, "which causes thanksgiving through us to God." Because God's always there. He gives us this ability. He wants to strengthen this within us and that mindset then, if we have it toward God, because that's the ultimate thing then that we grow in that thinking, but we give thanks to God for it because we recognize where it comes from.

Verse 12—For the administration or the administering of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints. So, he was addressing something here unique because of certain things that they were going through, especially in Jerusalem and food shortages, and so forth, and drought at different points in time here when Paul addressed the Church and asked for others to give to their need, and their response to it. Again here, this is something that's always existing, though, in a matter of being able, as it says here, "of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints." So, if we understand the things about the importance of fellowship, we're going to strive to be a part of that in our lives, and whatever that means to each individual.

...but also abounding through much thanksgivings to God. So, all of this is not done and accomplished without a mindset, as it says here, that is abounding. The word literally means "to go over above and beyond." So, it's what we put into it. How much do we put into it, into this thinking? What are we thankful for? How thankful are we? How thankful are we for each person that is in our fellowship or that we know in other areas that we know in God's Church?

...while proving this administration, they glorify God. Again, this chapter is really messed up in places. These words "**for the obedience of your confession**" are not even in there. One translation says, "for your professed subjection." I'm just going to read it as it is: **while proving this administration, they glorify God through their agreeing to submit to the good news of Christ**. That's all it's saying. That's what it's saying.

So again here, it's an attitude of mind, thankful for what God's given us, what we have, the truth that we have, the understanding we have. We have a peace that the world doesn't have. You look at the confusion that's in the world today, lack of soundness of mind, and you see the Church, soundness of mind, and things we're able to see in the world. We're able to see things in the world that aren't sound. Not because we're so great and have such great ability, it's because of what God's given to us. He's

shown us what is sound. He's shown us what the world is like. He's shown us what the world is going to be like and the need for His intervention, the need for Christ to come with the 144,000.

We think of the time we live in, different things of life that happen to us, we know our life is in God's hands. Incredible that we can have that peace of mind knowing that no matter what state.

So again, **while proving this administration, they glorify God through their agreeing to submit to the good news of Christ, and for, again here, singleness of heart, sharing of yourselves unto others. And by their prayers for you.** So again, we're to be praying for each other, to think about one another, to think about what different ones go through from time to time or whatever it might be if we're aware of a certain matter, and praying for them because we would want them to do the same for us under that situation, that condition, and it's just a genuine care and concern that's strengthened by God's holy spirit to see the big picture of what He's doing in all of our lives.

...and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God. So again, grace of God that excels in you. So, this is what it's talking about here: We're able to have these benefits, these blessings that we receive of God, and we're to have the same mind toward others. It's a matter of being patient. God's patient with us, and so we're to be patient with others and to be thankful for that ability. On and on it goes.

Thanks to God for His unspeakable gift, or His indescribable/inexpressible... In other words, there are things that we should be moved by as we think about a subject like this, of how much God has blessed us. You're going to hear about this at the Feast, and indeed we should. We are so blessed as God's people. This world, it has so little in the sense of knowledge and understanding of things. It's not there. Religion doesn't give it to them, and yet God's given it to us because of the truth because of His way of life. We are awesomely blessed.

I think about writing this book and just things about the Passover, things about Christ that the world has no knowledge of. They don't have what you have. They don't have the ability to rest upon, to be comfortable in, in that respect, truth that we just, if we're not careful, can take for granted. Instead, we're to be thankful, grateful for it. So again, we live in a world today where there isn't a whole lot of that around us.

Let's turn over to Luke 17. We live in a world filled with pride and haughtiness and ingratitude. It's everywhere. So much so, it's hard to take sometimes. That's why we should be all the more thankful for what we know is coming and be at peace in that.

This is an example that I gave one time, not too long ago here, but going back to revisit this with this particular subject in mind. It's one that Christ gave. **Luke 17:11—Now it came to pass that as He went to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then, as He entered a certain village,**

and there met Him ten men who were lepers, who were keeping their distance. And they raised up their voices and said, Joshua, Master, have mercy on us!

It's kind of an amazing thing here that people were moved, and some of this, too, by God, but to a point, and yet here is a particular thing where they weren't able to see all that was true by any measure, but they recognized something. You know, if you have a certain illness, disease, or whatever it might be, and someone is going through your region and the news has already gone out before you that He may well be the Messiah or He is the Messiah – because that's what they were looking for – and hearing of miracles that were being done, this is their response. There were those who were willing to come up to him and look to him as a possibility of being healed. This took place over and over again.

And so, here, it says, "They came up and raised their voices and said, Joshua, Master, have mercy on us!" So, there were several of them gathered there as it says here, and this is the example that's being given, of ten lepers.

So, when He saw them, He said to them, Go, show yourselves to the priests. So it was that as they went, they were cleansed. So, they listened to him. He told them, "This is what you do," and they responded. "Go to the priest; show yourself to the priest." And so, it says, "They went, and they were cleansed." They obeyed him.

I think of the individual who was from the area of Assyria, and he was told to go bathe in a certain river. He wondered why he couldn't just go back home and bathe in one of his rivers there because they were better than the rivers down there. Anyway, you know the story, but finally, he did it. But in the beginning there, it's this attitude of mind, why? Haughtiness and pride, but he humbled himself and finally did it, and it was only because he obeyed that he was able to be cleansed. Nahum.

Anyway, it says here they obeyed; they were cleansed. **Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God.** So, the only one who came back. Awesome. ... **and fell down on his face at His feet.** What does that show right there? Thankful! I mean, to think of nine others who weren't even thankful. Because they didn't come back. But he was so moved because he knew what he'd been given that he fell down on his face. Awesome! A right response.

...and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. Because he was so appreciative. It's hard for me to grasp people who wouldn't be appreciative of something like that. It should be hard for us to grasp that, how someone who is totally healed of something, of leprosy, it's totally gone, you know that something miraculous has happened, and not to have that kind of a response? It's unimaginable, inexcusable. It's really incredibly selfish and evil when it comes right down to it. But that's the way we as human beings can be oftentimes, unthinking, unthankful, and not responding in ways we should, especially when God is in the picture, to see something that comes from God, to be able to recognize it, especially in God's Church.

...giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. This is what tops it all. Incredible. Of all people, he was the one who came back.

So, Joshua answered and said, Were there not ten who were cleansed? So, where are the other nine?

And it's written for us to think about how human beings can be, how people can be. And even in God's Church, this is an area where there obviously has been guilt in people's lives. But it's something we're to learn from and see and make sure that we're not like that. Because of all things, especially when God is in the picture, we should be thankful to God for so many things. There are so many things to be thankful for, to mention in our prayers. And if we don't do that in our prayers, something is sadly amiss in our lives. It's inexcusable!

Because we are rich. We are so incredibly rich if we grasp it. People look at physical wealth, and that has no meaning whatsoever compared to what God has given to us. His desire, when it's said and done, if we grasp it, is to give us the universe. How much greater can that be? How much wealth does anyone want? There's more than enough to share! We can't even begin to grasp that, and yet that's God's desire toward us, to give us everything. Awesome!

So again, **So, where are the other nine? There are not any found who have returned to give glory to God except for this foreigner.** Awesome!

Let's turn over to Leviticus 7.

Last Sabbath made mention of the thank offerings, the peace offerings. Sometimes it's referred to as both. Primarily, the peace offering, which has to do with thanks and even called that at times here, a thank offering that God taught the Israelites to observe within the sacrificial system and that He established for them very early on as they came out of Egypt. So, it's something that God wants, desires that people be focused upon, to be able to think about, to learn from it, to be thankful to God. And so, He made the means possible through a sacrificial system to participate in that. We're to learn from that on a spiritual plane.

So, in God's Church, if we're not careful, we can begin to take things that we have been given for granted. It's just a natural course. This has happened throughout the history of the Church for nearly 2,000 years. We can live something for a long time, and after a while, we can begin to take it for granted.

I think of this Levitical system. I just want to go over some of this in my notes right quick. In that system of offerings, there were two aspects of those different offerings that, again here, I just mentioned in essence, but they helped to set the stage on a physical plane of those things that we need to grasp and appreciate on a spiritual plane, and it had to do with that system of the peace offerings that were given there. And why they are called that? It's about peace that God gives to us. It's about a peace that we're to have with God, and a thankfulness for it.

So anyway, there is that which is specific as referred to the sacrifice of thanksgiving, or seeking peace, if you will.

Leviticus 7:11, notice how it's phrased over here. So, it's a matter of, for us on a spiritual plane, wanting to have a relationship with God. It's about a peace offering, if you will, or a matter of a fellowship with God in thanksgiving that we have this. How often do we think about this, that we're able to go before God, pray to Him every day, and we know He hears us?

Leviticus 7:11—This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings. This isn't just to be read over; it's to be understood. "Sacrifice of peace offering." Christ, one of the first things that's recorded that He tells us about this subject, that we're to be peacemakers. We're to seek peace. That's to be our mindset. There's a lot involved in that because it doesn't just happen. It's something we have to think about. We have to work at it. Peace doesn't just happen.

I've made comments here so often. It's the opposite of drama. There are things that create drama, that stir up drama, that stir up contention and debate, and all the things that have to do with why drama can be raised so high. And the participation in that involves sin, if we understand. Something is wrong in the mind when drama is magnified in our thinking, and it's something that we have to fight against in order to have peace. Peace is the fruit of God's spirit. True peace is the fruit of God's spirit, and it learns how to fight against and combat matters of drama in life.

And again, this is something that doesn't just happen. It takes work! And more than that, it takes sacrifice. That's why this is so important in the book of Leviticus and called "the sacrifice of peace offerings." Because of something they had to give that they valued. If you had to give of your flock, of your cattle, or whatever it is you chose to give, or whatever was given at that particular time, there is value in that, there is money involved in that, and especially in that kind of society at that particular time.

And so, for them to do that, it was something they had to do that was a matter of the heart and of the mind, as a whole. But how much more for us on a spiritual plane, of the heart and of the mind. In order to have peace, we have to sacrifice. And most of the time, it's self. That's such a hard thing sometimes for us to grasp and comprehend. To be involved in drama, there is something that we seek to get out of that that isn't healthy for us. We have to learn and ask God for help to see what it is and that takes work.

This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer to the Eternal. If he offers it for a thanksgiving... So, again here, it's a peace offering as a thanksgiving. It's a matter of the mind and how we're thinking. That's what produces peace. Thanksgiving produces peace if we see God in the picture, and we understand our part in it in the Church.

...then he shall offer, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, whatever it is they're offering, and they're to offer with this **unleavened cakes mixed with oil.** Unleavened cakes. What does that mean? It's about us.

It's about what we're offering. Unleavened, not leavened. We understand leaven is a matter of sin; it reflects sin, it teaches sin, that this is what sin is. And just like Unleavened Bread, God tells us to become unleavened. So, a part of this process then is what we're trying to fix in self, what we're trying to make right in self in a spirit of thankfulness and gratitude to God in the entirety of the picture, if you will.

So again here, **with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mixed...** Because what does thanksgiving, being thankful mean if we're not sacrificing on our part, if we're not sacrificing in order to strive to live God's way of life, striving to become unleavened, trying to get rid of sin, wanting to get rid of sin, and thanking God that we can do that? How often do we thank God that we're able to come before Him and ask for forgiveness, that He's provided a means to be forgiven of sin, and to know of confidence that when we do it heartfelt and we mean it it's gone. God doesn't keep track. He doesn't keep score like we do so often as human beings.

Because we remember people's sins. We don't tend to forget. There's a challenge in that. God puts it away. He doesn't hold it against us. We as human beings sometimes have that battle because that's the way we are. We hold on to things and hold it against someone else. It doesn't mean that you're foolish in how you deal with one another in life. We can understand one another, and we should be able to see one another's weaknesses, oftentimes. The more we really get to know one another, the more we're going to see weaknesses.

Because we're human, we all have weaknesses, frailties. But how we deal with that is another matter. With thanksgiving? A willingness to forgive and forget? To strive to have those examples as we mentioned earlier here, talking about grace, God is able to make all grace abound. In other words, the attributes that He shows us, we should be willing to show others. Forgiveness is one of them, being of a forgiving mind. As a matter of fact, to not do that is a sin on our part. That's another subject in itself that we've talked about in times past.

To be unforgiving? To be of that kind of a mindset to hold something against one of God's people? It doesn't mean you forget something because there may be a time that certain knowledge is needed in a relationship. But how you deal with that, that's what counts. And if it's done from the attitude of love, care, and concern, and appreciation for one another, respect of one another, that's a whole other matter. God can work with that, does work with that.

...if he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil. Do you know what the oil is? In the way these examples are given, why does God give these physical examples? Unleavened, striving to be without sin. And you can't have it without oil, God's holy spirit. Because that's what it's about. It's about that which gives us the ability to be unleavened is a matter of God's holy spirit. That's what oil is about throughout scripture. It's about God's spirit. Awesome! These here together means a lot.

...unleavened wafers anointed with oil. Just driving the point home. **...or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil.** So, what we should see each time we see something like that is God's spirit, God's spirit, God's spirit. This is what we're striving for: to be led by God's spirit, to cry out for God's spirit so that we see things properly, and especially in relationships.

Besides the cakes, as his offering, he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

What does it mean when it's put in that regard? Because this isn't something that's just a matter of a physical routine, it's put there for a purpose this way to be learned from. "Besides the cakes," because it's already shown here that these are to be what's gone before, unleavened with oil.

"As his offering, he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving." It's about what we want. That's where the leavening is. What is it we want? We have to be willing to sacrifice that, our wants, "The way I see it," "The way I want it," and do it God's way. God says there's a way to be a peacemaker, and we have to follow that process.

"Offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving." Because we as human beings aren't naturally thankful about all the things we should be. It's not a natural thing, basically, because of selfishness. So, there are a lot of things we could become a lot more thankful for. That's what's being shown, if we understand it, around us that God has given to us, especially in the Church.

...the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering. Because this is how peace is possible. This is how right relationships and right fellowship are possible, and then a right relationship with God. Just like this matter of forgiveness. If we don't forgive and we're holding something against someone in God's Church, then we're judging that which is not ours to judge. Because if God forgives, who are we to hold something against His own children? Incredible.

Then, backing up a few chapters, let's go back to chapter 3 and notice other things that are said here. **Leviticus 3:1—When one's offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers of the herd, whether male or female, the offering shall be without blemish before the Eternal.** So again here, always this reminder without sin. And for us, we understand what that means, what we have through Joshua the Christ.

He shall lay his hand on the head of the offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron's sons, and the priests... What an amazing thing, they were involved in the sacrificial system. People have a lot of messed-up concepts about how this worked and think that everything was just given to the priests. And no, they had a part in these things. They had a part in killing the animal and slitting the throat, and blood coming out, being drained from the body of the animal that they gave.

He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron's sons, and the priests, it says, shall sprinkle the blood all around the

altar. Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire. It says, “**the burnt offering**” to the Eternal. So again here, an offering made by fire. Always being reminded here of trials, hardships, things we go through in life, of what we’re willing to fight against or work on in order to have what? Peace.

It’s like going before God and asking God for help, “That whatever it is I need to learn in order to change, help me to learn it, help me to see it, help me to see inside and help me to combat it, to be right before You, to please You, to serve You.” We just have to ask God for help for so many things. We truly do. He’ll show us if we have that spirit, that mind, and that attitude.

The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe that is attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove. Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood of the fire, as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma (sweet savor, sweet smell) **to the Eternal.** In other words, it’s showing here this is what is pleasing to God, if we have this spirit, if we have this mindset, and we go before God for this purpose of asking for help to have this kind of mind that is thankful, that produces peace God’s way. You can get rid of a lot of drama in life by learning this. It has to do with being thankful. Think it through.

Leviticus 22:31—Therefore, you shall keep My commandments and do them. Because they lead the way to this whole process. **I am the Eternal. You shall not profane My holy name.** Even there, we’ve had to come to see through time that it’s not a matter of words that are used in the sense of cursing and so forth because some look at the commandments and they look at the outward part, the first part of that, but don’t understand the spiritual and think that it has to do with things that are expressed, and so forth, that are said, that take God’s name in vain. No, we take God’s name in vain in the Church on a spiritual plane when we don’t live God’s way. We are part of the Body of Christ. We are the Church of God. We have the impregnation of God’s holy spirit in us. We are to live a certain way and to think a certain way toward others, especially within the Church.

We’re to strive to make sure that that is correct, that it’s right before God, and that we are living right as an example. Because if we are in this world and other people in this world know us and see us and see that we’re not living by what we profess, then we’re taking God’s name in vain. Because we have the ability to have God’s spirit within us, and that’s how we’re able to live what’s right before others, to be a right example. That’s a part of what this is about.

You shall not profane My holy name; but I will be sanctified among the children of Israel. Set apart as holy. That’s something that we have to do that’s in the mind.

I am the Eternal who sanctifies you. So, God is reminding us that He has set us apart first and foremost by His power for a purpose, for holy use and purpose, and we’re to set Him apart in the same way. That has to do with how we work to change this life and how we think.

...who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Eternal. Awesome! God's taken us out of sin. He's taking us out of sin. That's what this matter of being taken out of Egypt is about. He gives us the opportunity to leave sin, to have our minds changed.

What an awesome thing that this mind changes over time, that it's actually being transformed by the power of God's holy spirit. The more we seek that, the more we want that, the more we cry out to God for that, and the more we thank God for it, the more He gives to us. Awesome!

How could we not be thankful if we see these things and we respond in that way to God? "Thank You that I don't have to remain the same." There will always be things to work on, but we're always selfish by nature. Our initial response to most everything in life is always selfishness first. Just because you're in God's Church doesn't mean that isn't true. The reality that we are in God's Church means that we have the ability to fight against that and to work on that and to begin changing that, or to continue to change it and become more refined in it so that that isn't as quick of a response that it sometimes is in life.

So, this past week, have any moments of time that you responded selfishly to something? Because if you don't see it, how can you ever change it? I was. I have been day after day after day. The more we focus upon those things, the more we can actually see them. If we don't see them, we can't combat them, we can't fight against it, we can't pray about it, we can't ask for help in it.

So, we can ask God for help to see those things where we are selfish by nature in responding to certain things and fight against it. Awesome! And then this mind literally changes the more that becomes a part of our thinking. Beautiful! Truly is.

Let's turn over to 2 Timothy 2. So again, it's a matter of being on guard spiritually to realize how much we need God, how much this matter of thankfulness is so needed in our lives. Because when we react selfishly in things in life, it definitely isn't anything to do with being thankful about anything. It's being selfish. That doesn't produce thankfulness.

Especially in this age we live in, with its kind of technology we have, with the kind of ease we have in life, it's very easy to turn inward. The more familiar we become with one another, sometimes it's easier to turn inward.

2 Timothy 2:19—Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His. It's a beautiful thing. It's easy for God, but it isn't easy for us as human beings. I think of especially primarily when the Church was larger, and I think of all attended Sabbath services (let's put it that way).

So, "the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His." So again, we don't always know. Why is this important? Well, because it comes down to the fact that regardless, as long as someone is within the fellowship, we are to treat people in a right way with respect, with care, with love, with a desire to see everyone succeed. But that isn't always the case within the Church.

...also, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. In other words, from unrighteousness. **But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth.** So, the reality is we're always going to have certain battles within the Church that God allows. Every year, some leave the Church. Every year. That's why I think of this group here, and we were talking earlier about how large the group was that met up in Springfield, and we were coming up with numbers that were a whole lot larger than this than what's here today. So thankful we have what we have here today. Awesome! But why? Choices, choices, choices that God gives, and how the mind can begin to turn away from what God has given.

First and foremost, where did thankfulness go? Well, that went out the window a long time ago in people's lives when they get to a certain point. True gratitude and true thankfulness to God for what they have. It's like what happened in the Church in the Apostasy. What happened to the thankfulness for the knowledge and the truth that we had, of so many things that weren't even being taught anymore?

As an example, that Herbert Armstrong was an apostle. Didn't hear that being given in sermons. On the contrary, there was a movement away from that and even burning literature and getting rid of literature, telling people they shouldn't keep certain literature, and so forth, getting rid of tapes and tape libraries that had anything to do with what he had recorded and given in sermons or whatever it might have been, Bible studies. What happened to thankfulness for what they learned? Because that's where they learned it, whatever truth they still had at that point in time.

So, ingratitude, a lack of thankfulness, is a real poison in the mind. We probably all see it from time to time in different circumstances, even within the Church. And each one of us needs to think about that and look at our own lives. Not look at others when we see occasion where someone hasn't shown gratitude, but to look at ourselves to see where we can improve.

I think of last Sabbath's sermon and going through some of the things we went through. There was so much said there about everything else that affects that spirit, the mind of gratitude, a mind of thankfulness, and how it affects so many other things in our thinking. And the stronger that becomes, the more sound we become, the more at peace we become within the Body toward God, toward Christ, toward one another. But we have to be able to see it. So much of this goes back to this matter of seeing self, seeing selfishness inside of ourselves. Because when we respond selfishly, there is absolutely no thankfulness in that whatsoever, no gratitude.

So, "in a great house." We are in a great house. There is no greater. The Church of God. It says, "there are vessels of gold and silver, and also of wood and earth." Sometimes as a pastor, as a minister, I've worried about different ones, concerned because I see certain things that perhaps have been done or being done, and hope that people can address those things in their life and come to see them in their life and pray about that. But inevitably it comes down to the individual and their response to whatever God might be showing them to help them to see what they're doing. Because that's what it takes. It takes

God to do that. And if God works in our lives and shows us various things in our thinking, and we ignore it, we can become hardened. That's what happens to everyone who eventually leaves.

So, I continue to preach these things because I do it every year. I hate to see people go by the wayside. I hate to see congregations get smaller. But inevitably that's what continues to happen. So, I know there'll be a Body there when Christ returns, but how much, I don't know, and that depends upon the Body. God gives us every opportunity to remain in the Body, but it depends on our response to Him. It's becoming better, but there are still that which is wood and earth, not gold and silver.

Also, **of wood and of earth; some to honor and some to dishonor.** When I read that, I think of what happened during Laodicea. There were so many to dishonor, so many who had been in the Church for decades. And I think of choices that were made, things that were done, especially within the ministry, and that just pictures, then, as well, the congregations, because so many followed some of those things that were given to them, that they were fed in diets, bad diets.

So, "some to honor and some to dishonor." We should strive to that which is of honor. But it needs with it, it has to have with it, an ability to see what God has given and a thankfulness and a gratitude for everything we have.

Therefore, if a person purges... Which is a word that means "to cleanse thoroughly." That's something we all have to do individually before God. When is the last time you asked God for help to see what's wrong inside of you? Now, when there is sin, there is something that happens; there are times we absolutely know, and then there are times that people begin to ignore the sin or play it down, or downplay it, if you will. But again, this is an individual thing before God, and it's a refining thing before God.

Therefore, if a person cleanse thoroughly themselves from these... From what? From things of dishonor. That's what it's talking about. There is that which is to honor and that which is to dishonor. We've lived through horrible periods of dishonor within the Church. And so, we desire to have the other. But it means we have to see what's inside in order to respond to what this says. And candidly, only God can show that. God is the one who has to reveal these things within the mind because He knows the mind. We don't.

Now, we grow in that, and we do grow in that ability to see it, but it's through the power of God's spirit that we're able to see how we think and our responses to things. We should be able to see when we responded to something improperly, in a wrong manner. But as time goes on, if we do those things without changing, we become hardened and can't see, and we don't have the gratitude of what's right anymore. We lose it, lose the truth. How thankful are we for every truth that God has given to us? An ability to see God.

Because the truth—what an awesome thing—the truth is God. The word, what He's given to us is His mind. He's given us an ability to see His mind, His purpose, His plan, all the truths that He's given to us. Awesome!

Therefore, if a person purges (cleanse thoroughly) **themselves from these...** You can't do it yourself. We have to have God's help. So again, I'd ask the question: When is the last time we asked God for help to see things that we need to purge, things that we need to get rid of in our minds? Because there are things inside you don't see. There are things in my mind I don't yet see but have to ask for help. Then in those things that can begin to be dealt with, God shows. He does a little bit... He doesn't show us all at once, thankfully; otherwise, we'd be so depressed because of human nature.

I don't know about you, but I hate selfishness. And I see a lot. The more I learn about it, the more I see it, the more I see what I am as a physical human being. And I'm so thankful that that's going to change completely, that we're going to be out of these bodies. Because as long as we're in it, it's still going to be there; it's just a part of us. But the more we can combat that and have greater peace in our life, thankfulness and gratitude toward God, toward one another, what an awesome thing.

Therefore, if a person purges themselves from these, they shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified. Set apart by God. Because it takes God's holy spirit to continue to be sanctified, to be set apart for holy use and purpose. Sin actually cuts us off from being sanctified. It interferes with God's ability, then, His desire, His will to live in our life. That's His will. That's why Christ died, so they could dwell in us! And if we sin, we begin to cut that off, and we can ruin the fact that we were sanctified and called and set apart. That's happened to so many people – more, more than ever remained in God's Church through time. So many have been called, very few have come through it. Choices, choices, choices. It's a battle; it's a fight.

...a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet of use (useful is what this means) **for the Lord.** So, we are a part of a building. We're part of a creation, a construction that God is doing in the mind. And how we yield ourselves to that process determines whether or not we're fitting into shape and yielding ourselves to where He's going to place us, where His plan is, purpose is for placing us. A scripture comes to mind. I think of so many, see so many faces, of people who lost their crown. It says, "Let no one take your crown." And yet it's happened more than the reverse because most have left God's Church over time.

Isn't that a totally mind-boggling thing to you? That people could become antichrist in God's Church? And yet the majority through the past 2,000 years have actually become antichrist, against Christ? It should be so foreign to the mind that such a thing can even happen. And if we're striving to live what is right, it will be foreign to us, it will be unimaginable and despicable in our thinking, so that we so hate it and so will yield ourselves more to God and want God's help more, and ask for that help more.

...and meet [useful] for the Lord, prepared unto every good work. So, we want to be prepared, we want to be ready to do what is right before God, asking God for help to accomplish it.

Verse 22—And flee youthful lusts (passions, desires, things), whatever it is that people desire that is not healthy for us on a spiritual plane. **...but follow/pursue** (as the word is) **righteousness, faith**. So, that's what we're to work toward. That's what we're to ask God for help in accomplishing. **...righteousness, faith, charity**, which is a matter of God's love that we don't have by nature. We have to ask God for help in that, to have that mind.

...peace. It pops up over and over again, peace. How could we not think of drama when we think of peace? Because this world is filled with it, so much drama. I hate it! I loathe it with all my being. I don't like even hearing it because it's an agitation to peace. Peace gives peace. How can you put it...? When it's agitated, something is wrong, and you don't have peace.

...faith, charity, peace with those—awesome what it says—**with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart**. That's how we can do it. That's how we're able to accomplish it. We call on God because our heart and our desire is as David's, to be after God's heart, as it were. We love God. We love God's way of life. We love the truth. We love the word of God. We know that it reflects, reveals who God is, and we love it. We love God.

"With those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." So, this means we want to work on this to make sure that our mind is right, that our heart and the core of our being is right with God. We want it to be right with God.

It goes on to say, **But avoid foolish and ignorant questions [questioning]**... Sometimes, if we're not careful, and this oftentimes happens when a particular subject may be discussed and there is something thrown out, that someone throws out something different than what the Church is teaching, or a thought that's not really in line with what is being taught. That's where someone should be able to speak up and say, "Well, that's not what the Church teaches." We have to be sharp at those kinds of things. That helps someone then be on guard themselves against that kind of thing.

"But avoid foolish and ignorant questioning/questions." Because every once in a while, these things pop up. They still pop up and something is asked, a question that is frivolous by nature, that doesn't really have much to do with the scheme of things, but it's something that, for whatever reason, people begin to go into and... Why? Human nature.

...knowing that they produce strife. That's what I love about an ability to be at one with God. That should be our greatest goal, to be at one with God, to be of the same mind with God, to be in agreement with God and what He gives to us and His truth. And anything that's not, it just produces problems, strife.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive. Again, relationships within the Church. I'm so thankful they've gotten so much better over the last few years. We can see the growth of the Body as a whole.

But still knowing that there are going to be some who we know will go by the wayside, make their own choices, put wrong value on other things.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all, apt to teach. In other words, just what I mentioned there, it's not a matter of being a teacher, wanting to teach others. It's not about that. It's a matter of when there is something that comes up that is not as it should be, an ability to speak and say what is true and what is right in order to what? Help someone. In order to hopefully stir them a little bit in the right direction away from the dangerous area they're in. Because this happens. It happens from time to time.

So, **apt to teach.** We should be ready to speak up when we need to and not let something go by the wayside or ignore it or whatever.

...**patient.** This word has to do with "forbearing." So, hopefully, that we want others to treat us as we want to strive to treat them and have this kind of a mindset. This forbearing has a lot to do with a word that's used in the Greek that has to do with "allowing for the differences in one another." Allowing for the differences. We're not all supposed to be the same. God is not doing all the same with every one of us. We're not to be, as some expression used to be (younger generation probably doesn't even know what it is anymore), a yellow pencil. "What's a pencil?" That's about how bad it's getting.

But what an awesome thing that we have those differences, as was mentioned recently here, again, that we're not all the same and that God is creating something different and unique. We're not all going to fit into the same place, but our goal is to be in the same Family. And what we do and what we accomplish there is so far beyond what we can comprehend, the power, the might, the mind that God's going to give us, makes us look so puny it's not even funny.

...**patient** (forbearing), **in meekness instructing those who set themselves in opposition.** See, that's the same thing coming back again, this matter of teaching. It's the same thing here in that respect. "In meekness." In other words, a willingness to listen and judge properly in that respect, a particular matter. Listening to someone else, in that respect. Meekness has to do with a teachable spirit. But a willingness here, as it says here, "instructing those who set themselves in opposition." So, a willingness to speak up when there is a need to help someone. That should be the overall motivating thing behind this.

...**so that perhaps God will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.** So, it's showing here that there are times that people stray away from what is true and maybe say something that isn't in line with, in unity with, the Church, or how we should even treat one another. Then there should be a willingness to make comment. Be careful of that, to do it right.

...**so they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.** So, our desire should be to one another, to see everyone conquer, fight whatever battle is in front of them, whatever might come their way, or

whatever they might be yielding themselves to, that's not healthy spiritually in order that they be able to see themselves in a particular matter.

...who are taken captive by him at his will. Satan is powerful, and if we don't keep on guard, he does broadcast, and inevitably, every year, people get sucked into some of that.

2 Timothy 3:1—This know also, that in the last days... It says "**perilous**" but it's **hard to bear** (better translation of it) **times will come**. "Hard to bear." And because of technology, because we get fed such a diet of some of this stuff on TV, because of the kind of news we have, because of what we see in the world, sometimes it's hard to deal with the insanity. I don't know about you, but there are times you hear people talk and it's just hard to take it in, that people's minds have gone so far. People who vote people into office, and it's like, you're so far out there, you're so wacky in your thinking. Deliver us from this. And we realize we're not going to be delivered, that's why we're going to go into the end of this age and the problems we're going to have.

But we live in a horrible time. "In the latter days" – "in the last days," that's what this is talking about, "hard to bear times will come." It's getting harder to watch this stuff take place. Because when I see people put into a place of an office, you know that a majority have voted for them to be put there. I worry about the majority! I think, look at where things are going! How can so many have such mindsets that are so insane, that are so far out there from any soundness of mind?

And then, what does that do? Well, the positive side is that it stirs up a gratitude and thankfulness for God's Kingdom that's about to come, to know that all this is happening for a purpose and that it has to be manifested more in the world so that the world is going to be able to see more clearly why things had to happen as they did, that mankind has to experience this in order to be humbled ultimately. God doesn't just take it away.

It's just like the Apostasy. He didn't prevent us from having it. He could have stopped it, but that would have defeated the purpose and the teaching power and tool that it will be for the next 1,100 years. It's going to be one of the most important lessons ever taught to human beings, that even with God's spirit, just because you're in the Church and have been impregnated with God's spirit, doesn't mean that you can't fall asleep, doesn't mean that you can't turn away from the truth. Because there are going to be a lot of people who do, even then. Incredible!

For people will be lovers of their own selves. The ultimate selfishness. Today, people might as well just wrap their arms around themselves. How much can you reach around? Carrying these things around all the time. People love themselves. You watch these poses and things that people do, and it's like, what is your life? Sad. It really is sad.

Hard to bear that the world is getting that bad, technology that has provided the means for people to become more selfish, to turn more inward, which is farther and farther away from thankfulness. There is no gratitude in that. It's just total love of self. That's what this is talking about.

...for people will be lovers of their own selves, covetous. Because you know what? When you get into that kind of a black hole that's sucking everything in, that kind of selfishness, it creates covetousness; they're wanting more because they're never satisfied. That's why drugs are so bad. People want a certain feeling, and they can't have it, so they want more. And it's like it's an insanity of the human mind.

...boasters. Lifting self up. It's about self, you know, wanting to be out there, wanting to have millions of viewers that are watching them because their life is so important.

...proud. No humility. Just total haughtiness and pride, but no humility. Boasters. And if you get in their way, look out.

...blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful. And that's, almost as it were, if you will, a summary, unthankful. Because that's the fruit it produces. That's the kind of mind ingratitude produces. That's why there is no consideration of God in a picture. Because they don't see any need whatsoever.

...unholy, without affection, natural, if you will, or family affection as the word is, has to do with here. Things that should be more normal and natural in human life. And today we've seen that in ways because of technology, things that people can do, change their sex or whatever, try to, what kids are shown as normal. They're trying to show these things, that this is normal in life. You think, no, it isn't. It's not normal, it's unsound. But that's how far the world has gone.

...without affection, in other words, **unloving, trucebreakers, false accusers, without self-control.** Those things are out the window.

...brutal, despisers of those who are good, those who are striving to do something that's good or right.

...traitors, willful, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. By far. Sad world.

...having a form of godliness. Some can still profess this in the world, but even this is to God's Church. This is written to God's Church. It's about God's people. And it's a warning, especially as it says, in the particular times we happen to live in now, at the end of an age.

...having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. The only ones who can deny that power are those who have had access to it. So, this warning continues on until Christ returns. That's why we're to take it to heart ourselves and to understand how to combat it and fight against it. A lot of it has to do with asking God for a mindset of being thankful and understanding the power that's there on a spiritual plane in the mind.

...but denying the power thereof. It says, **From such, turn away!** So again, up to each one of us and our desire to do that.

So, in short, we're to become more thankful toward one another and toward God, and that's what our prayers ought to be this next week, asking God to see that and to do that, to live that, especially at the Feast this year more than any other Feast in times past.