Persevere to the End, Pt. 3

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This time of year, and especially on the Last Great Day, as it draws closer, again, I can't help but think of those who have left God's Church, who have been perhaps disfellowshipped from God's Church. But again, those who every year when it's mentioned around that time of year, there are those who will end up fully rejecting God and His Family. And it's good to think about His Family as well, because when God is rejected, when Joshua the Christ is rejected in that sense, and people go to do something else, whatever it might be, it involves people in the Church.

And so, I can't help but think of those who have rejected me as a minister, who have rejected you as their friend, if you will, and family member perhaps. I can't help but think of those, all those who have been given opportunity to be awakened during the period of Laodicea, after Laodicea, had that opportunity and then again ended up refusing, in that respect, turning against Joshua the Christ, turning against God's Church, and the fellowship of God's Church.

It is a very disheartening thing to have to go through every year when those things take place. So, we're addressing some of these things before the Feast, and some of it will be addressed a little bit later, depending on when you hear different sermons.

So, in God's Church, we're to come to see and understand the reality and pain due to those who have not persevered – Because that's the title of this particular series we're going through, *Persevere to the End*. Today is *Part 3*. – and also why and how this occurs, so that we're deeply committed ourselves and we understand the seriousness, the severity of making wrong choices.

I think of some of the old examples, or I should say examples in the Old Testament, that we can learn from and be admonished by. And we're going to go through a rather long one here today in that respect. But again, there are lessons that can be learned on a spiritual plane. I'm always amazed at how much more we can learn through, and have learned through time, of various stories in the Old Testament, that though they were very physical in nature to them and what they went through, there are things that God has given us to understand and see on a spiritual plane that can be helpful and encouraging to us. So, we're going to go through one that we have recently touched upon in another series, but it's about…

Well, let's just turn over there. 2 Kings 18. It's the story of Hezekiah.

So again, we've touched upon some of his story, and probably a little bit again here today as we refresh ourselves as to the story, but it's a very incredible story, if you will, of all that he went through in a period of time and what happened toward the end of his being king of Judah. It shows some things that we should be on guard against ourselves on a spiritual plane, to recognize the length of time. It takes a long

time to go through this process of having our minds transformed, of receiving God's way of life, of living God's way of life, and there are things you just can't let down in.

And that's one of the greatest dangers of all, is letting down, is getting to a point that I call coasting. There is no such thing as coasting. And that's a dangerous state, especially as we get closer and closer to the end, because it's the human tendency to do that, to begin taking it easier, to begin coasting. And it comes very close to being, and is for some, the same thing that happened in Laodicea. And those kinds of things we have to be on guard against. And that is a spiritual matter.

So, always on guard, always alert, never a time to let down, to let up, and to recognize the dangers that are out there and the dangers that can happen in our own mind and our own lives if we begin to let down in the things that God says we're to be alert to and to make sure that we're doing. Because we can't do this on our own. And those lessons are there over and over and over again.

So again, when recently we went through this story of this king of Judah, going to revisit some of that story now. And that was in that sermon about trusting and having confidence in God.

2 Kings 18:1—Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. So, it generally brings in the north and the south here at this point of time, and the things that took place as far as the kingdom was concerned. So, it gives the timing of those.

He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. So, as we covered in that previous series, what an amazing thing at that age to become the king of a nation. Absolutely incredible. But also, there is a lot of training and preparation that takes place for that kind of thing in the first place, and did here as well in his life. But to think about that kind of responsibility is… I think of the disciples and how young they were when Christ began to work with them. I think of how young Christ was. But I think of the disciples that followed him, they were younger. And you think of being in your mid-twenties doing certain things, incredible, having such responsibilities that were given to them very early on.

Verse 4—He removed the high places and broke the sacred places, cut down the wooden images. In other words, places of false worship and so forth. And to think that those things were happening in Judah at different times and even had been a part with Judah for a long, long time in many cases, that weren't fully taken care of or addressed with previous kings, if you will, not even King David or King Solomon in that regard. Some things that they didn't address and take care of, but he did. So, what a king here in the things that he began to do at the very beginning, at the outset.

It says, **He broke in pieces the brass serpent that Moses had made.** So again, we discussed this in that series. Seven hundred years later, from the time they were in the wilderness and the serpents came around and killing people. And we know the story. Amazing! But it was still here, seven hundred years. To

me, that's a little mind-boggling. Seven hundred years, that same device, that pole that had been made that Moses had put up, that God told Him to do with that snake wrapped around it, and there was still a sentiment and a feeling toward it. Things are passed down.

That's what's amazing about nations and history, and especially in times past. Because today we can go and think we're doing good research, going back and looking at history in the past, and yet a lot of it's been changed, a lot of it's not even true. A lot of it has been… This is what people do. This is what nations do. This is what kingdoms have done. They have rewritten history. Sometimes they try to totally erase everything that's any kind of evidence whatsoever. And some of the best things sometimes that are a matter of the things that are found in archeology that weren't destroyed, that give people a better understanding of what was actually happening at a particular period of time.

So, I look forward to a time when some of these things get cleared up. And what's incredible is… Can you imagine living in a time in that last hundred years? All of earth's history is going to be there. Everything that really happened, there are people who witnessed it. There are people who lived it. And might be a time, too, when things are really made right in the sense of history, because it doesn't have to be made right during the next thousand years, and so God may allow that to continue on for a time, for a purpose, and people being able to share in that, in the excitement of doing some of that. Because it's going to be exciting.

So anyway, what an incredible story, seven hundred years, things that are passed down, things that nations are doing today, things that we still have to this day, many hundreds, a couple thousand years later.

…for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it. It was a religious object to them. Burned incense to it. Why was that allowed? Why others hadn't addressed it before then, I don't know. You have questions in your mind. How did that slip by? Did it slip by?

…for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it and called it Nehushtan (a thing of brass). Indeed, that's all it was, but they were burning incense to it for a purpose. What was up here wasn't totally right, obviously, and he recognized it. He was moved to do this, to address it, to get rid of it, destroy it once and for all. And you know that just like any relic like this that there were replicas of it and a smaller version that people had in their homes, in their possessions. That's just the way human beings are; make a copy of it.

Verse 5—He trusted in the Eternal God of Israel. That confidence in what he was doing, trusted in God, and what he had learned. **…so that after him was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.** Easily said here in that regard because the rest of them didn't take care of even that one item alone. What else slipped by that hadn't been addressed, that people got by with in doing, perhaps in some of the groves, in some of the trees, some of the things they had done, and how they did

some of these things as far as false worship was concerned. So, he was going about trying to clean things up. Awesome! Striving to set things right.

For he held fast to the Eternal. And that's what people do, have to do if they're called of God. You have to hold fast. That's a good expression because it doesn't just happen, it's something you're doing. You have to actively do something to hold fast to it. To hold on to something with all your being? It's not just a phrase, it's not just a couple of words, or a phrase in this context of things here, it is something to live, it's something to live by.

Hold fast to what you have, to what you know about God, because it's easy to lose it if you allow it, if you begin to coast, if you begin to take it easy. If you begin to just kind of wait to see what happens, to see how it might turn out, to see…maybe not fully convicted of certain things. You get to a point where you become weaker and weaker and can go to sleep spiritually. And if you're asleep for a long while, that's an exceedingly dangerous state to be in, truly is, because you're not going to be able to keep going that way. Just doesn't work. After a time, it'll be exactly what happened to Laodicea: you get separated from God because God won't allow it. He doesn't accept that. You have to hold fast with all your being, truly.

For he held fast to the Eternal; he did not depart from following Him. I think of all the people who have departed from following God. Let down, let up, and then the inevitable finally happens.

…but kept His commandments. This is at the forefront in the story flow, and it should be in the forefront for us. Desiring to keep God's way of life, to keep the spirit of the commandments. Not just on a physical plane by any measure, but to go way beyond that, to understand what every commandment means spiritually. Because that's what it's about. It's about the mind. It's about how we think. It's grasping and comprehending things spiritually. Not just the physical act or the physical thing of breaking a specific commandment, and what that means.

I think about murder. Not to kill others. Think, if that's all we get out of that, we are sad, and we're sadly mistaken in God's Church. Because that's pretty simple to understand. No, you shouldn't do that, but to understand what it means on a spiritual plane, this has happened a lot in God's Church since I've been in it, let alone over the past two thousand years. It's a spiritual matter when it comes down to spiritual life because it's the most important thing of all. To be begotten of God's holy spirit, to have that life within us, is far beyond physical human life. We can die, God can resurrect a person and give them that life, give them opportunity for that life, I should say, but if that life goes, it doesn't come again.

So, when we have opportunity, when people have opportunity to be begotten of God, to have the impregnation of God's spirit in their life, not yet born, what a horrible thing when they are taken advantage of, when they are hurt, when certain things take place because of what was done to them that they begin themselves to become so discouraged or so despondent to what is true and right that they depart and leave, do something else. So, we have responsibilities toward one another.

I think of all the things we've gone through, it takes God's spirit and a lot of help and a lot of strength of that power in our lives to keep going through the worst of times. And that's what we all have responsibility to do. And that's in every person's part. But I think of the first time when I began to understand what it says in Ezekiel and so many places about those who were given responsibility to serve God's people (speaking of the ministry), because it wasn't about the old prophets and so forth, it was about the ones later on. And their condemnation was about the blood of many that was on their hands. And that's happened in God's Church during the Apostasy. They're responsible for large numbers of people, in some cases, going astray and losing out.

That's what it's talking about. It's talking about spiritual life. It's not talking about a physical life that they were out killing any of God's people. But to do it spiritually is far, far worse because that's forever. And sometimes in God's Church, we haven't taken those things as seriously as we need to, to grasp what's at stake.

…but kept His commandments. There's a lot to it. Have to know what they are. Have to understand what they are on a spiritual plane. **…which the Eternal had commanded Moses. The Eternal was with him; he prospered wherever he went.** So, it says Almighty God, the Eternal, was with Hezekiah in all that he was doing throughout his service as a king over Judah. Powerful! But he had a struggle toward the end, and this is a part of the story. He had more to learn.

And sometimes we go through various things, and we have more to learn. And you know what? It isn't over until it's over. And when we're being molded and fashioned to be a part of God's Family, to be in Elohim, so often there is a lot more to learn. And God will help us to learn it. Whatever it is we need to go through in order to be fit into that Family properly so, and not just into the Family but especially in the beginning framework of that Family, into a specific place in the Family, because it's all been preplanned, predetermined before time, the structure of God's government.

So, Hezekiah had more to learn. It was a dangerous course that verged on being right on the edge, if you will. It's a good warning because these things have happened over and over and over again in God's Church, what he went through spiritually.

The story begins to unfold in 2 Chronicles 31. So, Hezekiah cleaned up the land, built up the Levitical system again, and the people responded by pouring out great offerings and wealth to the house of God and for its service.

And then we come to **2 Chronicles 31:20—Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Eternal, his God.** What a beautiful thing to be said about anyone, to do what is right before God, being worked with by God as he was. So, he did what was good and right and true before the Eternal, his God, because he was striving to please God. Because it says he trusted in God, He relied upon God, He believed God, and the things that had been given to him. And God worked with him to mold and fashion him. Awesome.

And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered. See, the reality is there are lessons to learn here. You can't do it half-heartedly. We have the expression, to be half-hearted in something. No, if we're going to do it toward God, it needs to be with our whole heart, wholeheartedly. That desire. Are we going to be lacking in certain areas? Well, sure, because we're carnal human beings. But we should strive not to be.

We should have something that's already in our heart and in our mind, this is what we want, this is what we chose, we chose it when we were baptized. That's when the choice was made. A covenant if you will, with God, was made at that time. Incredible! And yet it's not taken as seriously in many ways as it should be because we're incapable at that point in time in many regards. But that conviction should still be there so that it helps us as we press forward, as we ask for more help from God to keep pressing forward. Because it's a battle. It's a long, long battle. But it has to be, should have been a determination from that point forward, "This is it. There is nothing else. I am God's. I belong to God."

"He did it with all his heart." That's an awesome thing that's said here. A heart like David's, if you will. That's where his heart was. And "So, he prospered." Why? Because God was at the forefront, and God blesses His people.

We might go through a lot of things, but we are so richly blessed if we grasp it. Going through hard things is a part of change. Going through hard things is a part of a transformation in our being, in our minds. Because without those hard things, without those difficult things, there are things we're never going to come to see and understand and grasp to the depth we do except by those things we experience.

God doesn't just flood our brain with knowledge and understanding. The understanding comes with experience. You have to go through things to get the experience. And then, as you choose those things, that's what becomes wisdom that is in unity and oneness with God Almighty, because your mind is set in a certain area and you're in agreement with God in that area. And that's wisdom. Because you've chosen that and it's you, it becomes you. It becomes who you are. But to keep that in the forefront, to keep and hold on to it, it takes God's spirit. It's not just a one-time thing; it's an ongoing thing in our life, and we need that power, that fuel, that life in us to keep it alive. Otherwise, it can fall asleep, it can become lethargic, it can drift and die.

2 Chronicles 32:1—After these deeds of faithfulness… So, it goes on with his story. It goes on to say, **Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and entered Judah.** Here he is, a king that's spoken of so highly, no one like him again and no one like him before. It means what it says and what is written there. But God allowed Sennacherib to enter in and begin destroying parts of the nation. Incredible what was taking place here.

…he encamped against the fortified cities. So, this was beginning as they were going down toward Jerusalem. That was the plan, to conquer the nation, the rest of those nations of Israel, if you will, not just the north. **…he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself.** There is a being that does that, and God allows it. That's the spiritual part to understand. Does this mean that because he was being faithful, he was being zealous toward God; in essence, his whole heart, as it says here, was dedicated to God, and he was obedient to the things that had been given to him, does this mean that God was going to prevent Sennacherib from coming down or that He should have?

Anyone going to judge God according to that and why He allowed this to happen? Was it a part of something of molding and fashioning him even more for things in the future? Thus, was it indeed valuable for this to take place for his sake, because God Almighty was working with him to produce certain things in his being, to give him opportunity to grow?

So, we go through things, and God allows things in our lives that sometimes are very hard to go through. But they can be the thing that makes us, that completes us, by going through it. Just by the thing of persevering to the end. If that becomes more deeply set in you, that's a powerful thing on a spiritual plane that God can bless and give in the mind that is set.

Because it's about becoming set in this way of life, at one with God, regardless of what happens to us in life. Because our life belongs to God. I've known of too many people who, in essence, unwittingly, foolishly so, have judged God, that "This isn't right," or "That shouldn't have been done this way," or whatever, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. "This shouldn't have happened to me because why is God letting me go through this if this is…"

Why did we have to go through the Apostasy? What's going on? We didn't know in the beginning. We didn't know that we were in an apostasy at the beginning, as soon as it happened. We had huge phone bills back then, $450, whatever it was, more in some cases, I think, some people had, because we were on the phone on a constant basis with other ministers trying to get something organized. "We've got to get this… People are hurting out here. They need help. Look what's happened to the Church! Look where so many ministers are going and what they're doing now." Incredible.

God didn't save us from that. On the contrary, it was for our benefit. It was for our benefit. We have had the opportunity to experience and live through some of the most incredible things of the last six thousand years on a spiritual plane. What is the value of that? You want to place a value on that? I wouldn't trade it for anything. It was excruciatingly painful up here. There are things you can go through and suffer physically, but after that period of time, I became more deeply convicted that a battle in here is far greater than anything you might suffer physically because of God's truth, God's way of life, and holding on to what we've been given. Incredible, the things we go through sometimes.

And so, we have to address them as they come. How are we going to do it? How are we going to look at it? How are we going to respond? And sometimes, people begin to ask questions, "Well, why… If I'm in

God's Church, why do I have to suffer like this?" And not understanding there is so many times it turns out to be the greatest of blessings you could ever have in your life in that regard, because of what it can produce that can't be produced any other way.

To me, it's such an awesome thing to grasp and understand what we have, what we've been given, to grasp how God works with us in the human mind, and what we have to go through in order for this to be transformed. It's not a simple process. It's not a snapping of the fingers and all of a sudden we're given everything we need. No, we have to live it. We have to experience it, and we have to keep making the same choice over and over again. God first. God first. God first. God first. God first! That's what we have to do over and over and over again.

And every time you do that, you draw closer to God Almighty, you become stronger inside. You truly do. You become stronger inside. It's something that helps make us and creates something within us that can't be created any other way. It can't be given by knowledge. You can't have it that way. You have to experience it and make the choice, "This is what I want, regardless of what I go through, because I understand this is good for me." Do I like it? Do I enjoy it as a physical human being? No! But I treasure it because of what it produces. Because this is what it's about. It's about becoming a part of God's Family. And of all people, by this time, we should see this very powerfully so.

And yet, in the following year, there are going to be people who are going to be gone. I hate that! I hate it! I oftentimes, not just every once in a while, but I oftentimes think of the song, "We walked to God's house side by side, and counsel blended sweet." Thought we were truly friends. And then find out, we really weren't, or it changed at some point. And hurtful as it is, you hold on to what you have and thankful to God that if you're able to keep going forward, to thank God for that. To hold fast? To thank God for that. And the others, they made a horrible choice.

Think we have a lot to learn yet about the judgment of God and about becoming part of His Family. It's not… Again, I've said it so many times, but to really see it and understand it spiritually? It's not owed to anyone. And only each person, as they're given the opportunity, can choose, want it, desire it, and choose to fight for it with all of their being. Because you can't take anyone with you. I've learned how to pray differently in those regards, in that respect. Sometimes you desire something for someone else, but you learn, very deeply so, "Nevertheless, not my will but Yours be done." Because if it's for the purpose of learning something from it, then so be it, whether it's for me or for others, we go through a lot of things to get where we're going.

And sometimes people make the mistake of beginning to find fault with God or the Church or something else. And you can't give it to anyone. God tries. God has sacrificed to give us everything. Joshua sacrificed to give us everything. But you can't give that choice. It's something each individual has to make themselves. Awesome!

And so, to go through things, to see different ones go by the wayside, it's a horrifying, painful experience. But I become more deeply convicted, we should become more deeply convicted only those who truly choose and want God and fight for it can receive it. Because God can't give God, Elohim, to just anyone.

So, **Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself.** Lucifer out there desiring to do that. Satan. The Devil. His desire is… He knows everyone who is a part of God's Church. He knows our weaknesses. That's why we have to fight on a spiritual plane, stay close to God, and know what the weapons are so we can stand.

I think of someone I saw something today that blew my mind. It didn't blow it really, I guess, to be totally blunt about it, but it's always, even though you see it, you think, what a horrible thing. Someone, who some time back was put out of God's Church, went off on a tangent, has written a book. Totally demonic. Totally demonic. Went from having the opportunity of God's way of life, knowing the truth, having the truth, able to have opportunity to grow in a sound mind, had fellowship with God's people, have eaten with him many times. And yet the mind, to go so far off base into weird religious ideas and perversions. Absolutely, totally demonic. That's what can happen when people quit this way of life. Doesn't mean all choose that or go that route. But to think that other things in between are all okay? No. It's not all okay.

Painful to understand what people do on a spiritual plane. I think of Joshua, what he went through, and to treat that in a sick and perverted way? That gave opportunity for someone to be baptized and receive the impregnation of God's spirit, and then turn against it. It's not a small thing.

How many will come out of that? How many will have the ability when it's before them? In my mind, I'll just be totally candid, every time I go through something like this, I believe it's less and less. The carnal mind is a horrible thing. It's an evil thing because it's so selfish, so inward. We should hate that in ourselves, loathe it. Because it's a battle to fight against it, let alone what's out there in the world. We have to fight against this and the battles that can come into the mind and keep rejecting and keep saying no and God first, God first, God first.

Now, when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him. So, that's what you do back then. Why let them have access to anything that's going to be of help to them? So, this is why they did this. Awesome!

Thus, many people gathered together who stopped up all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, Why should the rulers of Assyria come and find much water? "Don't make this easier for them. Do all that you can."

Verse 5—Then he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken… Do we see it? This is what you have to do. You have to strengthen yourself, build up the wall, make sure it's always fortified. I

think of right after everything happened in the Apostasy, and I think of the stories and the things that we related to so well about rebuilding Jerusalem, about building up the walls again. When they were allowed to come back down into Judah again, and the things they went through for so many decades afterwards, and the battles that they had to fight in order to build up the walls again. And yet that's what we're supposed to do spiritually – all the time to be on guard, to be alert. Because there are enemies out there.

And this is what these nations had to do. Nation after nation. They had fortified cities all over the place because of other nations. Because there are always different ones out there, they want a piece of this and a piece of that, and they'd really like it all. And we have it again today. Insane minds that are no different from WWI, no different from WWII. The same kind of minds! They don't care about taking life and destroying their own people in that battle as long as they get what they want. I mean, that's why you're in your place, isn't it, so you can do all this and have that ability to do it. It's insanity. But that's the way mankind has been for six thousand years. Go conquer this. Go conquer that. Just build a bigger name for yourself. Amazing!

Then he strengthened himself… Spiritually. God says that about every one of us, that that's what we're to do, to strengthen ourselves, know how to do it, know why we're told to pray day by day?

…built up all the wall that was broken. We need to make sure there is not something broken, make sure everything is fortified. And where we find a weakness, to work on that. That's why we've had the sermons, to know what the one, two, and three weak spots are on the wall, so that you fight those things above everything else. Because if those aren't closed up, those are the areas you're going to fall in the easiest. Then you can go and repair the others as that gets taken care of. You can move on to other things, and you become more and more refined spiritually. It's a beautiful thing if we see it that way. So, this is what he's going through on a physical plane.

He raised up the towers, and another wall outside. So when you've built, build some more. When you're drawing closer to God, seek to draw closer yet. Build up more fortifications in that regard, become stronger. When scriptures talk about having on the right armor and understanding this is a battle and a war that we're in, this is a battle for your life. And if we don't recognize we're in a war and in a battle? Everything you do in resisting things that are in the world and the pulls of the world, things that come into the mind that are not of your mind? You think things like that don't happen, that you're broadcast to, that things come into the mind that are not yours, and to understand, you reject any thought, any thinking that's wrong. That takes God's help to be on guard like that and to realize everything is… This is precious, what's in here. God's spirit, God's life. And we want it to be there every day so that we're close to Him and can fight the battles we need to fight.

Also, he repaired the Millo of the City of David and made weapons and shields in abundance. I don't think I wrote it down here anywhere, but I think that was a place where they're… of water and so forth

that they wanted to have for themselves. They had to have that for themselves and had to do with something in that part in the city of David. And because they were stopping up everything else, they had to make sure they had plenty.

"And made weapons and shields in abundance." So, we have to see it as a battle. We have to see it as a war. And if we let down, if we let down our guard, if we let down spiritually, if we don't stay close to God and we're relying on this, you're going to stumble, you're going to do some stupid things. Hopefully, not so stupid that it pulls you away.

Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, Be strong and courageous. Love when you go into Joshua and read the things that are there. "Be strong and of good courage." That's what we have to do, realizing this is a battle and we are to be strong. Not in our own strength, yet we're to put as much into it even there, knowing that it comes from God and work toward that in seeking that. And courageous. God gives us that ability.

Do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria. Before anything that comes at you. Doesn't matter. What's coming, we know it's going to be horrific; we just don't know how horrific it's really going to be. We can have knowledge of it, but to really experience it, we'll know when we get there. Be enough for its own time.

But we know it's coming. You look at the news. I was looking at some different news articles, thinking about reading some more of them today, and I thought, "Nah." Talking about things that are going on, and it's just openly talking about different nations are preparing for war. It's openly talked about. They know that's what they're doing. They're preparing for war. Everything that has to do with what's going on with Russia and Ukraine right now, Europe is preparing for war. They're preparing for a great battle.

Poland has the third-largest army now in NATO. They're building it up as much as they can, fortifying everything they can because they know what it's like to be up in that neck of the woods. They've received it from both sides before, from the Germans and from the Russians, and they get squashed. It's like this attitude of mind, "Never again." That's kind of how they're feeling. This isn't going to happen again, so they're preparing for a war.

And you think, they're only behind the greatest of military in NATO, the U.S.. The next? Türkiye. What a horrifying thing, Türkiye has the second-largest army in NATO, military. And you think of what they're going to do before this is all over with. They're already doing it, you know, in that respect. Think, sick, sick, sick. Who is smoking what when they let them into NATO? I mean, seriously, what insanity, what absolute insanity to let them be part with the ideas and beliefs and so forth that they have, to know the treachery that can be there, that can take place in that part of the world, in the Middle East?

I'll tell you what. This world is so sick. Truly is. Great Britain, right now, they're at a point… They're at a point almost of a civil war, and people are ignorant to it. They don't even know what's coming. But it's building up more and more even there because they've lost their nation.

I don't know how many of you know what's really going on over there in Great Britain. It's not great anymore. It's hurting. It's ready to go down the toilet, it really is. I candidly think and feel it's a blessing can't go there. That's how bad it's getting there. Sick. Two religions there that don't mix. Two belief systems that don't mix, and it's starting to show now. It's starting to show all over Europe, but Great Britain kind of receiving the brunt end of it right now.

And so, they've got a group that's starting to swing to the right because they see what's coming. Strong swing to the right. This is starting to happen in different places in Europe. It's happening in Germany so much so that it's a threat; the Germans feel like it's a threat. This one party that's getting more and more popular, and so they're almost, as it were, calling it… I wish I could think of the term. Trying to, as it were, to outlaw the group as being something that's harmful to Germany. Weird what's happening in the world this time around. So different in that regard, things that are happening.

Anyway, this world is so close. What's happening with China, the games they play. Everything they've been doing for several decades now, they're about domination; it's about taking over the world. That's where their minds are. And for them, they believe time is on their side. They look at time a little bit differently than we do, as a whole. And then you get a leader who is getting older, and sometimes they might want to push that up a little bit. Like the one in Russia, he's getting older, but he wants it back, the U.S.S.R.. Incredible!

Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of the king of Assyria. So, we don't fear what's coming. It's a fearful thing that's going to happen. It's not going to be pleasant to go through. But we know what's on the other side of it, and it won't be too long either, because when certain things happen, the only thing that can stop it is God. And that's why God is going to intervene in the manner He does and when He does. Because it's a timely thing. Because if it goes on, there wouldn't be anything left.

Do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitudes that are with him; for more are with us than with him. Awesome! Beautiful! And as a whole, we have no concept for what God has given to protect us, to be there for us, to help us when it's needed, when it's really needed for a particular purpose. So, when we go through what we're going to go through, that power is going to be all around us, truly is, that comes from God, that's been commanded by God Almighty. From Joshua as well, obviously, because he carries it all out.

Verse 8—With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Eternal our God. And that power that He gives, even in the angelic realm, to be there. **…but with us is the Eternal our God to help us to fight our battles.** That's the way it is. If we have a battle and we're looking to God's will being done, whatever needs to be accomplished, whatever needs to be done, even if it's death, it doesn't matter; we've got it

made. And sometimes that's hard for some to understand and see because those of 144,000, we don't know how many that we have from area to area, but there are going to be those who are a part of that. And those who at one time who weren't going to be, who are going to have the opportunity now. Persevering to the end.

Then the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah. After this, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sent his servants to Jerusalem (and he and all the forces with him laid siege against Lachish), to Hezekiah, king of Judah, and to all Judah who were in Jerusalem, saying, Thus says Sennacherib, king of Assyria, In what do you trust, that you remain under siege in Jerusalem? So, it started, and it was mild in one respect; it could only go so far because God intervened. And we read a lot of that story already.

Verse 11—Does not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves over to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Eternal our God will deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria? So again, we've gone through this recently, and we know what they had to say, and yet, yes, God was going to deliver them.

Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars? Shows you how much people really know, even about us. They don't understand. They can't know. He didn't grasp and comprehend what Hezekiah had done. They didn't know anything about God, really, when it came right down to it. They had their different gods, and to them, everybody else had different gods, and it's like… They can only see on a physical plane.

Let's drop on down to **verse 14—Who was among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand?** So, he's bragging and saying no one has been able to deliver others from us, no gods could. **…that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Now therefore, do not let Hezekiah deceive you or persuade … his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?** Well, he was barking up the wrong tree, so to speak, didn't know what he was saying. Didn't realize, no, this is God you're messing with. Anyway, and he brought God into the picture, and we know how some of that story went by what we went through earlier.

Verse 20—Now, because of all this, in other words, what Sennacherib had said about God, **King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven. Then the Eternal sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria.** So, as we've read in 2nd Kings 19, it stated 185,000 were killed. That's amazing. You think of the numbers of some of these armies, and here was this army that had come down, and 185,000 in this military that God just wiped out. Incredible.

So, he returned shamefaced to his own land. Then, when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there. Thus, the Eternal saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all

others, and guided them on every side. Then many brought gifts to the Eternal at Jerusalem. So, seeing this, this massive army destroyed, what they experienced, and knowing that he had gone back and they had come through this kind of defeat as it would have been without God's intervention, they're rejoicing. They're excited. Other nations are excited about what has happened and transpired here because the Assyrian army, in essence, has been destroyed. So, it took a lot of pressure off of a lot of other areas as well.

So, it says, **Then many brought gifts to the Eternal at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was exalted**… Not a good thing. That's why, when people at a Feast of Tabernacles would begin to clap and so forth for Herbert Armstrong, he told them to stop; he put an end to it. Because he knew what that can do to a human being, that your mind can get raised up about your own self-importance. And so, he fought against that. He knew the dangers of that kind of thing and spoke out very powerfully against it.

And we see the opposite mind that said, "Come on now, you can do better than that!" What an amazing thing to have experienced both, to see both things take place within the realm, the environment of the Church of God. I think it's awesome! Because to one it was in his head, in his mind, and he was so haughty and so proud and so lifted up that he "sat in the temple of God as though he was God." Awesome, to understand that on a spiritual plane. And to see the other who was fully humbled and filled with God's spirit and understood the dangers of allowing just a teeny bit, just a little bit of that to come through.

And that's the way every person should think. Never, ever, ever to allow yourself to be lifted up or to want to be lifted up, because that is one of the greatest dangers that has ever taken place in God's Church, people who wanted to be lifted up, people who wanted to be looked up to in some job. "Who's going to bring the cookies?" We were talking about that before services here. "Who is going to bring the cookies?"

Because I think of some up in the Toledo area that even after we'd been diminished to what we were and had very few people, there were some in the group who still wanted to have people who were parking in the garage on the Holy Day. And it's like, we have so few people and it's such a huge garage, if people don't know how to park their own car by now, we are in a mess! I mean, that shows how far the mind goes because, like, "Well, everybody has to have a job. Some need to be greeters at the door. We still need to have greeters." It's like, we're so small. If we don't know each other really well, we've got some huge problems going on, you know. I mean, really.

It's all about pride and haughtiness and being lifted up. The very thing we should run from with all of our being, truly. And I'm going to tell you it still exists in God's Church today. Not to the degree that it has been in times past, but every once in a while, sometimes certain situations happen where it's easy to succumb to that kind of thing, to being seen, to wanting to be seen, to think that's a… Whatever it is that

happens in the mind, to be seen by others as doing something important. Don't ever want that. Don't ever want that. And if it's ever there, repent, because it's sin.

So, it got Hezekiah. This went to his head. Took it to himself. He shouldn't have. He should have known better. But he was weak in this area, and he succumbed to it for a time, and he had to go through some things because of it. An interesting story as we go along here, how this all developed and why it went the way it did. A lot to be learned here, there truly is, on a spiritual plane, because it's happened in God's Church over and over and over again. It's just many haven't escaped that. He did.

So, it talks about, let's see here, **verse 22—Thus the Eternal saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. Then many brought gifts to the Eternal at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was exalted…** It means that he was raised up in his own eyes. That's what it means, raised up in their own eyes. That's what the word literally means.

…exalted in the sight of all the nations thereafter. So, he was lifted up because of what the nations were doing. Not that he was so great, by the sight of the others, but it's his response to this that's important in what's written here.

In those days, Hezekiah had been sick and near death, and he prayed to the Eternal. And He answered him and gave him a sign. Awesome! It's amazing what God has done at different times. And this was powerful, an incredible thing that took place.

Verse 25—Hezekiah rendered not, means didn't repay, **according to the benefit done to him, to the favor shown him.** So, it's telling something that happened that transpired here. So, it kind of goes back and forth a little bit, but it's to teach what transpired from all this and what had taken place because of his being exalted. There is something he had to go through and learn. God was working with him to mold and fashion him, and so there was something he had to come to see and understand in himself. And so, he did go through this as it talks about.

In times past, this has been misused a little bit, misinterpreted because of something that was said by a minister, and the time when I heard, I thought that's still an incredible lesson to learn that we should render according to the benefit that God gives to us. But that's not really what happened to Hezekiah in the sense of the truth of the matter, because it made it sound like that he failed totally at this point. No, he didn't.

It says that Hezekiah was the greatest king, in that respect, of Judah. There was none like him afterwards nor before. It means what it says.

So again here, **he rendered not according to the benefit done to him,** favor shown to him, **for his heart was lifted up. Therefore, wrath…** And I hate this word, the way it's translated. People don't grasp when they see things about God, when it's written about God, God being a jealous God. Yes, but you've got to

know what the word means, and it's about what He fights for and works for to protect, to esteem His way, His truth. And when people turn away from it, thankfully, He is jealous toward it in that regard, of upholding it and raising it up and showing its importance and magnifying it until this is all accomplished.

And so, this is an example here of judgment. When it has to do with something of this nature, it's about judgment, the righteous judgment of God, because there comes a time when there needs to be the execution of judgment. Does that mean that God is angry to the point of being so infuriated that He's ready to strike out at everything? That's the way the world paints this, and they just don't understand God. They truly don't. They don't grasp the kind of love and the mind, and where it comes from. But because He is God and because He has given certain things, certain things have to be done.

That's why not everyone can become part of Elohim. It isn't just thrown out there so anybody can have it. "Oh, I'm sorry I did that. I shouldn't have done that." And then they don't change. Yeah, they want what's there. They want something, but they don't want to have to do anything to get it the right way. Because it has to happen because this changes.

…for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath… In other words, yes, displeasure for the choice made. I have displeasure when I see someone leave. I don't like it. It hurts. It's painful. I wish they hadn't made that decision. Am I pleased with it? No. Displeased? Yes. Duh! We should all be displeased. It hurts. It's wrong. It shouldn't have been done. But it was their choice, and it brings judgment. That's what this is about.

For me, when it happens in God's Church, I have no other option but to say you're disfellowshipped. That's judgment. It's a matter of judgment being carried out. Did I want to do it? No. Would I love to see them repent before it ever happened? Yes. Once in a while, it happens. It's happened more in the last five years than all the other time I've ever been in God's Church (incredible), people who will and have been repenting.

…therefore, wrath was looming over him and over Judah and over Jerusalem. Judgment because of what he did. Pretty tough when you have that kind of responsibility, that kind of power, and God is displeased with it because it was so wrong to do that. That's what the displeasure is in. Wants to see him get back to what he needs and should have been doing.

Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. This is the story. And then it goes on to tell things that happened. But this is putting it all in a nutshell, what happened from the moment that some of this started, and people began to give presents and begin to esteem him, and so forth, and he took it to himself. He was exalted and raised up in his own eyes.

"Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride." He learned a lesson. He finally came to see how stupid it was what he had done, and he repented. That's what we do when we have sin. When we finally see

what we have done, when we really see it, we repent, which means we change, we turn from it, we become convicted of something far greater, that this is never going to happen again.

So, **he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** So, they were a part of this as well in that respect. And that's the way it so often happens. But they responded **so that the wrath,** in other words, **the judgment of the Eternal did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.** But it was a time that was numbered for Jerusalem because…and it wasn't just because of what happened in the time of Hezekiah, but that was a part of it. But it's a matter of a space of time and what Judah did back and forth, back and forth, maintaining the Sabbath, things about the Holy Days, and things that they would observe, but letting down at times and doing other things, mixing other things with it.

And then another king would come along, like Hezekiah, and set things right, and then another one would come along like the next one who's going to follow him, who does some of the most hideous, sick, perverted things that had ever been done in Judah. Though he did repent toward the end, if my memory serves me right.

So, it talks about here that in essence they all repented (that's what this is about), as a people on a physical plane, for what they could grasp and comprehend because they saw, and Hezekiah was an example in this, because he spoke what he lived and shared that with others. When wrong was wrong, done wrong, something was done wrong, let it be known. That's how it's done.

So, it didn't come upon them in those days. So, this flow is a little awkward, verse 25 here above this. It's not stating something that happened in the past, but it was about to happen because of the additional fifteen years that God had given to him. And so, it's bringing all this together and showing what happened from the beginning of it to the end of it. So, it's simply stating a matter of a fact that was yet to come and be fulfilled.

So, in times past, again, I think of how this has been represented in the Church, and it hasn't been totally correct. So, what happened? He was given a sign, it says. So, here is where the story needs to be picked up in **2 Chronicles 32:24**. Again, **In those days Hezekiah was sick and near unto death, and he prayed to the Eternal; and He answered him and gave him a sign.**

Now picking up the story in 2 Kings, okay, because this is how the story actually goes. **2 Kings 20:1—In those days, Hezekiah was sick and near to death. Then Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, Thus says the Eternal, Set your house in order, for you will die, and not live. Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Eternal, saying, Remember now, O Eternal, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart.** That's saying a lot. "I have walked in your truth and with a loyal heart." **…and have done what was good in Your sight. Now Hezekiah,** it says, **wept bitterly.**

Now, it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Eternal came to him, saying, Return and tell Hezekiah, the leader of My people, Thus says the Eternal, the God of David your father. I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day, you shall go up to the house of the Eternal. So, he's letting him know here a timeframe of things that are going to take place.

Then I will add to your days, fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. So again here, a wide berth timeline here of things that are being covered. The other was more of a summation in what was going to come to pass. This is bringing it altogether.

…and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David. Then Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. Now, have to be a little careful here, people, because sometimes if we're not careful, we'll say, "Oh man, if I ever get something, I want to use some figs because it'll do this," and it's kind of like that pole and a serpent on it. It's just a matter of obeying God. We don't do that.

I've known people talking about doing that. That's not what it's talking about here. It's not talking about there is something mysterious that God has created that's inside of figs, and that all we have to do is put it on a sore and we'll be healed. No, no, no, no, no, and no. You obey God. And if you obey God, what do you do? You call on the elders of the Church. But you don't add to that going and getting a bunch of figs. Okay? It's a matter of relying on and looking to God. Are there some physical things we can do for ourselves in various things? Yes. Figs isn't one of them.

And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What is the sign that the Eternal will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the Eternal the third day? Then Isaiah said, This is the sign to you from the Eternal, that the Eternal will do the things which He has spoken: if the shadow go forward ten degrees (of the sun) **or go backward ten degrees? Then Hezekiah answered, It is an easy thing for the shadow to go ahead ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward by ten degrees. So, Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Eternal, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.**

Now, what an incredible story. What had to happen for this to take place? Something had to move, and in a pretty big way. I don't grasp that, but I know for God it's a simple and a small thing for Him to do. Was it the sun? Was it the Earth? I don't have the foggiest idea. But I know God did it.

Going on. Now, this all appears to be the time here between when the vast army of the tens of thousands of Assyrians were killed, and the time that Sennacherib was killed, and it goes on here and says, **At that time Berodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and** it says **a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah was attentive to them and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious**

ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all of his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

Dumb. Not smart. Knowing what nations are like and showing them everything you have? So, this is the time when Hezekiah's heart was lifted up. So, we're coming down to the story on this. This is the period of time of some of this taking place now.

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, What did the men say, and from where did they come to you? So, Hezekiah said, They came from a far country, from Babylon. Isn't it amazing who came down and took them later? That God allowed to be the ones to conquer them?

Then he said, What have they seen in your house? So, Hezekiah answered, They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Eternal: Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Eternal. So, what an incredible thing. All purposed and planned by God. Do you think God doesn't have the power to accomplish such incredible things of a story flow? It wasn't at the last minute, and finally deciding, "Uh, we'll let them go into captivity for seventy years and bring them back. I better probably ought to do that now." It was all planned and purposed, and that it would be Babylon who would do it.

God works with people and with nations within a framework of what He's designed, and we have choices to make in living within that framework. The praise and the honor and the glory and the righteousness is always God Almighty's. Awesome, to understand it.

"Nothing shall be left, says the Eternal." So, we know it's going to be some time later, but it's still going to happen because Israel to the north went first, and then a lot later here, and then finally Judah did in time, yes.

Verse 18, going on, **Now, they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, The word of the Eternal which you have spoken is good! For he said, Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?** So, can understand some of that. It's not going to happen now, but it will happen in time.

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Hezekiah rested with his fathers. Then Manasseh, his son, reigned in his place. And that's a whole other story. The most wicked of the kings that ever came along, in that respect, in the things he did.

So, indeed, Hezekiah skated so close to the edge. He allowed things to go to his head. All the tens of thousands, the 185,000 dead, people sending him from different nations praises, in that respect, and

valuables and things to be given to God and the house of God, and so forth. But again here, and then Babylon comes down, and he lets this go to his head. Here they're coming to see him from far away with all the majesty that they bring with them, and generally, some pretty good gifts when they visited a king. But it went to his head.

So, we're always to be on guard against such a thing, to fight such things, because they do come into the mind of human beings. You know why? Because that's what God tells us and warns us about. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." It's the most powerful thing in that regard as to how we think as human beings and look to ourselves rather than to God and placing God first. It's what gets in the way every time someone begins to move away from God. Every time, without exception.

So, Hezekiah's life is summed up at the end of what is recorded in 2 Chronicles 32 as it shows all the wealth and what God had blessed him, and all of his accomplishments to better Judah and Jerusalem. And God worked with him in a powerful way throughout his time, and indeed, it means what it says, "There was no king like him after and there was no king before him like this." So, on the contrary, that "he didn't render according to the benefit," no, there was a period of time when he didn't, when he let things go to his head. He didn't live like he should have. He didn't think like he should have. He allowed something to get in the way. And that was sin, and he had to repent of that.

And God worked with him in a very powerful way to learn that lesson. I think of some of the things that David went through to learn some of the things he needed to learn. If you remember some of the stories, he had to go through some pretty rough things to see himself, and God showing him who he was and what he had done at different times.

2 Chronicles 32:31—However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him. From Hezekiah. So, this is backing up a ways. **…in order to try him.** What an incredible thing that God would back away. Has God ever done that in the Church? Has God ever done that in our life? Happen on occasion? You don't know.

…in order to try him, that He might know all—all—**that was in his heart.** God is going to know us inside and out before He'll allow anything like Elohim becoming a reality. So, we have to go through different things in our lives, we truly do, in order to be changed, in order to be transformed in our thinking. And God was working with Hezekiah in a very specific manner, powerfully so, to teach him, to help him to learn.

"In order to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart." Because the reality is, I saw this so much during the Apostasy, how incredible that event was, that so often in life we think we would do a certain thing under certain circumstances when it comes to a relationship with God. But there are certain events that bring that to a reality, to know what you will really do. Because so often we really don't until we're there. And God has to know what will you do? What is your true choice after you've

had this time to grow, to change, to be molded and fashioned? And pulls away and says, “Okay, what are you going to do now?” Awesome! Truly awesome.

…that He might know all that was in his heart. Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David. Now, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then it goes on to talk about this Manasseh reigning in his place.

So, quite an incredible story about perseverance, about battles we have, and about all the things that can happen within the range of those battles. And above all, God has to be first, and you persevere, and you fight until it’s over.