

Made Stronger Through Fasting, Pt. 3

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I thought I would go ahead and make some announcements here, kind of bring everyone up to date – so that this is also going to be kept there for Australia, New Zealand, and Europe.

Anyway, this past Sabbath I had to cut things short because there was still carpet residue even though it was some time back that they've changed out all the carpet there at that hotel where we were in Chandler, Arizona. And anyway, it's one of those things. If I can't do it, I can't do it. Because of that particular chemical smell, whatever it is, it messes me up royally.

Anyway, we were down there, we went ahead and drove up to (not very far) the Scottsdale area. Wanted to begin working on some sermons for the... Well, I was going to kind of focus on the Feast but I realize I need to focus on right now, which means the sermons coming up for the next several weeks to carry us through all the sermons that are going to be over in Europe as well because we're going to be over there for a little bit of an extended time, and I wanted to have all those complete and ready.

Also, I had to figure out some juggling here as far as who hears what and when so it's not confusing, and making sure that everything runs smoothly. And that's not an easy task. I have to do that for the Feast but this one here was harder, so it took me longer to figure all this out. It's going to be a little harder for Europe because I start by speaking in the Netherlands, and then I go to Great Britain, and it's not live over there so they're not going to be able to hear it at the same time. Although, I could probably try to work something like that out.

But anyway, it is something where each of them is going to have to listen to something different each Sabbath. And, of course, when I'm there they'll be listening to me.

But anyway, I thought I'd mention that I have five sermons that I was able to get together completed and that is exciting. I know where all the rest of them are going that'll carry me up through the middle of July. And so, I've been able to really focus well on all of this and get a lot of this done. Hopefully, sometime then later on, perhaps in July, I'll be able to begin really zeroing in on the Feast and the sermons that are going to be given this year, because I have no idea what they are.

And I have more to say about some of the sermons here as we go along and how awesome it is that things fit together in the manner that they do, whether it be Pentecost or pre-recorded sermons and so forth, that I'll be referring to later on.

So anyway, just wanted to bring everyone up to date on that, especially concerning my experience last week, as I couldn't take the smells there. And if they do put down new carpet in the hotel where we're having the Feast I know I won't be able to be in there. I will hopefully be able to come into the area after the sermon is done if we're able to do it in our room.

And that's kind of what this is here today. I wasn't planning on giving this. That's why we sent out the email to everyone to let you know that indeed there would not be a prerecorded sermon played today, I'm saving that for later on because I kind of need to in order to get through all the sermons and have something working well as far as when we leave for Europe.

This is a hotel room and I'm probably going to have to get used to this. So, this is kind of a test run, I guess. It's not really a test. I have to give a sermon somewhere so this is as good as it might be in front of a congregation. Although, I do like feedback from an audience, and I don't have one here except seeing myself on the camera and the computer there. And that's not what I want.

So, we're now going to resume the sermon series entitled *Made Stronger Through Fasting*. This is *Part 3*.

As it's been stated from the beginning of this series, prayer is an incredibly powerful tool that God has given to us, and yet fasting that's coupled with prayer (because that's how it works) becomes even more powerful so that we can be strengthened in God all that much more.

And so, as I mentioned last Sabbath, that's something that everyone should want and desire with all their being. So, hopefully, that raises our thinking and thoughts toward the process of fasting and the need for it. So, not just at a time when we're calling for a Churchwide fast, like we are for next Sabbath or the weekend of that Sabbath. Because it doesn't have to just be in the Sabbath, it can be Friday, Saturday, Sunday, in through there, ever how you want to do it. And that's up to each individual. So, giving a little bit broader time there because of everyone's schedules and trying to make it a little bit easier. But at least it's for that weekend.

So, anyway, fasting empowers our prayers. And that's what we need to grasp. It empowers them, it magnifies them, and the strength of God's spirit in us if we do it correctly. And that's why we're going through this particular series addressing some of the things we are. Because it has to be done correctly, it has to be done in a right spirit, in a right attitude, in a right frame of mind, and that's something we don't automatically have. That's something we have to pray about at self, that's something we have to ask for help in, and to work on it.

It doesn't just happen. It's not just going through going without food and water. There is the thinking and a mind, and an attitude connected to all this that we need to grasp, that we need to comprehend, that we need to exercise in our lives.

So again, next weekend is our Churchwide fast.

We ended in *Part 2* covering the importance of the lesson and need for humility in our life that the Day of Atonement teaches us. It's very powerful to understand what we're being told, and yet it's not so easy to grasp. Even though we talk about it, even though we know what the word means, it's something that isn't easily done, and candidly, can't be done correctly of and by ourselves.

Again, our need for God's help, our need for God's spirit so that we can even address that in a right way, so that we can go before God and ask for that right mind of humility. Not just a basic understanding of it and going without food and water. It needs to go beyond that in our thinking and how we approach it.

So again, a big part of all this is to understand what it means to afflict our lives, which means more than simply, again, going without food and water. And as we brought out, as it was discussed, that word in the Old Testament, "afflict," it's associated with humility, with being humble or seeking humility. They're used interchangeably. It's the same thing because it's what we're doing in a sense to our own human nature that doesn't like this.

Who really is excited about fasting? ...in the sense of going without food and water. Now, we should be excited when we realize this is a spiritual thing for us, this is a matter of drawing closer to God. And so, in that respect, indeed, it should be exciting, but in the mind in the thinking, in our understanding. But as far as the human nature and the body, we're just not made to go without food and water. We need it. We want it. We crave it. We desire it. And there are great lessons in that. We desire it. It's what we want. It's what we feel we have to have. And we do need it, but all the more we need that which is spiritual from God.

But for us, again, it's a very physical thing when we talk about food and water, and those are great lessons. That's just not a natural thing. And humility in our lives is not a natural thing. Afflicting ourselves spiritually is not a natural thing. It's a struggle. It's something we have to exercise even on a spiritual plane because we have to ask for God's help to do it in a right way.

So again, to afflict ourselves spiritually is about humility and learning to recognize and fight against pride. Pride is very hard to see. We think we see it as a whole. But the more you grow spiritually the more you grasp that there are aspects of it that we just can't see unless God helps us to see it, which means there are things in us of how we think that are a matter of pride. It's just a matter of how we think.

Because, candidly, as a whole, we think we're right as human beings. Our thinking is right, our way of looking at various things is right, our way of judging various things, we tend to think is right. And yet that's not true. There is so much of that that has to be changed. And that becomes more complicated because it's in the mind; it's deep in the mind and in our thinking because of our makeup and what we have been all of our life – carnal, selfish human beings. And if we think that we see all that, we deceive ourselves.

That's something good to think about and ask God about. What is it I don't see? What is it I'm not grasping? And ask for mercy in that as well.

So, there are things we think we see about ourselves that we don't. I think of different situations that happened within the Church and various things that come up where carnality tends to come out of us more than that which is spiritual, even when we think something is being done or said in a spiritual

manner, and it comes out as being, sometimes it can come out as being a little carnal. But so often we don't see those things.

And therein is the dilemma. We need God. We have to have God in our lives to see self, to be able to repent, in order for the mind to be transformed, because it's a matter of thinking. And to be transformed means we're coming into greater agreement with God which means we're seeing things in our self that we disagree with, that we know have to be changed.

So, what has to be changed in you? What needs to be changed in you? What is your battle? What is your battle in the mind, in thinking and how you do things, how you judge things, people, as an example? These are the kinds of things we need God's help in. And that's where we have to go and ask in humility, especially during fasting, for God to give us the help to see how we think toward others, how we judge others. Because we tend to do that, obviously. And therein is a great caution we should have in our thinking, especially within the Body of Christ.

So, humility is a matter of learning and then coming to know that we need God every day in our lives. To know that! It's learning the process, it's learning what we're talking about here, and becoming more convicted of it, "Yes, I need God more. This needs to be a daily thing in my life that I'm doing," when we talk about prayer and needing God.

It's a spiritual matter to know, as the outline of prayer reveals that we need daily bread. And we don't receive it unless we ask for it. If we don't pray about it on a particular day do you think you're receiving God's help? He says to do it on a daily basis. That's what Christ gave us and told us, need to do it on a daily basis. So, if we do something and we think that God's in it and we're doing various things and somehow we're living right, well, where is God in it that day if we're not asking for help, if we're not asking for His strength to be able to see various things in ourselves in order to fight against them, things that need to be changed.

So, we need daily bread, we need daily water, we need living water, we need God's spirit in us. That's just a fact. But it's something we have to see and be deeply convicted of as much as, which fasting teaches us, "I want drink every day. I want water every day. I want food every day, and a few times during the day."

Let's turn over to John 4. Very simple. I've referred to this oftentimes but it's good to review it, to think about it. **John 4:9—Then the woman of Samaria said to him...** So, this is about the woman at the well.

That's why I love the book of John. Because it goes through and reveals things about human nature, carnality that is without God's spirit, and that one cannot see the things of God without God's spirit. It's impossible. So, that's the way it was with Nicodemus as Christ talked to him and had that conversation with him in John 4, the woman at the well. I said John 4, I think. John 3 for Nicodemus. John 4 here for the woman at the well. John 6 when it starts going in and talking about Christ saying that he is the bread

of life and that we have to drink of his blood. And that's when many quit following him because to them that was sick because they knew that was against the law, to eat blood, to drink blood.

So again here, things that just so far out as far as the mind is able to think when it comes to that which is spiritual that God has to give.

Then the woman of Samaria said to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink of me? That's just something that wasn't done. Here is a Jew asking a drink of her. **...which am a woman of Samaria?** So, the difference between the gentiles then in the respect, and the Jews as a whole, there was a separation and how people oftentimes are to other peoples of different races or different backgrounds or different nationalities.

And people tend to think they're the better, they're the best. And some do it very badly in that sense as to how strong that kind of an attitude is and look down upon others around them. Sick, the human mind. Again, this matter of judging until God opens our minds and helps us to see the distortion, the perversion of that kind of thinking.

...which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. They don't talk to them. They don't have any dealings with them. So, that's what she's addressing here. She's surprised by the fact that he even asked. "Why would you speak to me, a Samaritan woman?"

Joshua answered and said to her If you knew the gift of God... "If you knew the gift." Now, we can read this and miss it, part of what's really being said to us. Because what's being written here, what Christ had to say to different ones, it wasn't for them at that time. Even the disciples, there was so much they couldn't grasp, and they had to wait until Pentecost to really grasp it, to begin to see it, for it all to come together in their minds because they needed God's spirit for that.

So, they were being drawn over a long period of time there, three and a half years, whatever. And so, they were being drawn, but to see it and put it all together, they couldn't. John 14, when Christ said, talked to them about he's coming again, and where he goes they can't know, and if they've seen him they've seen the Father. It blew their mind because they were looking for something physical. That's all they could grasp.

That's why it's so incredible that we see the things that we do. That's why I speak so often of the truths that we have. Others can't see them. The scattered Church can't see them. They don't even grasp and comprehend that they've gone through an apostasy. And yet on a physical plane, you think that would be so easy, simple to grasp and understand. And in so many ways it really is so it's kind of without excuse. And that's a matter of judgment that comes later at different times here as well.

But again here, we understand, we see so much, but the only way you see it is because of God's spirit. And the only way you can keep it is because of God's spirit. And so, if we begin to become weak and quench God's spirit and that flow isn't coming into us like it should, like it needs to to give us life, and we

begin to quench that... Just like pinching off the umbilical cord to a growing baby, it'll die. And that's what happens to us if we let that happen through whatever it might be, even a Laodicean spirit, because that quenches God's spirit. It can't flow in that, through that.

So, again here, what an incredible thing to understand what we've been given. All the truths we have. Everyone who has ever left, doesn't take long, they're being lost before they come to a point of leaving, but after they're gone, go right back into the world, whatever they want, whatever it is they desire or hold onto pieces of it with just knowledge, knowing. How hard is it to grasp Christmas is wrong, Easter is wrong, to maybe want to go ahead and keep the Feast of Tabernacles on their own because that's what they've been doing because they understand that there are things in the Old Testament that are right, just as the Jews do. But God's spirit isn't there so what does it mean on a spiritual plane? Nothing.

So, lose portions of it. But in order to feel better about themselves there are certain things they do. And sometimes if we're not careful we can go through the motions of various things, even like fasting or prayer or whatever to feel better about ourselves. That's been done a lot in times past within the Church.

So, going on. So, **Joshua answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God...** Do we know it? Do we grasp in depth what God has given to us in the end of this age? Do we believe it with all of our being, to grasp all the truths we have, what we can see spiritually? Awesome!

...and who is it that said to you, Give me to drink? So, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it was that said to you, Give me to drink?" So obviously, she didn't know him. She didn't know that he was the Messiah, that he had come at this point in time to be the Passover of all mankind. She couldn't know that. So, the disciples in time learned that, they came to see that, but they had to grow spiritually in all that to see it with all of its might.

So, "If you knew the gift of God." What is that? Well, it's what God planned for mankind that comes through the Messiah, that comes through Christ, that comes through our Passover, that we have.

So, **If you had known who said to you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of him.** So, was this for her, or was it for us? It's for us! To know the gift of God? Do we know it? Are we deeply convicted of it? Do we grasp the treasure we have?

Because I am sickened when so many people leave and don't grasp the gift that they were given, that they have in their hand. And yet treat it like they do in time. What horrible choices human beings can make. And yet it's happened to the majority who have ever been called by God. Happened to the majority. And it's not over yet!

"And you would have asked of him." Why? Because we're told to ask! We're told to ask for God's spirit to dwell within us. We're told to ask in the context of repenting of our sins because we know that we need to be forgiven of sin in order to receive of God's spirit because that's according to God's will.

So, to ask anything according to God's will is what this is about, which is about salvation, which is about change, which is about conquering and overcoming this and becoming stronger spiritually. It's about producing fruit and changing of the thinking in our mind, being transformed in our thinking.

"You would have asked of him." Because Christ then explains those things later on talking about the importance of asking, like he did in John 14 and 15, and in through there. Ask! And if we don't ask we can actually deceive ourselves into thinking we're okay, we're doing okay, even if when we don't ask.

...you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water. The holy spirit. But we have to ask, and we have to understand what it means to ask. It means that we have to be repenting of sin. Because it's a matter of understanding where that holy spirit comes from and then it's a matter of God the Father and Joshua the Christ living and dwelling in us that enables us to dwell in them, to dwell in the Church, to continue on in the Church.

So, seeking God's spirit to ever be dwelling in us means we have to keep alert to pride that resists that life. Because human pride resists, resists God, resists God's spirit. It just does. That's why humility is so important. Because as we raise ourselves up, if we raise ourselves up, if we think we are better than certain things and our ability and we justify various things in our thinking, perhaps about judging others or whatever it might be in our life that we do, or other sins that we know we have, that's a matter of pride and it resists God's spirit. When we sin we're resisting God's spirit, we're resisting the life of Joshua. We're resisting the very purpose of why he died!

So again, seeking God's spirit to ever be dwelling in us means we have to keep alert to pride that resists that life, that spirit life that we're given. The way of pride, human mind, just carnal human nature.

So, we tend to be self-reliant. We rely on self. We truly do. Not praying and fasting as we should reveals this spirit of pride, that spirit, that spirit that resists God, and lack of believing in Christ. For we need his life and the life of God the Father living in us.

So, there are some very basic scriptures that speak about pride and spiritual self-reliance that come to mind whenever going into this particular subject, especially then as we talk about fasting. Yet it's a battle to yield to those simple things. It's a battle. They're very simple and very clear things we should be doing and how we should be doing, but again, it's the mind.

Let's notice Proverbs 15. Again, simple things here but they're not so simple. Again, scriptures we've heard of many of times before, but to live them, to exercise them, to practice them?

Proverbs 15:31—The ear that hears the reproof or the rebuke, the correction **of life will abide among the wise.** Well, what does that mean? Well, it's not just talking about human wisdom because what's that worth? All we have to do today is turn on a TV, perhaps some news program whether it's to the right or to the left or somewhere in between. And then there's all this commentary that goes on of

people who consider themselves wise. And people ask others, "Oh, you wrote a book on the subject. (I'm in awe.) What do you think of it then?"

And it's ugly; human nature is ugly. That authoritative kind of attitude and mind. But it's not real wisdom, it's just the wisdom of human beings, what they come up with and what they feel good about as far as knowledge and what they think is understanding of various things. And yet true wisdom comes from God. It's a matter of God's spirit and the mind, the word of God that comes into our mind. That's where all wisdom is.

That's why I love things in Proverbs here because it's given in different ways at different times. But one of the ways here when it talks about that word or that life, God's spirit, the word that comes alive in us, wisdom, it comes alive within us, it has to come from God to be truly alive and have that kind of life in it.

So, "the ear that hears reproof," rebuke and correction. That's what we have to do. We have to be willing to hear it. We have to be willing to think about the fact that we're not right in everything. It makes it harder then when someone else tells us that. It's like we don't want to hear that. We want to hear that we're right, to be in agreement with what we think and how we think.

So, "The ear that hears reproof." If we'll actually listen. It's not a matter of just words, it's a matter of the thinking. Do we really listen?

So, **The ear that hears reproof**, of rebuke or correction **of life will abide among the wise**. So again here, there's a wisdom in that on a spiritual plane if we grasp what this is when it comes to whether we are living God's way of life or not, whether we hear a sermon and realize there are things in here that I need to address and change. If we will hear what God gives to us and then seek to change then we can be among the wise with that same mind that comes from God, be convicted of what is true.

He who refuses instruction, as to refuse chastening, if that be the case, a correction that's given in whatever way it is. It doesn't feel good because it's in the mind. Physical correction if it's given by human beings to others can be hard, whether it be words or whether it can be literally something physical that's done to someone, those things hurt. But that which has to do with God's way of life and that kind of correction, when God is correcting us of things, do we hear it, do we listen? Do we hear what God has for us?

And then if we do, if we're praying about it, if we're asking God for help to see it even and to understand it and to come into agreement with it, well, that's a spiritual process. But if we refuse it? And that refusal doesn't mean that we have to...that we're taking a stand, it may be just a matter of shrugging it off or just not even listening, or just of... Well, anyway.

He who refuses instruction despises his own life. So, when it comes to God's way of life, if we refuse what is being given to us, like Sabbath to Sabbath, Holy Day to Holy Day, if we're not hearing it all, if we're not really plugged in, if we're not really seeking that help and praying to God about help to be able

to drink in? Because you're not going to drink in spiritually of things you hear even in sermons or of the truths that are there unless you have God's spirit in you, unless you're crying out for God's spirit to be able to drink. It's not just a matter of it being poured into our minds, the spirit, food, the bread and the water just being poured in up here. It's a matter of something of the thinking that has to take place.

He who refuses instruction despises his own/their own life. It's like people who won't listen, people who leave who won't... Because that reveals it in a very powerful way. Leave. Definitely you're not hearing. Definitely, you're not listening. And what is the answer to that? You just hate your own life then. What a horrible thing! You don't really love live that God has given to you and what you can otherwise have, an abundant, joyful life filled with peace. Why would we want something different?

But that's what happens in the carnal mind when it gets weaker and weaker and goes off on its own because it thinks it's right. It's so insane.

But they who heed reproof... Whoever heeds reproof... Especially when it comes to what we're talking about here. Because we're talking about spiritual things. We're talking about that which comes from God. Proverbs is about wisdom that God has to offer us, His word, His truth.

But whoever heeds reproof... Again, it's always going to be a matter if we hear something and we're growing in it and we haven't seen it or there's a change that needs to take place, it has to take place in the mind. That's what transforming is about. It's about changes that have to take place in the thinking.

So again, **Whoever heeds reproof gets** (acquires) **understanding**. So, what an awesome thing! You have to start doing something. If we hear it, we start putting it into practice, we start going through the motions of living it, trying to do it. It might be something simple and basic in the beginning, which is generally where it starts, of not working on the Sabbath, of not working on Holy Days, of tithing, and so forth. And the more we do that the more we come to understand it, the Sabbath and the Holy Days, tithing and the purpose of it, and the beauty of God's plan and God's purpose in all those things. And then on and on it goes.

But things aren't just funneled in up here because of God's spirit. It's something we have to put into practice or prove as the scriptures talk about. And that's how you do it, you exercise, you do what you're told, you change something. It might be a matter of getting a shot. You don't understand that but you're going to do it because that's what we were told. And so, we go through the motions of doing it. Or putting it on or putting it off. I'm talking about make-up and stuff.

So, we learn moderation and we dress properly, we start dressing differently in order to be in unity and oneness and we begin to understand it after a while. We begin to see it. We begin to grasp why God says what He does because we're coming into a greater agreement with Him. And this is a matter of understanding. And then it is a matter of as we become deeply convicted of that, we begin to understand it, that we become convicted of it and it's ours, it's wisdom that's in our mind.

Knowledge, understanding, wisdom. The understanding and the wisdom can't be piped in here. It has to do with choices we make.

The fear of the Eternal... That's something to grow in. Because that can prompt us as carnal human beings, urge us, motivate us to be cautious, to beware because we don't want to be cut off. Because if we have grasp and understanding of what it means to go against God, that's a proper kind of fear, it's a proper kind of reverence toward God because we wouldn't dream of it.

It starts with a kind of fear because you don't want the alternative, of being put out, of not being a part of the Body. Those things should scare the you-know-what out of us, that we don't even want to get close to that!

And so, we want to live by, obey the things that God gives us. We want to be in unity and oneness. And that has to do with a proper fear and reverence toward God because if we don't fear the opposite, if we don't fear what it's like if we do our own thing and what the end of that means, we're pretty much on our way out, we're pretty much gone.

The fear of the Eternal is the instruction or the chastening of wisdom. So, we should be able to understand that if we're applying various things that we're told. Because we fear not honoring God, we fear not glorifying God, we fear going against God, what God has said.

The fear of the Eternal is the instruction or the chastening of wisdom. Because to change in our thinking means this is going to have to suffer. Carnality, our way, "my way" is going to have to suffer in order to change. Because we don't like change. We don't want to change. We like the way we are unless we grow and continue to grow and come to understand that no, selfishness, I hate, I loathe it. And wherever it pops up I want to be able to recognize it. And the more we recognize it the more we can fight against it.

And before honor is humility. So again, which means to be able to receive of God's way of life. For God to lift us up, for God to give us more there has to be humility. And that's a great battle.

It's a battle going on in the Church. Some are fighting it, and some are not. And some are fighting it to various degrees in there. Humility. Seeking to see ourselves for what we really are, which has to do with our thinking and our motivations, and on and on it goes, how we think and where we think we're right. That can go a long way. Doesn't take all that far.

When we think we're right, and then we come to know that we're right and we can do whatever we want, don't need God's Church anymore. Insanity.

So, indeed the human mind can be or actually is so exceedingly stubborn, self-willed. We have to see that. And not only that we have to pray about it for God to help us to see it, to help us to see where

we're being self-willed, to help us to see where we're being stubborn in certain matters of our life, whatever that might be, and then...

So, is stubborn, self-willed, and resistant to listening to God. Which is more than just hearing the words. A lot of people in the last two thousand years have heard a lot of words. But it doesn't mean they've really listened in the sense of receiving it, for the sense of seeing what has to be changed, of what we have to change in ourselves, of what we have to fight against and pray about.

I think of this account here that we're going to look at next. We've looked at it before but it's such a good account to see something on a physical plane that we can be appalled at. It's kind of like in the beginning when I first came in the Church and heard stories about Passover and Unleavened Bread and the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, and then as soon as they got on the other side of the Red Sea they're murmuring and complaining. You think, "Man, hard-headed, stiff-necked. Gives a whole different meaning to it, doesn't it? It's like, how could human beings be that way after seeing something so massive?"

And then as we grow we begin to see that which we hated and what we saw them do we're guilty of on a spiritual plane. And we have to repent of those things then because our human pride is stubborn, stiff-necked, self-willed, we want our way. It's just the way we are, and we have to fight against those things as far as our thinking is concerned. And so, this is a good example in this area here about humility, humbling ourselves, or whether we're filled with pride.

And we can think, "Oh, how can somebody be like that," but if we can begin to see this is the way we are as human beings and it's not just a matter of the way Pharaoh was, it's the way our carnal nature is. And there is our battle. It's in us. It's not with others, it's in us.

And if we really grasp those things then others aren't going to affect us in the same way that so often they do, where we have problems in our thinking toward others and think that they should do a certain thing a certain way and it bothers us. And you realize like Christ said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." That's so much of how you deal with so much of that.

And for those in the Church, we have different levels of growth in one another, and we want everyone to succeed. We want everyone to be able to come through this successfully and to be on the other side of this in the right way. And we're going to be in different places in the sense of growth and the production of fruit and so forth. And we have to be careful then in all that process, that we don't lift ourselves up in the midst of all that.

So, anyway, Exodus 10. Let's read the story about Pharaoh. It's just before the eighth plague of the ten that came on Egypt. And this is plague after plague after plague. And we can look at those things and think, "How could anyone be so stubborn?" We are stubborn. Our carnal human nature is stubborn. It is filled with pride. And therein is the great battle. It's in us. It's not in others, it's in us. We have control to

a point as we seek God's spirit, but we can only control through God's spirit what's in us. You can't anyone else.

But within the Church, we hope that everyone can fight the same fight or grow in fighting the same fight.

Exodus 10:3—So, Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and said to him, Thus says the Eternal God of the Hebrews, How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? So, we can look at that and think, eighth plague is coming and here we are, all these others have taken place and it's like how long are you going to continue to do this? And we can be appalled at such an example of this, that a person can be like this.

But we have God's spirit, or we have access to God's spirit. Not everyone always has a full supply of God's spirit in them and may be quenching the spirit. And that exists in the Church. Because there are going to be more, and for that to happen that means that's what's taking place in some people's lives.

So, that's why I continue to cry out about these matters. The closer we get to the end the more this is going to continue to happen. We can be very, very, very close.

How long will you refuse to humble yourselves before Me? We just need to look at ourselves. Are there areas where we refuse to humble our self before God because we don't even see something in us? Do you think Pharaoh saw these things in himself? He didn't care!

And sometimes we can get in that frame of mind too, that we're going to services, we're paying our tithes, we're paying our Holy Days, we go to the Feast of Tabernacles, we do 'this', we do 'that' to... Anyway. And we can have a different estimation of our self and still be refusing certain things that need to be changed. Don't even see them!

That's why you have to ask God to help you see things you can't see so you can grow more. Only when you begin to see them can you then ask for help to fight against them, because then you can begin to detect and to see as God gives you the ability to do that, where the battle is and what it is you have to fight up here in ones own thinking.

Let My people go, that they may serve Me. Otherwise, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring the locusts into your coasts. So, plague after plague.

And I think of things that people go through and as they get weaker and weaker and then finally leave. It doesn't happen immediately at one point in time, it's been happening for some time in their thinking and what they're doing. And things happen in their life and ... anyway, can't even recognize that they're going through difficult things because they're satisfied with it.

That's the way the world is. You begin to be satisfied with the way the world is, you're in the midst of huge plagues on a spiritual plane. Truly. What a horrible thing to not see how evil, how sick, how ugly,

how perverted this world is. To think that somehow you can rub shoulders with it now and be away from God? Horrible.

Verse 5—They will cover the face of the earth so that one will not be able to see the ground. So, so many locusts, and sometimes this happens to people spiritually. They can't see something that should be right in front of them because of their stubbornness, because of their pride.

They will eat the residue of that which has escaped. Things don't get better, they get worse. They get worse up here. The battles that people go through, the things that take place up here, you have to almost come to a point, and some people do this, and they grow in this in their ability to do it, but to put everything else behind them, because otherwise there is going to be guilt. To the point, one can even accept Christmas and Easter.

Because otherwise, there can be something gnawing up here of something you knew at one time or had certain basic, at least, even then certain basic knowledge of (even though you don't understand it). You lose the understanding. You lose the wisdom. What a horrible thing!

So ...**they will eat the residue**, that which has escaped, **which remains unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field.** What a horrible thing to have the world and not have God. That's what we're talking about here. To have everything that's catastrophic that's in the world, all the insanity that's in the world, this insanity of religion that clashes, a lack of understanding, losing understanding of what it's all about, what God is doing. It just becomes the world.

They will fill your houses, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of the Egyptians.

Guess that was the only verses I had. But again, it's just to show here an attitude of mind on a physical plane that we can be appalled of, appalled at, and not grasp on a spiritual plane we don't even see it spiritually sometimes in our own lives, that same stubbornness.

So, have any of us ever refused to humble ourselves before God? Because that's what can happen so often because of pride. And yet if we refuse to humble ourselves, which is about a desire to more fully seek God, where is that desire? Do we have that deep desire in us to have God the Father and Christ dwelling in us? Because if we really do, if it's true in spirit and in truth, there are going to be certain things we're going to be doing regularly in our life. We're going to be asking the way Christ told us to ask.

So, resisting and fighting against our own human pride, again, is not all that easy. Takes God's help. It's not that easy to recognize so often, to understand it, to see it, because it's a spiritual thing. We need God's spirit to see it, to grasp the spirit of the mind that's wrong.

Because there is a spirit. That spirit essence that we've been given, that we were given at birth, that gives us the ability to think and reason, it's a spirit and it's a wrong spirit because it's a selfish spirit, it's a

carnal spirit (better said, a selfish spirit) because it's the same spirit that Lucifer had, that he came to. Became Satan, the adversary, the devil. It's the exact same spirit because it's one of selfishness.

And to see that, to deal with that requires God's spirit. It's not something you can do on your own, it's spirit. So, resisting and fighting against our own human pride, again, is not all that easy to recognize, and to be repenting of as we should be. It takes God's help.

There are things we must yield to, to do in other words, to practice in order to conquer pride and self-reliance. Because that's what we're doing, self-reliance, relying on ourselves.

I think of someone not too long ago that left and they're just totally relying on themselves, of their ability to study and read the Bible, and condemning others because they just weren't reading the Bible like this person was, like they said they were able to do. And others didn't want to talk about various... Why do you want to talk about various aspects? It's something you're to drink in from the Sabbath and from the Holy Days, but not from you. Is there something new you're giving? What is it? Why is it that people would want to...? Anyway, I don't even want to go there.

Let's turn over to James 4. So simple. So basic. Yet so hard to see because you can't physically, you can't carnally, you can't with our own human spirit. It requires God's spirit.

James 4:5—Do you think that the scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? See, "the spirit that dwells in us," apart from God, just our own; our own human spirit that God gave to us that's based on selfishness. Because that's what it is. The ability to think and reason and so forth, but it's all done to how we think, how we reason, about self, "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life," it's there and it's a spirit. And it takes God's spirit to conquer it, to fight it, to reveal it. To give the ability to even see it has to come from God.

"Do you think that the scripture says in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy?" Are those just words or do we see it? Do we grasp what's up here in our thinking, in our minds. So, it's a living thing, it's a spirit that dwells in us, in that respect, that has to be conquered.

"The spirit in us lusts to envy." Basically, lusts to have power, authority, wealth, self-importance, to be important. What does that mean? Do we recognize certain traits within us of our human mind that we have to be careful of and on guard against because they're not good?

There is one who was leading the church at one time that would speak to God's people and say, "Come on, you can do better than that," when they were applauding. And there was another that said, "No, don't do that." Something different up here, different in the thinking. So, one was yielding to God's spirit, and one was yielding to their own selfish spirit. Night and day.

Should be so easy for everyone in God's Church to see. But not in self. It takes God's spirit to reveal those things. When one is being filled with pride, when one is being a little too haughty, a little too self-reliant,

a little too lifting up one's own judgment. So again, those things are very easy to yield to because that's what we are without God's spirit. But we have to have God's spirit, and that's why we cry out for it, to fight against that, because we recognize the danger of it, the evil of it.

We're in war. We're in a battle. And it's a battle to change this in order to receive all that God has promised us, that He's placed before us that is so great, that is so awesome beyond comprehension.

Amazing so many don't want that, don't see it, don't hold on to it, don't fight for it. What do they have? Well, if they've gone too far? Because one can go too far. I wonder deeply about all those through time, the majority who have left, who have gone astray, because as a whole every one of them became an enemy to God just as Lucifer. Became an enemy to Christ. They became antiChrist. That's what that means. And that's the most hideous, evil, sick, perverted thing a human being can do, to turn against the very one who died for us, who suffered for us so that we have the ability to go before God to ask for help to change, for repentance and to become more at one with the Great God of the universe.

Why wouldn't we want that? But the majority of those who have been called haven't wanted that. They've wanted something else that's temporary. They wanted themselves to be right. They wanted themselves to be whatever, but not God's. So, how do you deal with that? Well, you can't. It's in God's hand, in God's judgment. And that judgment isn't going to be really too good for a lot. Because what does it mean?

That's why scriptures talk about, can you kill Christ twice? Can it be done in a spirit, in the mind? You know, there is a point where Lucifer came to because for him it was immediate because he was composed of spirit. And the moment he thought differently – forever. No desire. Because there has to be the desire.

Not because you want to live on, which some can do because that's what so often happens to human beings when they're dying and coughing and choking on the bed and whatever and are about to gasp their last breath and someone comes in there with some kind of a white thing around them with a big black robe and sprinkling water across the bed and you're forgiven, you're going to be in heaven now. You're going to be in heaven. You don't have to worry. Your family doesn't have to worry because he made it there in time to throw the water around and you're okay! Sick. Sick. Sick.

That's what people want to believe. That's what human nature wants to believe, that you can do different things and somehow it's all going to be okay. Well, it isn't going to be okay. God means what He says, and judgment is strong.

Ever since this past Feast, I'll tell you what, we're moving very fast in a particular direction, and I hope people can see it. And it's about things of judgment and so forth. It's coming and it's coming down fast. It really is. For the world, and for us.

And if we're striving to do what is right before God, we know we are. You can be at peace and thankful and grateful. But others who aren't or think you have it made in certain ways and because of false thinking here about certain things, that it's okay and you've gotten by with this for so long it's like, well...?

So again, "do you think the spirit that dwells in us, that it lusts to envy?" It's a spirit that dwells in us. It lusts to envy. That's what the battle is. Lusts to have power, again, as I said, authority, wealth. That's why we had so many struggles in the Church of people getting into battles over the littlest of things. I've given the example before where some people got in a battle because they wanted to know who's in charge of bringing the cookies and we've got to have the cookies, and this is a big thing.

So, let's get upset at someone else in the Church and have this divisiveness and squabble going on and just... Well, where was God's spirit? Well, it wasn't there. It wasn't active at all. But that's what can happen. Stupidest, littlest of things because people want power, "I want to be recognized."

I remember when we first had the Apostasy and started coming back together. And there were those in the group who wanted people... Here we are, what, a tenth the size of what we were? I don't know what the percentage was. And so small and yet some wanted to have people that would be in charge of, and maybe even them, to be at the door to be the greeters. Because we got to a point where there were greeters. And it's like, why do you need greeters unless someone is new? Well, got to the point where there was nobody coming along new as far as the period of time was concerned, of what was happening, and it's like, "You've got to have greeters."

And then if you have a Holy Day, we need people parking out in the garage. You think we're so small that would look so stupid, having a small little group out there telling people where to park and how to park. It's like, I can find an empty spot. I have to every time I take a trip when it's packed out there. Nobody's standing out there waiting for me to get there at the airport. Cincinnati is horrible!

But people thought we had... Because it's about power. It's about position, that people need these positions, and some can be (that are more important), can be serving in certain areas because they need to be, and "I have family that I really want to be in there doing some of that" or whatever it is that motivates people in their thinking. It's just sick, sick, sick.

Where is the humility? Where is the understanding of how God is really working with us in our lives in the Church? But there is such a basic lust to have power. That's why so many have wanted to speak in times past and have said, you know, come up and generally approach my wife and say, "I've been working on a sermonette, and I think it'd be pretty good for the Church to hear that." Or "I have a split-sermon." Power, to be recognized, to be seen as important. Where does that come from? Instead of things to be repenting of.

But He gives more grace. So, God is merciful to us. He knows. He created us. But we have to be able to be of a mindset that we want to see that in ourselves so we can change, so that we can repent of it, so we can have help and cry out to God for help. So, He gives more grace if indeed we are willing to yield ourselves to the process to receive God's help, to receive forgiveness of sin, to receive favor then and help of His holy spirit living within us, but we have to be doing what is right, living right before God.

But He gives more grace, wherefore He says, God resists the proud. So, there is something we have to do. God resists the proud, so we don't want to be like that. We don't want to be self-reliant. We don't want to be lusting after power or be seen as important or whatever it might be because those things are just a bunch of vomit that needs to come out of the Body.

...but gives grace unto the humble. So, that's what it's saying here. We can receive grace if we have right thinking, if we're seeking to be humble, which means we're looking at our minds, we're looking into our thinking, and we're seeing things that aren't right, we don't want those things that lift up or are "lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes," be a part of us. We want to be of a humble spirit and so we realize we have to ask God for it to fight the fight.

Submit or yield yourselves therefore to God. That's what it is. And too many haven't yielded themselves to God. Because that takes humility. No one would leave once they've been impregnated with God's spirit if they did this, if they truly submitted themselves, yielded themselves to God because they knew they had to have help to change. Are we all yielding ourselves, submitting ourselves to God to change, to grow, to grasp hold of humility?

Resist the devil... Because that spirit of selfishness it's the same spirit, and he has power. That if we yield to those things of the spirit, our own carnal spirit, selfish spirit, he has power to sway there and can pull and can influence and magnify our weaknesses to where we can move in a wrong direction. You have to fight.

Resist the devil, his ways, him, his ways, **and he will flee from you.** So, if we're yielding to God and crying out to God for help that being has no power. He has power in the world as never before because they're yielding to that more and more. So, he has greater power to influence and magnify the perversion that's out there. Within the Church, he seeks anywhere where he can do that, and individuals who are not yielding themselves to God.

So, herein is the battle, and that's why we have to have prayer, that's why we have to have fasting. We need fasting in our life on a regular basis. Every once in a while then to make sure we're doing that, which is a matter of seeking humility and seeking to humble ourselves before God because we know we need help.

So, it goes on to say, **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.** That's what God wants. But we have to do it. It's something we have to practice. It's something we have to exercise, drawing near to

God. He doesn't... After He's drawn us to Him in the beginning, then it's up to us to draw near to Him. He's given us the ability, He's opened the door, and it's up to us.

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." That's what we want.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners. That's the process. That's what it's all about. That's what we have to do. We have to repent of sins. "Cleanse your hands, you sinners." We have a sermon coming up later to focus on this even more.

...and purify your hearts—purify your hearts. What's in here. Does anyone need a little more purifying? Do you know where? Because you can't say, "Yeah, I probably do." Where? Can't just say that, you've got to ask for help so you can see something you're working with, where you need to have something purified. God can see things within the Body. I see things within my own, of things I need to fight, that I have to fight. But we have to know what they are to fight them. But I see certain things going on at times where people don't even see it in themselves, certain things that need to be purified.

Purify your hearts you double-minded. There are battles there that have to be fought.

Be afflicted. So, there are times to fast. **Be afflicted and mourn.** There are times to get in that frame of mind where we go before God and just pour ourselves out and "I know what I am. I know my thinking and I know... and I want to see more so that I can fight those things. Help me to see them." Because that's a part of the process.

It's not a matter of just beating yourself up and being like some like one time I saw in Mexico. And seniors went down there after Big Sandy, Ambassador, and we went to this one big church out there and this long... Just, I guess it was just flat stone all the way leading up to this church and this person out there beating themselves in the back as they were crawling along the ground in order to feel better about themselves, what they thought spiritually would help them to be closer to God. Think...?

But we can do that on a spirit plane, too, beat ourselves in the back, that somehow we can feel better about ourselves and we can go through the motions of various things in order to feel better about... Some people sometimes pray in order to feel better about... That's not why you pray. You don't pray or fast in order to feel better about yourself. "I did it, therefore, I feel better about myself. I'm doing that routine." That's not what it's about. It's about the mind, the heart, and what's inside of us.

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep! There are times that we should be able to see ourselves and just be honest with God. And sometimes to weep because the battle is so real.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning. There are times for that. A sober time. Fasting is a sober...kind of a sobering time, in essence. That's what it's about here. **...and your joy to heaviness.** It's not a time...

Not that one can't laugh when they're fasting, I'm not talking about that. But I'm talking about this is a time to really look deep at self and cry out for help to fight against this, in the fight against this.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. That's what you're to do when you're praying and fasting. You're humbling yourself before God and you're crying out for these things and these different things you're looking at in your heart with all of your being.

...and He will lift you up. So, God is the one who lifts us up spiritually, helps us to produce more fruit in our life. We shouldn't strive to do it ourselves. Sometimes people try to lift themselves up within the Church. Don't ever do that. Fight against that. It's a great evil, it truly is, and not conquered quickly, it'll destroy you.

Let's turn over to Joel 2:1. Can't go through a subject like this without talking about what it says here because this is pretty timely if we consider the period of time of some of the things being addressed.

Joel 2:1—Blow the trumpet in Zion. Well, it's to the begotten people of God, to those who have God's spirit. "Blow the trumpet." What's that? It's a warning. It's a warning trumpet in that respect. And that's what it's talking about, "Blow a trumpet in Zion." So, that's been going on for quite a long time in the Church. It's getting stronger and stronger. I hope we understand that.

And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! That's been going on for a little while now. A few years it's getting stronger and stronger.

"And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!" We should be alarmed that there are those who continue to disobey God, there are those who continue to refuse to seek God in their life, who refuse to cry out for God's help in their life in spirit and in truth from the heart because they know they need God, they want God. Some don't want that.

"Sound an alarm in My holy mountain!" We're getting close to the end now of this time of measuring of the temple. We're almost there. That's an alarm, that we should all take it seriously.

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; the day of the Eternal is coming. So, it is a literal time that God said would come, in that respect, on the earth, and we have more sermons coming that will be addressing this more directly.

For it is at hand, in other words, it is near. **A day of darkness and gloominess.** We know where we are in time. This means more to us than ever before.

Verse 11—The Eternal shall utter His voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for he is strong who executes His word, for the day of the Eternal is great. So, we're living in a time where God has started already executing His judgment on the world if we understand the process. Which, again, interesting where all these are going because we're going in a certain direction here in the sermons. And we're to see these things. We're to understand what's taking place.

It is exceedingly terrifying and who can endure it? Who can endure it in the world, and in the Church? We should know the answer to that.

Now, therefore, the Eternal also says, Turn to Me with all your heart in fasting, in weeping, in other words, even in sorrow as we see what human nature and what the world is like, **and with lamenting.** The more we have that kind of mind the more we want to see all this garbage in the world come to an end and God's government be established.

So, as it says here in **verse 13—Rend your heart, and not your garments.** It's not about the physical process here which they went through in their time. And even within the Church today it's not about just a physical routine. It's about something on a spiritual plane and it's about the heart. It's about our thinking in the deepest part of our being as to how we think toward God.

And turn to the Eternal your God. Do we need to turn more to God? Absolutely. Each one of us individually can turn more. We can do things in crying out to God, turning more to God. Some need that more than others.

For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness. And He relents... In other words, doesn't want to bring this but must. Doesn't want to see people leave the Church, but it must happen. If people don't live what is right there are certain things that must happen, just as much as they must happen in the world.

He relents of the evil. In other words, an execution of His judgment that's coming on the world. And within the Church, it's been going on for some time.

Isaiah 57. Let's turn over there. We'll just start some of this and I'll close here today. But Isaiah 57 because this leads into deeper understanding about a fast on a spiritual plane, especially within the Church of God, and things that we must really be focused upon, the things we're to pray about, of things we don't see that we're to focus upon so that we can be drawn to and God can reveal to us so we can see them, so we know... We have to know the battles. We have to know where they are, truly.

Isaiah 57:10—You have been wearied in the multitude or the vastness of your way. Now, this is talking about others and how they are. Especially, we could use this in the Church then, "You have been wearied," for those who aren't living and doing exactly what is right, in talking in this respect then to others around.

But it says, "You have been wearied," made to be wearied if you will, "in the multitude, or the vastness of your way." So, here is the carnal human nature that mankind has. It's the carnal human nature Israel had. It's the carnal human nature that we all have even within the Church. We still have it. There are things that have to be gotten rid of here. And if we... It's basically addressing here the more that someone relies on themselves, in essence, "You have been wearied in the multitude of the vastness of your ways."

So, when we were called that's all we were, and then God began to reveal to us His way and we began to yield to it. But where people don't yield to it and don't submit to it then it becomes their way. It becomes their way to not pay tithes, to not give Holy Day offerings, to not pay second tithe faithfully and handle them faithfully as the way they're commanded to do, and then expect to continue on in the Body and be blessed by God, to have God's hand in our life.

So again, on and on it goes. So, our relationships with others, how we think, whether or not we're striving to lift ourselves up, whatever it might be. So, if we're not relying on God as we should we become wearied in the greatness of our own way. That's what this is talking about.

And you did not say, There is no hope. In other words, weren't alert to or couldn't see that you needed help to change. There is no hope when you rely on your own way. If you do that then you don't even grasp things spiritually. And that's what happened, has happened to the majority of people who have been called. Still going on! Incredible! Mind-boggling!

People become wearied in the greatness of their way. They don't see that they're becoming wearied in that respect, being made wearied, if you will. Because when God is not in the picture anymore and you have the world in your mind it's like, what is there? You don't even know what you've done to yourself. You don't realize there is no hope in that. And it just makes life worse.

You have found life in your own hand. What is that? What is that worth? Drama? You want more drama? Is that what...? And sadly, that's the way the world is in so many ways. They really do love drama. People love, they thrive on drama. All you have to do is turn on the TV and that's all you see, drama, drama, drama. And it's like they relish it, they want to talk about it. Not just a little bit, but a lot! And you get so sick you think, how sick is the human mind? We need God's Kingdom so desperately. We truly do.

"You have found life at your own hand." Everyone who has ever gone out of the Church, that's all they have. That's all they have now. You have life in your own hand. What is it? What is it worth? How long is it going to last? What are you going to produce? What do you have now?

Therefore, you were not grieved. We grieve. We see the battle. We grieve concerning our own human nature. At least we should. Because if we're not grieving, we're not fighting. So, we hate to see the ugly head that comes up. And it looks like one of those games where you have these little furry things (I can't even think what they are), gophers and you have this big ole round thing and you're beating them on the head as fast as you can getting their heads back down.

Well, that's kind of how we have to be in our own lives, "Get your head back down!" Beating ourselves in the head to keep ourselves in subjection to God. It's a battle. It's a fight.

"Therefore, you are not grieved." When they should have been.

Of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you would lie and not remember Me? God says. If we don't have God, what do we have? What do we have? We know the truth. And to turn away from that, to turn against Christ, become antiChrist? Where did the fear go, the reverence, the awe of a very loving Father?

...that you would lie and not remember me, God says, **nor taken it to heart?** We have opportunities every time we fast to take it more to heart, to dig down deep and ask God to reveal to us those things that we can grow in and change, to see human nature more clearly and to loathe it, to fight it, to grieve over that and be determined to fight it with all of our being. And that means we're going to be praying to God more for His spirit because we know it's a spiritual battle.

Is it not because I have held My peace from old, from times past (that's what it means here), **that you have not feared Me?** In other words, "Is it because I have not stepped in before this to correct you mightily and say to you that you shouldn't be doing this?" In the Church, we should know.

If we are of a spirit, if we are of God's spirit we're going to be able to know and see the things that need to be changed. If we're drifting we're not going to see them, we're not going to be engaged in the battle, we're not going to be fighting, we're not going to be seeking growth, we're not going to be producing fruit.

So again here, that's what it's all about. It's about an incredible battle. It's a war, and God has given us a mighty tool, that of fasting with prayer, that it's powerful, it truly is. It strengthens us. It helps us to continue on, to fight the fights we need to fight.

And so, to pour ourselves out before God as we approach this fast and to pray about this next weekend when we go into that, to realize there is so much in here to fight. And to understand it's happening within the Body too, that there are things going on within the Body that God is going to continue to deal with.

But we have choices to make, to willingly choose to be engaged in the fight and to want God's way of life with all of our being. Let's pray accordingly and have a great fast this next Sabbath – or the weekend of the Sabbath.