

What Will It Take To Redeem The Time?

Feast of Tabernacles

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Brethren, here we are; it's day six, Feast of Tabernacles 2014. And I'm sure for many, if not most here, the time that we've had together this year has flown by—screamed by. For those of us here in Kellogg we still have several opportunities for worship and fellowship before all is said and done. And looking at my calendar, certainly God willing, there's plenty to do.

Projecting out from this point in time, it seems it's going to be a long time before we get back together for the Feast of Tabernacles, again God willing, in 2015. But if we stop and think about it—and it's often been stated as such—as time progresses, it seems to be speeding up and it won't be long before many of us will again be starting to prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles next year as it takes months of planning, months of preparation to ensure that all of us are well-served and that we can enjoy this opportunity that we have to be together.

Now as we get older and look back on our lives, it feels like time is increasing in its never-ending pace. I remember when I was my kids' age a two-hour Sabbath service or a two-hour holy day service that was an eternity! Ah! When is this going to be over? But now, as—and I almost hate to say this, a middle-aged adult (Gasp!)—entire weeks fly by and if I stop at any given point in time and I look back over the course of a couple of weeks in the past, I'll be mystified. I'm at a loss. What just happened? What happened to that time? It's just gone by.

Now as we expand this thought out, then, even the time that we're here foreshadowing, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Millennium, compared to human history or certainly the entirety of history, that thousand year time frame is going to be pretty short, pretty tiny. In the Millennium as spirit beings we will have a God-plane perspective of time. And, in light of what we're told in 2 Peter 3:8, that thousand year period that we're foreshadowing is going to go by like a twenty-four hour day. It's going to come and it's going to go.

The concept then that I'd like to drive home here is that time is finite.

Time in the context of events—such as keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, our lives as physical human beings, or even in the context of the time that we're here again foreshadowing the Millennium—they're all short. They're all finite. Now on one hand, if we're honest with ourselves, this is actually a nice thing to be aware of. Isn't it?

We all enjoy keeping God's feasts. The Feast of Tabernacles is a highlight of the year. One of the things that we do in our house is that we make a "feast chain" where you

take these little pieces of paper and you staple them together and we count down the days to the Feast of Tabernacles. Kids love it!

But the reality is after seven days or six days or five days, as is the case for some this year, most of us are pretty worn out. It could be the very young being out of their routine in a strange place, the frenetic levels of activity. For those of us adults, frantically chasing these kids around and taking care of them, trying to control the energy, control the drama that's taking place or, again, as I know for many of us here in Kellogg this year, powering through the stomach flu that's made its way through our ranks. For the adults that are older, it is kind of similar. You have the late nights. You have the rich food, eating out, being away from home. All of these things can be very tiring. With this in mind, we can have a little comfort knowing that eventually we'll be able to reorient, sleep in our own beds again, bring the level of chaos back down to our more normal operating levels.

Now for our lives in the physical, we know the aches, the pains, the emotional trauma, trials, tests—simply put the mileage that we're accruing in living this life—it's going to eventually end. And we look forward to the resurrection, to the incorruptible, and to our ultimate purpose, our ultimate destiny as the Bride of Jesus Christ.

Okay, how about the Millennium? I'm not going to take the time now to dive into it, but after the thousand years is completed, we move into a chapter of history for which most of the pages to our knowledge—we know about the Great White Throne Judgment, but after that—it's kind of blank. We don't know what's going to be happening after that. But what we do know is that's the culmination, the apex of what we know as God's plan for His creation, specifically the creation of His family for all who've ever lived. And that's tremendously exciting, wonderful, and encouraging. So again, we can find solace, comfort, encouragement in these thoughts.

But on the other hand, when these events come to a completion—again in the context of the Feast, the context of our physical lives, the context of the Millennium—there are some unknowns too. Aren't there? What sort of challenges are we going to be facing when we go home from the Feast of Tabernacles this year? Opportunities? Absolutely, plenty of those. Risks? There might be some risks too. As our lives progress, we face the same types of uncertainties. For those of us with families, what will our children have to experience and endure in this life? You have the bumps and the bruises, the heartaches, the failures, the pain, the frustration, perhaps some of these things on pretty epic scales. We just don't know. As we age, the aches and pains increase with frequency and duration. Will we have to face things like cancer? The loss of our minds to Alzheimer's or dementia? Who will take care of us if we become incapacitated? What sort of legacy are we going to leave to the next generation?

Now projecting this out from the Millennium, as we've already explored, there is kind of this great unknown when the Millennium is done. And while that is exciting, that's marvelous; it can also be a little unsettling to consider. What part are we as individuals going to play specifically in God's plan going that far out? What exactly are we going to

be doing for eternity? Even as adults, for a couple of hours, we're ready to move onto something else. We're talking eternity. What are we going to be doing?

What about all of those living in the Millennium? How are we going to help set their expectations? How exactly are you and I going to contribute to Christ's efforts? The reality is that, while we have some scriptural glimpses into some of the things we're going to be involved in, we don't have any exact explicit answers to these questions. It can be very easy, then, to get caught up in concern or worry or fear, as we've heard about, about the future.

But we've been provided some very explicit Biblical instruction on how we're to view what comes next. Turn with me please to Matthew chapter 6. We'll read just verse 34. Christ admonishes us here:

Matthew 6:34. *"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (NASU)*

So, what is Christ telling us here? He's saying, "Live in today. Live in the present," because tomorrow is coming. There's nothing you and I can do about that. We only have control over today. We only have control over right now.

Ephesians chapter 5, please; we're going to read verses 15 through 17 and I'm going to be reading this from the New King James Version.

Ephesians 5:15. *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, (NKJV)*

Verse 16 is where I want to focus.

16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (NKJV)

We're facing oppression in our society today.

17) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (NKJV)

Now, the word "redeeming," used here in verse 16, in the Greek means *to buy up or rescue from loss*. The same word is used, in addition, in Galatians 3:13 and Galatians 4:5. We're not going to turn there, but just as a reference. Those verses are in the context of Christ redeeming us from the penalty of death and taking that penalty upon Himself. So He has rescued us from being eternally lost with His sacrifice, His life in the flesh.

So we can extrapolate here then that if we don't redeem the time, if we're not taking advantage of every opportunity that we're afforded here, now in the present, it will be lost. But not just lost as in *missed*, a window of opportunity missed, but subject, as is

inferred here in verse 16 of Ephesians 5, subject to being overtaken by evil if good, if righteousness or doing right isn't actively pursued. And, brethren, there is no neutral alternative. There is no middle ground.

I think of the picture that Christ paints in Matthew 12:43-45. We're not going to turn there for the sake of time, but it's an image of this man who removes evil from his life and Christ says that the house is swept and it's in order, but he doesn't back fill it with righteousness. He doesn't back fill it with anything. Christ also says, "The house is unoccupied." What ends up happening to him in the end is that he becomes worse off than he was when he had the evil in his life.

The keys pointed out here, going back to Ephesians 5, to redeeming the time are: "to walk in wisdom" (verse 15) and "understanding of God's will" (verse 17).

But the question I want to ask is "How do we do this?" What I'd like to focus on this morning is not specifically what it means to have wisdom or what God's will is but to take a step back even from those concepts and explore what can underpin or what can give us the ability, give us the character to actively pursue, to buy up, to rescue, to redeem the time that we have to practice wisdom and to have the clarity we need to know God's will for us. This is especially vital at times of change or times of transition. Hence, the reason I'm sharing this study with you as we draw towards the end of the Feast.

As we started with, as we go through the ebbs and flows of life with specific events, our lives in general, the broader context of transitioning from the Millennium to the Great White Throne Judgment and beyond, there's a tremendous amount of opportunity. There's also risk. And understanding what it takes "to redeem the time" will be paramount to our success.

So what I'd like to do is take a look at three Biblical examples of these times of transition, times of uncertainty, times of opportunity, times of risk. And in the process we're going to see some prevailing character traits kind of bubble up here that are identified as being required to be successful in navigating these transition times.

For the first one, turn with me to Joshua chapter 1. We're going to read the first nine verses. We've been here already this Feast and what I'm hoping we'll be able to do here is tie some of the themes we've heard together. So we've heard about overcoming fear. That's an aspect here. Challenges in leadership, we're going to see that kind of bubble up as we go through some of these examples. We've talked about opportunity. We've heard about opportunity this Feast already as well. We'll going to talk about that as we go.

Joshua 1:1. *Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,
2) "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. (NASU)*

Now, I want to stop here for a second and again establish that this is a point of transition. It's a point of transition in a couple of different ways. First of all, we have a transition in leadership. We're going from Moses to Joshua in this process. And anytime there is a change in leadership, there is huge opportunity. There is huge risk.

While Joshua was established as a leader in the nation of Israel (He wasn't just some nobody. He had been around.), following in the footsteps of Moses—thinking about this—who to this day is arguably one of the most esteemed Jewish patriarchs, whose body was later disputed over by the angelic realm (We know this from Jude 9.), this is a pretty tall order. This wasn't just anybody he was following. This was Moses.

Not only then do we have this change of leadership, but we're coming up on a huge shift for the children of Israel in their history. Remember? They spent the past forty years up to this point wandering around in the wilderness because of their lack of faith and now have, with this new generation that's come up, another opportunity to take the Promised Land. So there's no doubt here, just establishing that we have a time of change, a time of transition. So reading on here, Joshua 1:3:

3) *" Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.*

4) *" From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.*

5) *" No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life.... (NASU)*

I want us to hold onto this next thing that God tells Joshua here.

5b) *... Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. (NASU)*

We're going to see that again as well. Verse 6, though, is where I want to focus. Here are our character traits coming to the surface.

6) *"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.*

7) *"Only [again] be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.*

8) *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (NASU)*

And again, we see this in verse 9.

9) *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* (NASU)

For our second example, we're going to move forward in history a little bit. Turn with me to 1 Chronicles 22. We're just going to read verse 11 through 13 here and again, we have a time of transition. David is in the process of transitioning the kingdom of Israel to his son Solomon. Specifically this context is the construction of the temple, a job that David infers (if you look at verse 5 of 1 Chronicles 22) as being beyond Solomon's capabilities. So let's look at the instruction David gives to his son Solomon here. We'll start in verse 11 and I'm going to read this from the New King James Version.

1 Chronicles 22:11. *Now, my son, may the Lord be with you; and may you prosper, and build the house of the Lord your God, as He has said to you.
12) Only may the Lord give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the law of the Lord your God.* (NKJV)

So again we see these themes of obedience and law-keeping as well.

13) *Then you will prosper, if you take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments with which the Lord charged Moses concerning Israel....* (NKJV)

But notice. What is it going to take to do this?

13b) *... Be strong and of good courage; do not fear nor be dismayed.* (NKJV)

How about the New Testament? Third example here, turn with me to John chapter 16. We're going to see these themes continue here. John 16, we're going to read verses 32 and 33. We have here Christ's final hours on earth and His final instructions to His disciples. So we're not only seeing a time of change or a time of transition taking place but this is also a time of transition in which things are going to get pretty bleak for all the parties involved. For Christ, He's fully entrusting. He's surrendering His life completely in His path forward, to the Father and we know how that ends with His eventual tortuous death. For the disciples, they're going to abandon Him. They're going to be shepherdless. They're going to be without a leader for a period of time here. John 16, then, starting in verse 32, Christ speaking:

John 16:32. *"Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.* (NASU)

Hold onto that as well.

33) *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* (NASU)

To be able to, as it was put in Joshua 1 then, “to have success” or as David told Solomon in 1 Chronicles 22 “to prosper” or as Christ told his disciples here in John 16 “to have peace,” if we desire to have these things through the pursuit of wisdom and the will of our Father as we read back in Ephesians 5, putting all these pieces together, it requires strength and it requires courage. So, let’s explore these concepts—strength and courage—to see how these will be able to help us succeed in our times of transition, in our times of change and take advantage of the time—redeem the time—that we have been given today.

So first then, let’s talk about strength and I’m going to spend the bulk of our time here together talking about strength. Now the Hebrew word used in our Old Testament examples—and all of this is from Strong’s—means *to fasten upon, to seize, be strong* (I love it when they use the same word to define a word, but strong means *to be strong*.), *obstinate, to bind, restrain, conquer*. Now the word “overcome,” used in John 16 that Christ said, means *to subdue*. And it’s similarly translated, if you look at the King James, as the Hebrew word is for “strong.” So you’ll see *conquer, prevail*. You’ll see those translations across testaments.

In the King James the Hebrew word has some interesting translations. And I’d like to use those as a springboard, then, to explore what it means to be strong. These translations include *to cleave*—and we’re going to go through each of these in detail—*to cleave, fortify, repair, be sore* (I thought that was an interesting one.), *and be urgent*.

So, the first we’ll talk about—*cleaving*. Now when I hear the word “cleave,” I immediately think of God’s commandment to husbands and wives. We all know this, Genesis 2:24. In the King James, it reads.

Genesis 2:24. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (KJV)*

Now the Hebrew word used for “cleave” there in Genesis 2:24, it’s not the same word as Joshua 1 “strong” but both of these words emphasize an important thing. And that is that effort is required. “To cleave” or “to be strong”, it’s not passive. It’s not a passive activity. It demands that we’re actively engaged in the process. Now in the context of the marriage relationship then, if we’re not pursuing our spouse, abiding with our spouse, joined with our spouse, as that word in Genesis 2 does mean, our marriages will suffer. And they’re going to eventually fail because, again as we talked about, we looked back at Christ’s image in Matthew 12 about the man who swept his house and it was unoccupied. That space is not going to stay unoccupied. Someone or something is going to come in and fill that space in our lives.

So how does this cleaving, then, how does it provide strength? Let’s tie these pieces together. Ecclesiastes chapter 4 please, we’re going to read verses 9 through 12, a very familiar passage here. We’re talking about how cleaving provides strength.

Ecclesiastes 4:9. *Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.*

10) *For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.*

11) *Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?*

12) *And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart. (NASU)*

So in unity and in the union of marriage, which should be our closest human relationship if we've been blessed with such, we find strength. It's in this relationship that we find the image, then, of our relationship with "our Husband," our Savior, Jesus Christ. And in that relationship and in that context, where does strength really come from there? Is it us? Psalm 46, let's turn there and see where our strength comes from in that cord. Psalm 46, we'll read the first three verses.

Psalm 46:1. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

2) *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;*

3) *Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. (NASU)*

What do we see here in verses 2 and 3? We see turmoil. We see transition. We see change, and things we may be soon facing if Christ doesn't return soon.

Now Joshua was encouraged in that God was going to be with him and that even though it was going to be tough, if Joshua cleaved to, if he held fast to, if he was strong in the Lord, he would be successful. We know that as long as Solomon occupied his house, as it were, with the Lord the kingdom prospered and his endeavors were successful. It's when he started filling his house with all those wives and concubines that he drifted away. He was no longer cleaving to the Lord, but he was cleaving to them. And it's interesting because it was at that point that the fate of the entire nation was sealed in what? In disunity, in that cord being torn apart and frayed. Now, Jesus on the other hand, kept in constant lockstep with His Father all the way to His last breath.

Let's talk about *fortify* and *repair* as we explore strength here. I'm not going to take the time to go through the passages, but the first thought that came to my mind was the account of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. I find it fascinating how that was actually accomplished and it ties neatly into this cleaving concept in that if you go through chapter 3 of the Book of Nehemiah, you're going to see a listing of all the families and all the individuals involved in that process. So and so repaired this piece and this family repaired this piece and this family repaired this piece. So, in each of those verses that word "repaired" is the same word as in Joshua: "strong." So in order for the endeavor of the rebuilding of that wall around Jerusalem to

be successful, everyone had to be involved in the process to do their part to repair or to strengthen that wall.

So, brethren, the question becomes “How about us?” Are we doing our part as individuals, as families to strengthen our part of the wall? If it be, again, in the context of our nuclear family or how about our Church family? Are we doing our part? Going back to Joshua, even though the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, if you remember, they were taking their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan, but Joshua held them to their commitment to work with the rest of the tribes once they crossed over to take the rest of the Promised Land. And why? So the other tribes wouldn't get discouraged. It took the entire family, if you will, to take the Promised Land. And we know this from verses 12 through 15 of Joshua 1. It took the work of armies of people for Solomon to complete the building of the temple all working together in concert.

Now how about Jesus Christ? In the end, He was left alone, but before that He was fortified. If you remember, He was strengthened by an angel in the Garden of Gethsemane as He prayed. We know this from Luke 22:43.

Now another thought here is that if something is being repaired, if something is being fortified, there is an inference there that it wasn't in a perfectly ideal state to start. The wall in Jerusalem is a pretty obvious example. It was pretty much destroyed, but strength as a concept is the result or the output of a process. And that brings us to the translations of *being sore and prevailing*.

Now by way of example here—I'm going to use a physical fitness example—to build a muscle a couple different things have to happen. A lot of things have to happen, but two specific things I want to point out. There has to be some form of resistance and that resistance must be of enough intensity that it actually tears the muscle fibers, which will then stitch back together and bind together with stronger tissue than what was there before.

Another example is say you cut yourself. And I've got this nifty little scar on my thumb here that I dropped a razor blade on my hand a number of years ago and it just sliced me. The skin that grows back when you cut yourself, it's different. Isn't it? It's tough. It's harder. It's thicker. And in either one of these examples, the entire process, it's not painless. Is it? There is some pain involved.

Now going back to the physical fitness analogy then, if one persists and is consistent—ideas we're going to talk a little bit more about here in a sec—the end result is overcoming. The end result is prevailing over that resistance. But that's not just the end of the story. Once your resistance level becomes too easy, then in order for your training to continue to be effective, what do you have to do? You have to up the resistance. You have to make it harder.

So spiritually then, we grow in strength through this process of resistance against sin, against the pulls of this world, against our human nature. And that hurts. Doesn't it? It's tough. It's damaging to things like pride, ego, vanity. But what is it replaced with? Harder tougher things—faith, trust, hope in our true source of strength. And this will be a lifelong process. We're not complete until we're done in this physical life. I'm sure we've all experienced it. We've all been here. You overcome a sin. You overcome a weakness just to have it reappear in your life from maybe a different angle, a different perspective that's more difficult to address the next time around.

For Joshua—going back to our examples—the literal physical battles in taking that Promised Land, it was a lifelong endeavor for him. It wasn't just Jericho and done. We've got it. It's all good. No, he had to keep fighting. They had to keep fighting. For Solomon, while David did a tremendous amount of preparation work, Solomon was still ultimately accountable for the success of the project in orchestrating the event, that building of the temple over the course of seven years, thousands of laborers and the pressure of knowing just who this project was for. For Christ, His resistance training if you will, took Him literally to His death.

Now the last translation of being strong I want to talk about here is *being urgent*. We just mentioned that building strength is not an instant process. Having strength comes over time and requires consistency and requires motivation to carry on. And with that should come a sense of urgency because, kind of looping this all the way back to where we started, time is short. We have today. We don't know what's coming tomorrow for us as individuals. We have now.

Turn with me back to Ecclesiastes; this time chapter 12. We're going to read the first four verses. I'm going to read this from the New Living Translation. It kind of fills out some of the details and starts out with an interesting translation of verse 1, which we'll explore.

Ecclesiastes 12:1. *Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. (NLT)*

I read that and I had to ask myself, "What is the 'excitement of youth'?" I can look at my kids. Again I have a five-year-old and a seven-year-old. I can look at the kids we have here. Right? And it's full of wonder. It's full of discovery. They're so excited and they're running around and they're having a great time. But it's also fraught with distraction. Every shiny object that passes by gets their attention regardless of its importance. Right? Squirrels! That kind of thing.

Exercising urgency or strength is to be mindful of what's important and relentless of its pursuit. And why? Let's keep reading here in verse 1.

1b) ... Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."

2) Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky.

3) Remember him before your legs—the guards of your house—start to tremble; and before your shoulders—the strong men—stoop. Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly. (NLT)

And verse 4, again another interesting translation.

4) Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed ... (NLT)

Brethren, there will come a time when the door is going to be closed. So our time, our opportunity is now.

I'd like to dive here quickly into the second trait and that is courage. And as the meaning of these two words, strength and courage, going back to Joshua 1 are very, very similar. I'm only going to focus on one aspect of courage. For that I'm going to pull a quote out of Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on Joshua 1:6-8. So quoting from Keil and Delitzsch, "Joshua was to be firm and strong, i.e., well-assured, courageous, not alarmed." So a key attribute of courage is not being alarmed or being steadfast and not being shaken.

So how is it that we're alarmed or surprised or shaken? How does that happen? Well, it's the unexpected. Right? It's being caught off guard or our expectations not being met. For Joshua, not being alarmed or surprised meant he had to understand what he was up against. And we talked about this already. He had been around. He had seen what was going on. He had seen the highs and lows and God encouraged him to bear that in mind and to bear in mind that He was with Joshua. For Solomon, with his father's expectations being said as "naïve and untested," an enormous scope, he had to exercise a discernment that God had given to accomplish the task. For Christ, while being the Word, the Creator, aware that His sacrifice was going to be required from the foundation of the world (We know this from 1 Peter 1.), the reality of what it entailed was enormous. It was intense. There's gospel accounts of Christ being unable to perform miracles, of His anger, His grief, His physical needs—things like hunger, thirst, fatigue and His desire to not have to suffer—but He wasn't shaken. He wasn't pulled off the course. He wasn't surprised or alarmed.

Now, how about for us, you and me? Are we easily shaken, brethren? If some aspect of prophecy isn't fulfilled or we aren't healed of an affliction, taken out of a trial all on our timetable each of these pieces, do we lose faith? Or if something happens in our lives or in the world around us that we didn't anticipate, do we panic and freak out?

Questions to ask.

I'm going to read the following verses for the sake of time. You can jot these down if you would like, but we have very specific instruction about being not alarmed, being aware.

1 Peter 4:12. *Beloved, do not be surprised ... (NASU)*

Don't be alarmed. Don't be shaken.

1b) ... at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; (NASU)

Matthew 24:6. *"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, ... (NASU)*

"This is going to happen. I'm telling you in advance. Don't let it shake your tree."

1b) ... for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (NASU)

Another example here, we are told:

1 John 3:13. *Do not be surprised, brethren, if ... (NASU)*

What?

13b) ... the world hates you. (NASU)

But don't let it shake you.

So, how can we have courage then? How can we keep from being taken off guard? Brethren, we've been given a vision of our purpose in life and God's plan through the scripture, which includes instruction on keeping the annual holy days. It helps us paint that picture very vividly for us as human beings. We have the examples of those who have gone before us living in faith. Some little fanfare, some great persecution, great tribulation, but all of them, as it says in Hebrews 11, "seeking a heavenly country."

So, to put this all in the simplest terms here as we begin to wrap up, the essence of what it takes to be wise, to do what God has set us out to do, to rescue from loss what we have been given and that being the time that we have right here, right now, today is to—and these are my words—hold on and be alert!

Who and what are we to hold onto, to cleave to? Who or what should we be focusing our efforts on? Overcoming and prevailing against our carnality to get to and have a sense of urgency about? First and foremost, our husband, our Savior Jesus Christ. Secondly, one another. Husbands and wives. Families, both physical and spiritual. Again, the bigger that cord is the harder it is to break.

And why alert? The distractions, brethren, they are numerous and they are spiritually lethal. We know who the adversary is and how the adversary is portrayed (1 Peter 5:8). We know this. We have to be spiritually awake and aware of what's going on and what

will come to pass, but not get lost in the minutiae. And zero in on that heavenly country. Zero in on the kingdom, on His righteousness, on our inheritance.

And finally, why does any of this matter? Because, again, brethren, time is short. It may not seem like it looking at it now. We've got this long gap between now and the spring holy days or now and certainly the next Feast in 2015, but I assure you that time is going to scream by.

The question we have to ask ourselves is "How are we going to redeem this time that we've been given?" Will we carry what we've learned here at the Feast—whether it's messages, fellowship, shared experiences, whatever it happens to be, a combination of all of the above—are we going to carry that forward? Do we have the strength we need to endure, to overcome, namely through Jesus Christ living within us? Are we alert and awake during this, if you will, "third watch" of the year—a time of year in which we're not only exposed to more physical literal cold and darkness as winter sets in, but spiritual darkness as well.

Now taking these concepts further to the time that we're foreshadowing, we can take being strong and courageous as character traits that will help those living in the Millennium. There are going to be scary transitions for those folks. We know about some of these. We know what the end-times are going to look like. And the people living through that, they're going to be frightened, confused, broken, hurting, you name it. And as the Millennium draws to a close on the other side of the thousand years, what's going to happen? Satan's going to be released. There's going to be more chaos. The earth's going to be damaged once again, one last time. And it's going to take our help. It's going to take our encouragement. It's going to take our example to help these people through. And for us, now is the time to be developing, to have a chance to exercise through our own changes, our own transitions in life the character traits of strength and courage.

I'd like to close with two passages. Turn with me please to Romans chapter 13. We're going to read verses 11 through 14 here. I just want to leave you with some words of admonition and some words of encouragement.

Romans 13:11. *Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; ... (NASU)*

Now is our time.

11b) ... for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

12) The night is almost gone, and the day is near. (NASU)

Tomorrow is coming. Again how are we spending this time? How are we redeeming and keeping this time from being lost to evil in our lives?

12b) ... Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

13) Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (NSAU)

But notice here in verse 14:

14) But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, ... (NASU)

Again that strength, that refuge. Put that on. Carry that. Let it be our strength.

14b) ... and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (NASU)

Finally, brethren, 1 Corinthians 16 please, we'll just read verse 13. I'm going to read this from the New King James Version. As we depart, let's let these words resonate in our minds. We are admonished:

1 Corinthians 16:13. *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. (NKJV)*