

My Burden is Light
Last Day of Unleavened Bread
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Good afternoon everyone. I would tell you, just to be able to get together with everyone and enjoy a meal, I told the ones here for those on the west coast, that I'm speaking today so make sure you get another cup of coffee. Maybe make sure it's the strong coffee. I've also said that if I can serve you that's what the job of the ministry is, to serve. I can serve you by taking a nap, as long as you don't snore and distract the other people, we'll even let you do that.

Turn over to Leviticus 23. In starting this sermon I would like to remind you of a very clear scripture that God gave to the Levites through Moses and recorded for our day, specifically directed to the Church leaders and to the teachers as well. Leviticus 23 and we will start in verse 1.

Leviticus 23:1. *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
2) Speak to the children of Israel, ... (NKJV)*

Of course, we know who spiritual Israel is.

*2b) ... and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim [to be] holy convocations, these [are] My feasts.
3) 'Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day [is] the Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it [is] the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.
4) 'These [are] the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. (NKJV)*

There are probably some that could make the case in this age that we all have our Bibles to read, we all have God's spirit to help us understand and, therefore, we can do all of this ourselves. This was a time when there were no widely available written material and all of that and the priest was very necessary. But I will tell you, I remember back twenty or twenty-five years ago and the circumstances that were extant in just a few short years when they were not, let's say, focused on the holy days. Not only were the holy days forgotten, they actually became despised and those that continued to observe and keep them were put out of local congregations.

Now let's make no mistake about it, God does hold everyone accountable for their own actions. You can't get a pass on, "Well, this is not for me." But I will also tell you that God holds the teachers and the leaders more accountable because they have influence on more people. Turn over to Exodus 12. My determination this year was to get a new Bible. It has just come apart here.

Exodus 12:15. *‘Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.*
16) *‘On the first day [there shall be] a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but ... (NKJV)*

And God makes an exception knowing that we are humans and there’s not always a time to have a preparation day.

16b) *... but [that] which everyone must eat – that only may be prepared by you.*
17) *‘So you shall observe [the Feast of] Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.*
18) *‘In the first [month] on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.*
19) *‘For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether [he is] a stranger or a native of the land.*
20) *‘You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’” (NKJV)*

Skip to the next chapter, Chapter 13 and we will pick it up in verse 4.

Exodus 13:4. *“On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.*
5) *And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.*
6) *“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day [there shall be] a feast to the Lord.*
7) *“Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.*
8) *“And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ... (NKJV)*

And again there is a responsibility for parents to not only do this but also to pass it on to their children.

8b) *... ‘[This is done] because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.’*
9) *“It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.*
10) *“You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year. (NKJV)*

On the first day, Steve mentioned in the sermon that as near as he could estimate just going around the people that were in the room, there were around eight hundred total years of experience represented just in this room. Being an engineer, that sparked something in me and I'd just like to share it with you. Of course, any hypothesis or any statement is based on assumption, so let me give you the assumptions first.

The assumptions are: Let's say the bride is made up of 144,000 and let's say that each one of those has an average of forty years from the time they started their journey until they ended. The bride-to-be of Israel would have a total of 5,760,000 years of total experience. It astounded me, the number of that, but that is the total human experience of trying to live God's way.

Now before we get too puffed up, remember we are referred to as children and we are referred to by Christ and by John as little children. So let's don't get too puffed up about those big numbers. We might be a bit seasoned, but don't forget that God is the Ancient of Days and He is the one that claims to be that.

Brethren, we are here today because God has commanded us to keep this day, the first of three holy day seasons, but we're to do more than just observe it. We are to use this day and all of the holy days as a special time to focus on the meanings of what these periods represent. Unlike the world's holidays that are just empty, I'll just relate it to me, it's like me getting over at the dessert table and eating all of this chocolate and how great it is until about an hour later. Then I've got a headache and I just want to go off in a corner and die. That's the way the world is.

But God's holy days are much different. Again, I want to refer to something that Steve said on the first day and that is if all we focus on leading up to the period is removing the physical leaven from our homes, all we have accomplished is spring cleaning. Brethren, if all we accomplish from keeping the seven Days of Unleavened Bread and to sit together and enjoy the fine food and the fellowship, all we've gained is a few pounds, maybe more.

The spring holy days, starting with Passover, the evening sacrifice of the lamb, the placing of the blood on the doorpost, the death of the firstborn, the expulsion of the children of Israel, the crossing of the Red Sea, the forty years of wandering in the Sinai, rejecting the initial entry into the Promised Land, crossing over the Jordan, the circumcision, the seven days of trekking around Jericho and the shout on the seventh day which was on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread when the wall fell and they received the promise of their physical inheritance. As I've said in previous sermons, this first season represents the total journey that every child of God will take during their conversion process, from the beginning, from the covenant, from the baptism and then that journey in the wilderness while (and I'll bring this out) the old man dies in the desert and then the reaching of it. All of that will take place in this period of time. A wandering of forty years, if we think about it, was to be led by Christ by day and by night. We do that, we feast all of our lives (we should) on the spiritual manna that we need to make

the trip and then to finally arrive at the destination to a place that's been prepared for each and every one of us.

On this day, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, I want to focus on the journey that God has selected and foreordained that each of us will take in our life time, to the end, I hope, that we will be very encouraged and strengthened during these very unsettling and very uncertain times as we look around us and even as we look ahead of us. I don't know about you but I think if we look around us and see what man is doing, it's an impossible task to get through this. There is no hope. The future is very dark. But as we see, God and Jesus Christ are our constant companions, our rock, our teacher, our friend and protector all of our lives. If we see that, and the more we see that, we can be refreshed and we can be encouraged to move forward.

I think before we start to examine the aspects of the journey, I want to get a clear perspective of ourselves, who we are.

Turn over to 1 Chronicles, chapter 29. We're going to look forward by looking back here. From the time the Israelites left Egypt and constructed the tabernacle in the wilderness at the time of Solomon and there was a solid structure for the Ark of the Covenant, about 550 years elapsed. The Israelites, while settled in the Promised Land did not have a structure for God that would represent permanence to them. The ark, which was portable as you can read in the earlier parts, was moved around. It was even in the hands of the Philistines at a time, but it was not in a permanent structure. Here we are; we will pick it up nearing the end of his life and his journey, David is announcing the proclamation of this relatively permanent structure which was to worship God in.

1 Chronicles 29:1. *Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, [is] young and inexperienced; and the work [is] great, because the temple [is] not for man but for the Lord God."* (NKJV)

Have we ever considered the weight of the responsibility of us and what God is doing to us is not for man? God is creating something. David has an understanding and an awe of the magnitude of what they were constructing. Do we all have a complete appreciation of the fitly framed building that we are participating in?

Hold your finger in 1 Chronicles and turn to Ephesians 2. I just want to let this settle in our minds. Just as David felt the weight of responsibility, brethren, we should feel not only a weight but an extreme appreciation for what we have been called to.

Ephesians 2:20. *... having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,
21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,
22) in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* (NKJV)

To me that is just astounding to think of what we have been called to do. Again, as David was building a physical temple, he realized the weight of that.

Back to 1 Chronicles 29 and we will pick it up in verse 2. David continues on:

1 Chronicles 29:2. *“Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for [things to be made of] gold, silver for [things of] silver, bronze for [things of] bronze, iron for [things of] iron, wood for [things of] wood, onyx stones, [stones] to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance.*

3) “Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver;” (NKJV)

You know David put everything he had into this project, both from a national resource which he had under his control, but also from his personal wealth. If we were playing Texas Holdem, David went all in. He didn't hold back. It's everything he had at his disposal he put into building this because he realized the importance of it.

10) Therefore David blessed the Lord before all the assembly; and David said: ... (NKJV)

Let these words sink into us.

*10b) ... “Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever,
11) Yours, Oh Lord, [is] the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all [that is] in heaven and in earth [is Yours]; Yours [is] the kingdom, Oh Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. (NKJV)*

There was none of this, “We, I, look at this.” David realized this was to God's glory and it was for God. Then he goes on to say:

12) Both riches and honor [come] from You, and You reign over all, ... (NKJV)

David realized what they were giving to God. They were only giving back to Him what was already His. He had given it to them. You know there was no personal glory and there was no national glory in David's words. It was completely centered on God.

12b) ... in Your hand [is] power and might; in Your hand [it is] to make great and to give strength to all.

13) “Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name.

14) But who [am] I, and who [are] my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? ... (NKJV)

Did David go, "Look we gave You everything. I hope you're pleased with that." He said, "Who am I; who are we that You have blessed us to be able to offer this to you?"

14b) ... For all things [come] from You, and of Your own we have given You. (NKJV)

If we could just underline that in our hearts; we just gave it back to you. It belonged to You and we've given it back to You and the praise and the honor go to You.

Now notice, David goes on to acknowledge and if you think about the contrast here, ever since they had the ark, it's been on the move. It's never been permanent. Then at the end of David's life, the plans are to build a permanent structure and yet look what David said as he goes on, and how we should feel today.

15) For we [are] aliens and pilgrims before You, as [were] all our fathers; our days on earth [are] as a shadow, and without hope. (NKJV)

Again, the first time they set out to do something permanent and what David wants ringing in their ears is, we are just passing through. We are just strangers, we are just pilgrims and we're just going to be here just like the grass for a very short time and we will be without hope.

16) "Oh Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for your holy name (the third time David says...) is from Your hand, and [is] all Your own." (NKJV)

Where in there did David take personal glory for commissioning this? It was all to God.

17) "I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these [things]; and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You." (NKJV)

David wanted to make sure that the witness was delivered in a written record for those that came after him that everything they had was provided by God at His pleasure and the temple was to be a sign to point to God.

18) "Oh Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You." (NKJV)

David wanted this not to glory men, not for them to look at this temple. He wanted the people to look and say, "Our God, we belong to Him. He is the one who gets the glory."

What is sad is that we have the historical record. Let's push the fast forward button about a thousand years in the time of Christ. You see, people felt at that point they had

a relationship with God because it was their right. They were descended from Abraham, therefore, “We don’t have to do anything. We inherited this. It’s ours.” Instead of looking to God and keeping their hearts fixed on Him as they looked at the temple, they looked at the temple as some kind of magic thing ... “the temple, the temple, the temple! God’s not going to let anything happen to us. The temple is here.” They completely perverted and lost the very central thing that David said it was for. It was for you to point to God, to see God. It was to keep your hearts on Him, and what happened? Their hearts turned inward. “This is our right and, you know what? There ain’t nobody going to touch us because the temple is here.” Well, you can fast forward just about another seventy years and see how that worked for them. Brethren, they forgot that they were strangers and pilgrims.

What about us? Do we look at ourselves, our knowledge? We want to belittle and berate those around us because they don’t measure up to our level of righteousness, in and out of the church. You see at the root of those attitudes and thoughts is the fact that we have forgotten that we are on a journey. We’re just passing through. We want everything and everyone to measure up to our standards. We want our human governments, our friends, our mates or whatever to meet our standards and we forget that we are on a journey and we are just passing through. When we forget that, brethren, we become sluggish and we slow down and we start to become leavened and weighted down and finally we will stop moving forward. That weight that can come around, that we can become so distracted, can stop our progress and then we put our efforts into trying to change everything that we think is wrong. Again, we forget that we are just passing through.

Hebrews 11; you probably don’t even need to turn here. I’m trying to remember my last sermon that it didn’t end up somehow around this. But I’m not going to apologize. God has put this in my heart.

Hebrews 11:13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were assured of them, ... (NKJV)*

They never doubted it.

13b) ... embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14) For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15) And truly if they had called to mind that [country] ... (NKJV)

Let me add, they get distracted. They start to look around; they start to see and then you know what? I think God made us to want to be “fix-its.” We want to fix everything, and that’s not wrong. What we see around us today we should want to fix that to the depths of our being and realize there is coming a time we will be able to participate in that, but not now.

15b) ... from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16) *But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly [country]. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (NKJV)*

Where do we fit into this, brethren? Are we just passing through? Everyone, I think all of mankind desires a better country. It's just, what is it? We desire a better country in the future. We are not, and we couldn't try to make this one today like that better country that we're moving toward. Look around you. Do the world's governments feed off of and prey on its citizens? Do the strong enslave and steal from the poor? Do we as people think anything of killing unborn children that have no choice and then call it freedom of choice? Does that affect us? Does that grieve us to the depths of our being?

Matthew 23. Brethren, if we get to the point where it doesn't hurt us, it doesn't grieve us, we are in trouble. Here is Christ, knowing that He was going to be killed, hated and rejected, even by those that were following Him.

Matthew 23:37. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under [her] wings, but you were not willing!”*
38) *“See! Your house is left to you desolate; (NKJV)*

When it does hurt you, brethren, and it should, and you get discouraged by just the daily fight, go back and read Hebrews 11. When we're hurting so much and we want to fix this world, let's realize that we are called to do that, but just not now. I will guarantee you, if we had the power to fix everything in this world, it wouldn't work because we can't fix the most important aspect. Go to Jeremiah 17:9, again one of our memory verses. You see, this is at the root of the issues.

Jeremiah 17:9. *The heart is deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked; who can know it?*

10) *I, the Lord, search the heart, [I] test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)*

You see, as humans we can only work on the physical things. We can only work on and treat the effects. Even the legislatures of our time that keep making more and more laws, trying to legislate their concept of civility are completely failing. No human being is capable of fixing the cause of the problems. Brethren, that's our desperately wicked hearts. We cannot fix ourselves and our own desperately wicked hearts. If we focus on that and we realize it, what God has blessed us with is He is now, with a very few and God is fixing not the effects, but the cause. He's working on fixing our hearts because we can't even do it, only God.

Romans 1:28. *And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, ... (NKJV)*

You see, this verse starts out with a root cause and then goes on to show the results of that root cause. As we're reading this, I ask you, can anyone fix this?

*28b) ... God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;
29) being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; [they are] whisperers,
30) backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, ... (NKJV)*

That one really hits us in this generation.

*30b) ... disobedient to parents,
31) undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;
32) who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (NKJV)*

Back in the early days of television when the channel selector only had twelve channels on it and there were three networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, they all went off at midnight. There was a reason there were twelve channels. I'll tell you that one some other time. But back in the early days of T.V., there was a T.V. show called "Queen for a Day." I think it was Bob Barker, but there would be a lady that people would nominate and she would come in and they would sort of go through her life and then they would give her this garland of flowers and put a crown on her and her life was sort of out. She was crowned Queen for a Day. What would I do if I was king for a day? Okay, I'm king for a day and I have all the power. What would I do? I hope this sounds ridiculous; Okay, I'll go and repeal Obama Care. I'm going to put Social Security in a lock box. I'm going to outlaw abortion. I'm going to repeal gay marriage. I'm going to shake that pompous little twenty-eight year old Hitler until his eye teeth rattle. I'm going to outlaw war. I'm going to legislate that everybody be happy.

Now if you consider that a solution, it's like a mother going into her child's room, making the bed, putting the toys away, cleaning it and thinking it's going to stay that way until the child is an adult. I thought you would see the folly in that. You see, brethren, we can't fix it because what is broken is in here in all of us, not a few. We are no different except God has looked at us and said, "I'm going to start fixing the insides of a very few now."

That leads us to the next logical question. If we aren't supposed to try to fix this, what are we supposed to do? Did God intend for us to just be these passive punching bags that we go through life and He's going to see how many times we get up after we get knocked over?

My brother was an Aggie and I remember in there they would take a pugil stick and punch him and they would go, "Thank you sir! Can I have another?" And they would hit them until finally they couldn't get back up. Is that what God is doing with us, just to toughen us up and "You can't get me down." Is it just a test to see how much we can take? Are we just to keep a stiff upper lip and endure it? Look over in John 17:14.

John 17:14. *"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."* (NKJV)

You see, Jesus in essence was saying, "They are strangers and pilgrims just like I am."

15) *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."* (NKJV)

Again, we could do a sermon on this, but here's the cliff notes version of this. If God did not keep us from the evil one, we would be destroyed in about two seconds. Don't ever think when we run into trials that God has not kept us from the evil one. We're still alive. Satan would destroy us so fast it would make our head spin. That's why it's part of our daily prayers, is to keep us from that. Read Matthew 6:13 in your own time.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7 said that Satan was allowed to buffet him. We do get buffeted, but remember that Satan can only do and can only go as far as God allows him.

16) *"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."*

17) *"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."*

18) *"As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."*

19) *"And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."*

20) *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;"* (NKJV)

It is very clear, brethren, that it was God's intent that we are in this world, that we are here but that we are not part of what is taking place. We are in this world, brethren. We feel the pain. We feel the sting of sin, ours as well as others. Why? Knowing we can't fix what's broken in mankind, knowing it will injure and in some cases, cost us our lives, God intended that we remain on this earth and make this journey. Why?

Numbers 32:13. *"So the Lord's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone."* (NKJV)

What was the evil? You know from the onset they rebelled against God. Right after they made a covenant with God in the sight of Sinai, they committed horrible sins and idolatry against God and each other, after their covenant, after their baptism. God was

ready to wipe them out but Moses begged God to spare them as their advocate, as their high priest.

Thankfully brethren, we can sit here and say, “We never committed any sins after we were baptized, after we entered into a covenant! We aren’t like those doughheads back then!” We got it right ... Oh, wait. Causing and demanding a sacrifice and our high priest to intercede for us (remember) even in the clear sight of the cloud and the fire they murmured and doubted God’s ability to keep His promise. “He’s trying to kill us! He’s trying to starve us! This horrible manna, it’s despicable to us.” Again brethren, thankfully we have never doubted God’s ability to carry through, have we? We never thought, “What’s He trying to do, kill us?”

Many of us came along in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s and we just knew at that point that there was just a short stroll to the Promised Land. “Just keep your head down and do what you’re told, obey what the minister tells you to do. In a few short years you’re going to be there. It’s going to be all over. Christ is going to return. We’re going to get these huge crowns that will barely fit in a room. We’re going to sit on this throne and those people that have wronged us are going to quake in their boots. They’re going to grovel. You just wait!” We used to say this under our carnal misguided breath.

What happened? Why did God wait? We’re ready! Those of you who were around back then looking back, ask yourself: were we ready back then? Did we have the faith in God to do what He told us and required? What a wonderful, merciful God that He didn’t unleash a bunch of self-absorbed knotheds loose on this world, I chief among them. I can hardly stand what I am today, much less forty years ago when I thought God was going to take me to the Promised Land in just a couple of years. My sweet wife that I’ve spent the best forty years wandering with will tell you I was the most vain, cocky person she’s ever met. I think now she just accepts that. I don’t think I’m that much different.

Brethren, we lacked the trust and the faith in God to put ourselves and our lives in His hands. We had to wander for forty years. It’s interesting when you look at that word “wander” as we just read. That’s Strong’s 5128 and it is “nuwa”. That’s my pronunciation, “nuwa” 5128 and it’s a primitive word. There are many definitions of it, but let me just read some of them. This is interesting for your own study. Remember the wave offering, if you look at the Hebrew word that was “nuwph”, that’s only two Strong’s different from this and it’s the same root word. It means *to wave and to move up and down*. Nuwa and nuwph are from the same word. So there’s your piece of steak. You go tear it off and digest that one. It means *to scatter, to sift, to be a vagabond or to wander*. You know when you consider wandering for forty years, at first blush it seems that God just let them kind of aimlessly wander around on their own until their fathers died. Brethren, that’s just not so. As a matter of fact, our wandering was before we were called. We will look at that in a minute.

Exodus 40:36. *Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys.*

37) *But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.*

38) *For the cloud of the Lord [was] above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. (NKJV)*

Does that call to mind a promise that Christ made to us? “I am with you always even to the end of the world.” In talking to someone about a journey and the children of Israel wandering, while it’s not a direct straight line, it was nevertheless very carefully determined by God and decided to give them a path that was best for them to accomplish His purpose. It wasn’t like, “Well, okay let’s go east for a few days.” There were times that they stopped and stayed there sometimes over a year and their wandering was following the cloud and the fire. I mentioned that to a person and this person mentioned that even in leaving Egypt, God led them in an indirect path so they would not encounter the Philistines and see war and become afraid and return. You can read that in Exodus 13:17. You see God, even with them, did not test them beyond their ability to deal with it. Does that sound like a familiar promise God has made to us? He knew at the time they didn’t have the faith and they would become disheartened and He led them in a different direction. 2 Corinthians 5:4; You see brethren, we are wandering as strangers and pilgrims, but it’s not a misdirected, unguided, aimless wandering.

2 Corinthians 5:4. *For we who are in [this] tent groan, ... (NKJV)*

This tabernacle, this very temporary dwelling.

4b) *... being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

5) *Now He who has prepared us for this very thing [is] God, who also has given us the spirit as a guarantee.*

6) *So [we are] always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*

7) *For we walk by faith, not by sight. (NKJV)*

Again, we should never view the Israelites or ourselves as just an aimless wandering. As I mentioned before, the Bible clearly tells us though, pre our conversion. That’s what it was. Look over in 1 Peter 1; this very clearly tells us that that’s what we were doing.

1 Peter 1:17. *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay [here] (that word is “your sojourning”) in fear;*

18) *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, [like] silver or gold, from your aimless conduct [received] by tradition from your fathers, (NKJV)*

You see that was the wandering, that was just; “We’re just going to do whatever hurts the least and feels the best. That’s what we’re going to do.” That’s what we were

taught. We didn't have a direction. We did what we were taught by word and example and that was as much as we can do to satisfy the self and the lust that we had. We not only received that from our physical fathers prior to our redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we received it from our spiritual father at the time and that was Satan the devil.

19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20) He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. (NKJV)

Today when we go from one place to another, our travel is really like everything else in life, it's just to get us from point A to point B. I used to travel a lot more than I do now, but I remember having to take a trip to Brazil or to the Far East or to Europe. I would get on a plane, try to get as little sleep before and my goal was to go to sleep as fast as I could and sleep as long as I could and wake up just as the wheels were touching down at the destination. I didn't want anything in between, like sitting there watching people, watching the clouds, eating peanuts and being bored. The trip was something to be endured.

Brethren, consider our journey. It's not that way. I think we thought that was the way it was going to be. We would just be called and we would do as we were told for a few years and then we would be at our destination. God didn't call us so we could take a nap and wake up at our destination. That's what we thought in the early days. God does indeed want us in His family and He is drawing us to Him; no mistake about that. But He wants our presence, He wants our hearts, He wants our love, He wants our trust in Him and even though we left the old man behind at baptism and we came out without leavening, that old man just refuses to die. We are going to be on this sojourn, following the cloud and the fire until that old man dies in the wilderness, because that old man is not compatible going into the Promised Land. It had no faith, it was selfish, it was Godless, it was sensual and it wanted to satisfy the self. That man is going to die in the wilderness. It can't go in. This journey is to put us in circumstances that, coupled with God's spirit, will allow us to see the necessity of it, give us strength to do it and mercy and forgiveness through His Son when we slip.

Colossians 3:1. *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4) When Christ [who is] our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

5) Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; ... (NKJV)

The old man, the one that followed us and then sprang back up as we came out of baptism, the leaven that keeps coming back on top of us and dragging us down.

5b) ... fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6) Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

7) in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. (NKJV)

We understand that no longer walking is a process not an event. Oh, I wish it was an event because stopping the event means to change the heart and we know that is a process.

One thing that is apparent to me when I consider a journey before the industrial age, a journey was not just to get a person from A to B, a person was also shaped and changed by the journey that they took. The pilgrims came across from England looking for something better, seeking to escape persecution and that journey changed them from what they were to what they became. The Louis and Clark expedition, they set out and that journey to the west coast of Oregon changed every one of those on that journey. The travel westward, by the settlers seeking a better home, changed them. I heard a sermon about the Oregon Trail and the arduous trip that the Oregon Trail was. People loaded up their Conestoga wagons, headed to Oregon, the land of promise. They filled the wagons with everything imaginable. They took their stoves, their anvils, they took their pianos, they took their heavy oak furniture that had been in the family for years and years, they took the kitchen sink with them. Guess what? The weight of those overloaded Conestoga wagons, the axils were breaking every couple of miles because they were so weighted down with all of that stuff. You see, the settlers took what they thought they needed and they learned on the trip it was just a lot of baggage that slowed down their progress. When they got to the Rocky Mountains, and I don't mean this to sound funny, but I can look at myself. When they got to the Rocky Mountains and they had to go through some of those narrow passages, their horses and oxen couldn't pull the wagons up with all of the junk in the Conestoga wagons and apparently right at the front range of the Oregon Trail there were miles of littered furniture and pianos and excess clothing and anvils because they couldn't get across with it. The Indians finally realized, "We don't need to raid these things. Let's just go to the front range and wait for them to leave it behind and we don't risk anything and we still get all the goodies." The journey that they took changed them forever. They never looked at what they had as necessities after they crossed the Rocky Mountains. They had to decide what was really necessary and much of what they really thought was necessary was almost their demise.

Hebrews 12:1. *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares [us], and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (NKJV)*

You can't run if you're dragging a piano with you.

2) *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

3) *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (NKJV)*

How much baggage do we drag through this life thinking that it is a necessity, when really it just weighs us down? Not only are we just passing through on this pilgrimage, this journey, brethren, it is shaping us and changing us into ways that we could never have anticipated. And you know what? We're the ones that pick up the baggage through life. It will eventually, as I said, weigh us down and stop our forward progress. This isn't from God. We are offered just the opposite.

Matthew 11:28. *"Come to Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29) *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

30) *"For My yoke [is] easy and My burden is light." (NKJV)*

If you want a title for today's sermon, it is:

My Burden is Light

If you think about it, the term "pilgrim" and "baggage" are mutually exclusive. In the early '60s I went into the military. Everything I owned in the world fit in a duffle bag. Everything I had; I think it was about sixty-five pounds. That was my total possessions. I was a pilgrim. In 1968 I moved from Fort Bragg, North Carolina to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Everything I owned in the world fit in my Mustang, in the trunk, in the back and a little in the passenger seat. Everything I had fit in the Mustang. I was a pilgrim. When I moved here to Illinois in 2003, it took an eighteen wheeler, half of a moving van, two weeks to pack and a month's worth of wages to get here. Do we pick up baggage through life?

The Israelites moved to Egypt so the land could serve them and it did for a while, but true to man's ways after a few generations, they ended up serving the nation. When we're young; (forgive me young people) when we were young and foolish, we accumulated stuff to serve us: cars, boats, airplanes, computers, televisions. None of those are wrong. Don't get me wrong. But those were to serve us, and again, nothing in them is wrong. But as time goes on, these things that we accumulated to serve us, we end up serving them. Maintenance, gasoline, insurance, upkeep, taxes and, and, and. My kids laughed at me for longer than I can remember and in true Ecclesiastes 3:5 fashion, I go through these "*A time to gather stones together*" and I stay in that mode until it takes all my time to maintain it. Then I go into, "*A time to cast away stones*" mode and I get rid of all that stuff and then I forget the pain and I go, "I think I'll get that and that and that." First thing you know I'm back into gathering stones together. My kids just roll their eyes at me. I believe it was just a day or two, one of the kids said,

“Oh, dad another “cast away stones” time? As I get older I see more and more of the side of having to serve and maintain and maybe it’s because I’m less capable to do it. I find myself wanting to accumulate less and less.

You know what? Spiritually we can still pick up a lot of baggage. I can pick up a lot of baggage. All I have to do is let my guard down. Because like leaven, I don’t have to go out and gather it, I just have to stand still and it will start to pile on.

Let me read you a definition of a pilgrim. A pilgrim is *a religious devotee who journeys to a shrine or a sacred place*. Then they went through about the pilgrim festivals, the pilgrimages. Those are the three: the spring, the summer and the fall holy days when the Israelites that lived in Judah made their pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

Every major religion has pilgrimages; the Muslims and they take their Hajj. Once you go you’re known as a Hajji. The Christians go to the Holy Land unless you’re Catholic and they go to the Vatican, or whatever. But there seems to be, and I think God put it in us, to make a journey, to be a pilgrim.

Brethren, we are on a pilgrimage to a sacred place, but just as Christ told Pilate it’s not of this world. It’s not a place that we can go to on Google Maps; it won’t show up. For that reason, the world thinks we are nuts. “You’re doing what? Come tell him what you just told me. It doesn’t make sense. You’re going to lose your job, you’re going to lose this, you’re going to let this happen and you can’t even show me where you’re going?” *One who embarks on a quest for something conceived of as sacred; a traveler.*

Brethren, the very obvious reason that we’re to take this journey is to allow ourselves to be shaped and fashioned by the events and experiences we encounter on the way. You see, we don’t run into them by happenstance. It’s not an accident. We are being led and directed every step of our lives if we will follow the cloud and the fire. God has promised us that if we do that during that journey, when we come out the other side, that old man is going to be dead in the desert. What goes across is the only thing that is fit to go across, and that is the heart that we have allowed God to build in us. There is no shortcut, there is no easy way. We can’t get on a plane and go to sleep and wake up there. That doesn’t change us. That doesn’t affect us and we have to be. We experience living God’s way in Satan’s world and that has to be. It has to be felt. It has to be learned and it has to become, as I’ve said, part of our DNA.

What’s interesting is even on this journey God has promised us He would take care of our physical needs. We shouldn’t be taking anxious thought. You know we here in Worden over this last week have experienced some very dramatic events that God took care of us. He knew what we needed and He saw that we had them and there’s not a person sitting here that can glory in that. God did it for us. He will take care of us throughout our life so that we can focus our energy on this spiritual journey we are on and to learn the invaluable lessons from this trip. It will change us. Look over in Deuteronomy 8:1.

Deuteronomy 8:1. *Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers.*

2) *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, ... (NKJV)*

Again, we didn't aimlessly wander without purpose. The purpose of the trip was to change us, to see the miracles of God as He delivered us from our trials.

2b) *... to humble you [and] test you, to know what [was] in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*

3) *So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, ... (NKJV)*

Yes, you got hungry, but He fed you. You got thirsty, but He gave you water to drink. He allowed you to encounter huge, seemingly unscalable obstacles and then He delivered you. Why?

3b) *... that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every [word] that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. (NKJV)*

We are to be changed by this journey from a puffed-up, self-important, self-reliant, vain, cocky, self-trusting person to one that knows that our Father will deliver us and take care of us and while we are on this journey, our physical needs will be provided by Him.

4) *Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.*

5) *You should know in your heart that as a man chastens ... (NKJV)*

"Chastens" is to train and to teach which is why we are on this journey. We're taught and trained to rely on God that we are to live by every word that comes out of His mouth.

5b) *... his son, [so] the Lord your God chastens (trains) you.*

6) *Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. (NKJV)*

Brethren, we with God's spirit must learn the destructive, hurtful nature of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It has to become part of who we are.

At the end of the Bible, in fact turn to Revelation 21. In the closing chapters we are given a vision of a time that, while we read these words, what is described is almost beyond our comprehension. We're not just observers in this, but we're also here to see and to feel and to hurt, and with God's spirit to understand to the depths of our being how much Satan's ways are destructive.

Revelation 21:3. *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them [and be] their God.*

4) *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

5) *Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

6) *And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. (NKJV)*

Brethren, we have been called as firstfruits to help and to serve and to lead and encourage the remainder of mankind through their pilgrimage. We can only do that because of the experiences we had while we made that journey. None of us would think of taking a guide that had never been down a trail. None of us would ever think of getting into a car with someone that's never driven or an airplane of a pilot that has never flown, or have a surgeon do an appendectomy that only stayed in a Holiday Inn one night. We would never think about that. You know what? God is not going to unleash us on His other sons and daughters until we have been seasoned, not just in our experiences, but this heart has been changed into what God knows, then we will look to Him and always give the glory to Him. We will be experienced guides and we will clearly know what lies just ahead of them. Why? Because we were there too. If we can get that vision in our minds, relying on God's promises, Jesus Christ's sacrifice and let Him lead us, nothing will distract us from our calling and the priceless potential as the Bride of Christ.

Final scripture; 1 John 2 and we will start in verse 5.

1 John 2:5. *But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.*

6) *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (NKJV)*

We are to follow in His footsteps. If we say we are Christians, we are on that journey that He took.

7) *Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.*

8) *Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. (NKJV)*

Brethren, as man sees it we are facing a very uncertain future which looks very dark and hopeless, but we should walk in the light of God's truth. We should be strengthened and settled as we face the days ahead.

Brethren, let's never forget we are on a journey and that journey is to change us so that we will be able to serve those that come after us and show them the joy of being in God's family.