

## **Prosperity and the Fear of the Lord Feast of Tabernacles – Day 3**

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Well, good morning, everyone! I'd like to give a special warm welcome to all those out there listening on the internet, particularly our satellite site in Elkhart. Got an e-mail last night from Shelby Farmer, who's attending there in the Elkhart site and she asked me to give a "Howdy" to all of you here in Idaho from the "Farmer clan" as she put it. I also wanted to give a special greeting to Paul Gibson. Paul's in a nursing home in Florida watching us on the internet. He has multiple sclerosis. And I just wanted you to know you were being thought of, Paul.

I also wanted to thank all of you for your prayers, your cards and letters, the calls, the e-mails. There were way too many for me to respond to everybody. And I apologize for not getting back with everyone from me personally.

I'm sure, as most of you are aware of, three weeks ago today I sent an e-mail to Rick Railston and I told him about an abscess I had. And I told him, I said, "Look, based upon my history of having had these issues before," I said, "I'm not expecting to be at the Feast this year."

And if you know Rick very well, he's a very positive, optimistic person. So he was trying to say, "Couldn't this possibly work out?"

The way I put it to Rick was I said, "Of course, God can do anything!" I said, "But realize what you're saying here. This would require God's intervening and altering the laws of physics and science here," I said, "to make this happen."

Well, as you know, he sent out an e-mail prayer request to all of you. And once the prayers started, I saw things I've never seen throughout all of my life in dealing with this! And that's why I'm standing here today. And I just want to say a "Thank you" to all of you because I know if it weren't for all of you, I wouldn't be standing here this morning.

And as Rick and I were talking earlier, when he was starting to compose this e-mail, he asked me. He said, "What do you want me to tell the Brethren?"

And I was just trying to lighten the mood and be funny about it. And I said, "Well, you can tell them that the technically scientific term for what I have is 'a pain in the rear.'" And I said, "So, while I'm happy to report that my having a pain in the rear has significantly improved, unfortunately, my ability to be a pain in the rear to others that really hasn't changed much!"

I was also joking with Dale Roecks as we were talking about how this trial was kind of playing out. And realize all of this was said in a joking context. But I made the comment to him, I said, "I had to be the rocket scientist who a month or two before the Feast gave a sermon on *Pre-Feast Trials* and how we should respond to those. And, of course, immediately got hit with one so that God could see how well I actually practice what I preach!"

And Dale was joking back and he pointed out, he said, "Yeah," he goes, "and the sermons you gave prior to that were on Job and his suffering and his trials. There's kind of a trend here." He goes, "Maybe you should consider talking about a different subject."

So I decided to take Dale up on his advice. So today we're going to talk about the subject of prosperity (laughter)!

Well, Brethren, as you know, we're all here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. And the Feast of Tabernacles is a time that we look forward to all year long for a variety of reasons, physical, and spiritual. But I think physically speaking one of the reasons that we look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles all year long is we enjoy a level of prosperity here at the Feast that we really don't have the rest of the year. If you think about, we save up our second tithe all throughout the year. And the income that we normally stretch over a twelve-month period—whatever your standard of living is—you save up ten percent of that and the vast majority of that you bring and use in a one-week period here at the Feast of Tabernacles. That's naturally going to result in a level of prosperity that you have here this week that you don't enjoy the rest of the year.

And, as a result of that, we oftentimes get to stay in nice resort locations like this. We oftentimes stay in housing that's probably a little better than what we typically live in throughout the year. We get a chance to go out and enjoy nice meals and go out to eat and go out to eat at nicer places than we normally would the rest of the year or certainly eat out more often than we can probably afford to the rest of the year.

We take part in other activities that we like to do again, oftentimes that we don't normally or are able to do the rest of the year. And it makes the Feast a special time.

And this level of prosperity, this enjoying this is something that God commanded us to do. It's part of the instructions for the Feast of Tabernacles. So by way of introduction, let's start off by looking at Deuteronomy chapter 16. This had been read prior to this in this Feast, but we're going to look at this again. Deuteronomy chapter 16 and we'll start in verse 13. And we're going to see here God's instructions in keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. He said:

***Deuteronomy 16:13.*** "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.

14) "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your [manservant] and your [maidservant] and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.

15) *"Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice. (NKJ)*

Now notice He said, "I'm going to bless the works of your hands and your produce so that you can rejoice." Now we know God gives a lot to physical and spiritual blessings, but the "works of our hands" that's a physical thing. And He's saying, "I'm going to bless the works of your hands and your produce so that you can rejoice at this Feast. I'm going to give you a level of prosperity at this so that you really have a good time. And see this is able to happen through second tithe that we save throughout the year. That's what enables us to have this prosperity.

Let's turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 14 and notice this. Deuteronomy chapter 14, we're going to read verse 22 is what where we'll start.

***Deuteronomy 14:22.*** *"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.*

23) *"And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. (NKJ)*

Now we're going to come back to that phrase in a moment.

***Deuteronomy 14:24.*** *"But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you,*

25) *"then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses.*

26) *"And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.*

27) *"You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. (NKJ)*

Now notice here He's saying, "Take this second tithe, save this up throughout the year." And, of course, this is for all of the Holy Days, but the vast majority of this, we all tend to save up for the Feast of Tabernacles. And He's saying, "When you use this, go out and have a good time! Whatever your heart desires, go have it. If you like staying in a nice place, well go rent yourself a nice place to stay. If you like having a good meal, if you enjoy a good steak, well go have a good steak. If you like desserts, if you like fruit, if you like cheesecake, you go have some. If you like the activities, if you like to go mountain biking, if you like to enjoy the water park, well go do it and have a good time." He's telling us to physically enjoy this and to really take part in it and really enjoy the abundance of it. He actually commands us to.

But notice something here. Now notice the context of what we just read. This whole section of Scripture is about second tithe and about saving it up and having that abundance when we come to the Feast. That is the entire context of what we just read.

Now let's go back and notice the end of verse 23 here. The very last phrase here, we'll find something interesting. We're doing this why?

**Deuteronomy 14:23.** *that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.* (NKJ)

Notice this wasn't in the context just specifically at the Feast of Tabernacles. This is specifically in the context of our second tithe and enjoying it on whatever our heart desires at the Feast! What is the connection between this prosperity and learning to fear the Lord our God always? Well, we're going to answer that question today. That's the focus of this sermon. So if you'd like a title for the sermon today, it's *Prosperity and the Fear of the Lord* because we're going to look at what is the connection here between this prosperity and learning to fear the Lord our God always.

Well, as we know, Brethren, we're here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles looking forward to a time in the future because this seven-day Festival—we're here for eight days, but the last day is the Last Great Day; it's a separate Festival—but the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows and looks forward to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, after He returns down to the earth and sets up His rule over this earth and what the earth will be like in that whole time period. That's what we're looking forward to and what this Feast pictures.

Well one of the things that this prosperity is teaching us is what this world's going to be like at that time. The world is going to be enjoying a level of prosperity when these prophecies are fulfilled that is not true today. We here in North America have a level of prosperity most of the world doesn't have at this current time, but even in North America there's still not prosperity everywhere. And if we look at the world in general, yes, there are areas that are very prosperous; there are areas that are having great starvation and famine, and live in extreme poverty. Well, that's not what the world's going to look like in the future.

Let's look at some of the prophecies that address this. Turn with me over to Amos chapter 9. Amos chapter 9, we're going to start reading in verse 13.

**Amos 9:13.** *"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.*

*14) I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.*

*15) I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.* (NKJ)

Now notice this is creating a picture here that the plowman is overcoming the reaper. In other words, they're still reaping the harvest of what happened from the last time, when it's time to plow and start getting ready to plant for the next time when you get a picture of what that looks like.

Now for myself, I work in downtown Dallas in a high-rise building. It's more of a corporate environment. I'm honestly not really in touch with the agricultural world at all. So to get a feel for what this would mean, how can I kind of tangibly get a feel for what this is really saying here? I talked to Dale and Laura Roecks about this because they're in the farming business. They farm as a career and understand a lot more of that world than myself. And I asked them, I said, "How can I kind of tangibly get a feel for what does it mean for the plowman to be overcoming a reaper?"

And here's the answer they gave me. They said, "Of course, there's some variables here. It would depend upon what crop you're talking about, what part of the world you're talking about." But they said, "Generally speaking, this would be about twice the yield of a normal crop."

So if you think about that, if on a regular basis, you're producing twice the yield of a normal crop and that's the norm, you're going to have extreme prosperity. You're going to have plenty of food to go around. There's not going to be shortages of food and people starving and such. You're going to have plenty of food to go around.

Let's look at a couple other Scriptures here that will also kind of paint out this picture of the prosperity here in the thousand-year reign. Let's turn over to Joel chapter 3. Joel chapter 3, we'll read verse 18.

**Joel 3:18.** *And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Acacias. (NKJ)*

Now notice again this picture of flowing with milk and plenty of new wine. We're having this prosperity and abundance is the picture we're getting here.

Let's go over to Isaiah chapter 25 and verse 6.

**Isaiah 25:6.** *And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people (NKJ)*

Now notice that. It's not just one part of the world. It's for everyone!

**Isaiah 25:6b.** *a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. (NKJ)*

Now notice that this is abundance that's available for the whole world. It's a time of prosperity that everyone gets to enjoy! That's what we're picturing here in the Feast of Tabernacles.

There are lessons here that we need to learn about this as we're picturing it. That's part of the purpose of what we're going to see here is learning to fear the Lord our God always. Prosperity for human beings is not always a good thing. Prosperity can be a double-edged sword. It can be a curse as much as it is a blessing if we don't learn to handle it properly, if we don't learn to manage it and deal with it maturely. And that's part of the lessons of what we're here to learn at the Feast of Tabernacles is how to properly deal this.

Think of it like this. I was watching TV this past month or two and I came across a show on TV. It's one of these "news" kind of specials. And it was called "The Curse of the Lottery." And what they had done is they had taken a whole bunch of lottery winners and they had followed-up with their life and kind of saw how did life turn out for them after they got this windfall of cash. After they won these millions, how did things turn out for them over time? And they kind of followed-up with them. And person after person after person had bad results. That's why they called it "The Curse of the Lottery."

Because see, oftentimes, we as physical human beings we think we work on our jobs and we slave away at times just trying to make ends meet. And we deal with all the stresses of that and we think, "Man, if I could just be fortunate and like win the lottery!" I'm not suggesting we play the lottery, but I'm saying that's something we tend to think of as humans. "Man, if I could just be wealthy like that, if I could just get this windfall of millions of dollars, my life would be wonderful! Man, I could quit my job and I wouldn't have to put up with that annoying boss who's on my case all the time. And I wouldn't have to work like this and slave away. Man, I'd go buy myself a nice vacation home in an exotic location that I love. Man, I could just retire and enjoy life and it would just be wonderful."

Well, very often it's the opposite results if people don't handle it properly.

Because in this case they followed-up with person after person. And yes, when they won their millions, they were elated. They were joyous. They were happy. They quit their jobs. They thought, "Man, I can retire now and life will be wonderful."

And in many cases, they followed-up over time and previously happy families were now divorced. They were now at war with each other. They were fighting over this and how to use the wealth and who got it and such. In many cases, it was even worse than that! And how they handled it and how they lived their lives afterwards, a number of them wound up in prison because they just kind of went crazy after they had all this prosperity. They didn't know how to handle it. In some cases, they wound up committing suicide.

It just really in many cases, it just wrecked their lives. And I'm not suggesting that was everybody who's ever won the lottery, but my point is that in many, many cases, the storybook scenario that we all think, "Man, if I just had that happen to me, everything would be great afterwards" it wasn't. And in a number of cases, people specifically said, "If I could go back to that moment when I won that knowing what I know now, I would rip up the ticket and I wouldn't bring this upon my life because it brought me ruin."

Because see what happens is people oftentimes look at physical prosperity as an end within itself. If we're constantly seeking that and not properly managing that and not understanding it, it becomes a curse rather than a blessing. Because you see one of the lessons in all of this is that the physical prosperity of and by itself will not satisfy us because our physical desires as human beings, we never get enough.

Let's look at an example in the Bible of a man who had—you might say was a lottery winner. You might even say his life on an on-going basis was kind of like one big long Feast of Tabernacles when it comes from a prosperity standpoint.

Turn with me to the Book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 2 is where we're going to start. And let me give a little bit of backup information here. I'm sure we're all familiar with the story of Solomon. We all know he was King David's son. He became king of Israel.

And as Solomon first became king, God comes to him and asks him, "Tell me what you want." Basically, "Give me your wish." It was kind of like the old stories we hear of the genie, "Give me your wishes and I'll give you what you want." Well, God said, "I'll give you one wish. What would you like?" Well, Solomon made a smart request. He asked for wisdom. He didn't ask for riches. He told God, "I'm going to be king of Your people. I ask for wisdom to do that." And God said, "Okay. Since you've asked for wisdom, I'm going to give you wealth as well. In fact, I'm going to make you wealthier than anyone that's lived before you." So He just showered him with wealth and it was like Solomon won the lottery. He just had the millions dumped upon him.

Well, Solomon didn't handle that in some of the smartest ways. Let's read his story and see what he learned from this. Ecclesiastes chapter 2 and verse 1:

***Ecclesiastes 2:1.*** *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity.*

*2) I said of laughter—"[It is] madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"*

*3) I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. (NKJ)*

Now notice he chose to learn by hard core trial and error, from experience. And he had to learn some lessons the hard way.

Let's pick up in verse 4:

**Ecclesiastes 2:4.** *I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*

5) *I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.*

6) *I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.*

7) *I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all [those] who were in Jerusalem before me.*

8) *I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.*

9) *So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem.*

*Also my wisdom remained with me.*

10) *Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. (NKJ)*

And notice his comment here, "Whatever his heart desired". Remember what we read in Deuteronomy 14 about second tithe? God said, "Whatever makes you happy. Whatever your heart desires, you can go out and use your second tithe." Of course, that's within God's Law, obviously. But He's saying, "Whatever you want, just go out and get it."

Solomon's life was essentially, if you look at it from a prosperity standpoint, his life was one long Feast of Tabernacles! He was able to get whatever he wanted all the time. But what did he learn from that?

Look down here in verse 11.

**Ecclesiastes 2:11.** *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. (NKJ)*

What he figured out was is our physical desires, we always want more. And if we just look at pursuing physical pleasure and abundance and the good things of our physical life, it will never completely satisfy us because if you neglect the spiritual, the physical just never takes care of it all. And let's see why that is. Let's turn back over to Ecclesiastes chapter 1 just across the page here. We'll start reading in verse 7. It says:

**Ecclesiastes 1:7.** *All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again.*

8) *All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (NKJ)*

What it's saying here is it's never enough for our physical desires. We can see lovely scenery and things that we like. We can hear beautiful music. And guess what? Tomorrow we want to see some more! We want to hear some more beautiful music. We want to go out and see something more spectacular that we haven't seen before



because that's how we're wired as physical human beings. We always want more. We always want to do it again. Have some more experience or find something more incredible because physically that's just how it is. We never really get enough. That's just how we're wired and we have to understand that and know how to manage it.

Turn over to Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and we'll see another point here Solomon made, kind of back up this same idea. It says in verse 10:

***Ecclesiastes 5:10. He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity. (NKJ)***

See even with money if we don't know how to properly manage it, we always want more. There's always something more we can get. There's always a bigger house we can get. There's a nicer car we can get. There's more something exotic. There's another place we haven't been that we can travel to. There's always something more that we can add that we don't already have. So we have to learn how to manage those physical desires.

And, yes, God intends for us to enjoy the good things in life. We read it before when He says, "Come to the Feast of Tabernacles. I'm going to bless the works of your hands. I'm going to see that you have abundance so that you can have a good time." And I want you to have a good time." He said, "I want you to go out and whatever makes you happy, what good things that you long for, well go do it." He said, "But I want you to realize that's not an end in and of itself." You have to properly manage that and you have to be able to put that in the right context because if you're neglecting the spiritual, the physical is never going to make you happy.

It's kind of like pouring water into a strainer. Ever seen like those strainers used for spaghetti and stuff? (I'm not much of a cook, but I've seen those.) And you know if you pour water into that, what happens? It just pours out the bottom. And if you're trying to fill it up, it never happens. You just keep pouring, it just keeps pouring out the bottom.

Well, it's kind of the same idea. You're never going to fill it up. It's never going to get full and say, "It's enough," because we always want some more. That's just kind of how we're designed as people and we have to realize that we have to manage that.

Well, see there are two things that we have at the Feast of Tabernacles here that's typically different than our normal every day average lives. One of them is obvious that we've talked about. It's physical wealth and abundance. Again, you take ten percent of the income that you normally stretch over a twelve-month period, you focus that ten percent on a week, you're going to have wealth that you don't have the rest of the year just by simple math.

There's another thing that we have though—time. Because think about it! What do you do the rest of your life? Unless you're retired, you're typically working at a job forty plus hours a week if not fifty, sixty, depending upon the job you have and the boss that you

have. You may be working very long hours. And what happens when you come home oftentimes? You've been working fifty hours a week and then you come home and then you've got to take care of house. Then you've got to run errands and then you've got to do maintenance on the house. You've got to take care of the yard. You've got to run errands. You're constantly working of just getting by day by day and taking care of your normal necessities. It's just kind of how life works.

Well, what do you find here at the Feast of Tabernacles? You're on vacation. You've got a lot of extra time. You don't just have extra money to do things. You have the time to do it. And see we have to properly learn how to manage that as well because that's one of the major things with prosperity. That's one of the things that happened with these individuals that won the lottery. Suddenly they can quit their job and they get bored. What do I do with myself now?

We have a saying in today's world that typifies kind of what tends to happen if people don't effectively deal with that. It's an old saying that goes, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." Because what tends to happen if someone has too much free time on their hands and doesn't learn how to effectively manage that? What do we tend to do? We tend to find ways to get ourselves in trouble. Don't we? We tend to find ways to be destructive to ourselves, to be destructive to others. We just tend to find ways to get into trouble. We tend to find ourselves at times experimenting with things that we know we're not supposed to because the temptations are there. Again, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." He tends to come after us and toy with us and get us off in the ditch. It's something we have to effectively learn how to manage.

That's one of the things that we're here at the Feast to realize because what did God tell us to do? He sent us here at the Feast, He gives us abundance, and said, "Have a good time. Enjoy the good things in life, but I want you to come to Church every day." Because what would we do if He didn't tell us that? I mean, naturally, hey you send somebody off to a nice exotic location, give them plenty of money to spend, and say, "Go have a good time." What would we do? We'd wind up every day going, "Man, there's lots of activities I want to do. There are all these restaurants I've got to check out. I got to go see all the sites." And we would do that all day long and God would get squeezed out.

So He says, "Yeah, I want you to have a good time, and I want you to come to Church every day and focus on how to build a relationship with me along the way, because this isn't just about the physical. Yes, I want you to have a good time. Enjoy yourself. But learn how to balance that because if you don't, you'll wind up in the ditch." And see that's what we have to learn how to effectively manage with this.

Now let's look at a couple of Biblical examples where God did this very thing. He placed individuals in a situation very similar to what the thousand-year reign of Christ would be like for the purpose of them to be able to have this extra time to develop a relationship with God that they may learn to fear the Lord their God always. Let's look at their examples and what we can learn from it.

Let's turn over to Genesis chapter 2. Go back to the Garden of Eden. Genesis chapter 2 and we'll start reading in verse 8. But just to give a little background here. As you know, God creates Adam and He places him in the garden, places him in the Garden of Eden, kind of a rather ideal setting. And let's notice here. Let's kind of read some of the details and we'll see as this plays out here. In Genesis chapter 2 and verse 8:

**Genesis 2:8.** *The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.*

9) *And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (NKJ)*

Now jump down to verse 15:

**Genesis 2:15.** *Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*

16) *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; (NKJ)*

Now notice these trees were already producing fruit.

**Genesis 2:17.** *"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (NKJ)*

Now this is Adam. Of course, Eve gets created a few verses later here. But notice the setting where He's placed them. He's put them in this ideal garden and said, "Hey, this is all available to you." Now notice these trees were already producing fruit. And God lays it out and says, "Hey, you can eat of any of this. There's this one tree in the middle of the garden. That's off limits! Stay away from that one." But notice the setting that he is in.

Now, if we were to try to produce a garden like this in today's world, that would be a lot of work! Because you wouldn't just be able to walk into something and it's all here provided for you and it's all just producing fruit and all you've got to do is the maintenance on it. No, we'd be planting the trees. There would be watering and fertilizing them and pruning them and over time trying to get all this developed. And there'd be lots of sweat and toil and work in this. And then you've got to feed yourself and sustain yourself somehow during the time that you're doing all this to get all of this up and developed and going.

Adam gets to skip all of this! God just plucks him down in the middle of this and says, "All this is provided for you. Just do the upkeep on it. And he doesn't have to work his brains out trying to keep all this going. And we'll notice this particularly later when we talk about the curse he gets after he sins. It's obvious if you read the language there the situation he was in here, but I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

But notice as a result, this gives Adam and Eve a lot of free time. Just think about it. What do you do most of the time during your daily life? You're working trying to make ends meet. You're working trying to take care of your daily necessities. And you're not having to do nearly so much work because all of this is provided. They've just got to do some maintenance on it. This gives them a lot of free time. What God intended for this time to be for though was to help them develop a relationship with Him.

But notice what I said before, "An idle mind tends to be the devil's workshop." And what tends to happen is Satan tends to come mess with us—our boredom another thing there—and get us what? Experimenting oftentimes with things we shouldn't be and going into areas where we know is wrong and we shouldn't be messing with. That's exactly what happened.

Let's go down to chapter 3 and verse 1:

**Genesis 3:1.** Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3) "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

4) Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5) "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (NKJ)

Now notice this. God had told them upfront, "You've got all this available to you. There's the tree in the middle. Leave that alone!"

So what do they do? They have all this time on their hands. Satan comes and toys with them. "No, no, no! You're missing out. You should experiment with that one! You should go touch the one in the middle because God's holding out the good stuff from man." So what did he do? They go and they, "Well, let's try it out. Let's experiment with it." And they go and they sin with it.

But now let's turn over to verse 17. As you know from being familiar with the story, after they sinned, God addresses Satan and addresses his part in this. Then He talks to Eve and addresses her part in this. But let's just focus on what He says to Adam because this really tells us about the environment and what they were in as God pronounces his curse on him. In verse 17, he says:

**Genesis 3:17.** *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your*

life.

18) *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.*

19) *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*" (NKJ)

Now notice what He's saying here. Obviously, He's saying, "From this point forward, you're going to have to work really hard. You're going to sweat. You're going to toil. It's going to be difficult. Times are going to be hard." Obviously, by contrast, that's not what it was like before. In the Garden of Eden, he wasn't having to work with the sweat of his brow and toiling to make it all work. He wasn't having to fight thorns and thistles to get all the plants and the trees to grow and such. Otherwise, it wouldn't be a meaningful statement. Obviously, this was a change. So he wasn't having to do all of this in the Garden of Eden. It was far easier. Now He's saying, "From this point forward, you're going to have to work your tail off just trying to meet your daily necessities, just trying to make food, trying to put food on the table and shelter over your head and clothes on your back. You're going to have to work constantly to make this happen. And this is going to be a major change for you."

Isn't that oftentimes kind of what our lives are like? We're not necessarily in the farming business. But when you think about your jobs, again oftentimes do you work fifty, sixty hours a week just paying the bills, putting a roof over your head, taking care of your daily necessities? That's what happened. If you think about this just specifically in the example of what God was saying to Adam here, He was telling him how difficult it was going to be now just to grow things.

Now several years ago I worked for an insurance company. And, as a lot of you know, I'm a corporate recruiter. And I did recruiting for them as well. One of the kinds of the positions I used to recruit for was sales positions. And if you're familiar with insurance sales at all, it's a tough business. It's something if you're good at, you can make a lot of money at, but it's not easy work. And probably the vast majority of people that go into that don't wind up real successful out of it.

But the market I worked with, the company that I worked with, we focused on rural farming communities. You might say it was kind of their target market for the products they were selling. And my boss used to tell me, he said, "We love it if we can recruit someone to come to work for us who's from a farming background." And here's why he said this. He said, "People that have grown up on a farm and do that for a living," he said, "they're used to working sunup to sundown seven days a week because there's no such thing as a lazy farmer. "They starve to death." He said, "That's an industry where you've got to work and you've got to work constantly. And if someone has that work ethic, we can train them everything we need to know about this business. We can teach them that, but we can't teach them that work ethic." Because that's what it takes to survive in this type of thing. To constantly get things to grow, like He said, "From the thorns and the thistles and the sweat of your brow, you're going to work constantly to make a crop grow because that's what it takes in today's world."

Now let's look over at another example with ancient Israel. As we know, they wound up in captivity. You can turn over to the Book of Exodus. And they wound up in captivity in Egypt under some very harsh circumstances.

What we're going to see is when God delivered them and took them out of Egypt, tried to take them to the Promised Land, His objective was to set them up in an environment, again, very similar to the Garden of Eden of what Adam and Eve had and what He was trying to do with Adam and Eve and very similar to what the thousand-year reign of Christ is going to be like on this earth. A situation, again, where they had prosperity and they had lots of free time with the objective being for them to use that time to develop a relationship with God. And, again, to enjoy the physical benefits of it all, the good things of life, but to balance that with building a relationship with God and learning to fear Him. And to use that time for that, not squeeze it all out with just the physical pursuits.

Let's notice kind of where they were at first of all when they were in Egypt, what their life was like. Let's go to Exodus chapter 1 and verse 8.

**Exodus 1:8.** *Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*

9) *And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;*

10) *"come, let us deal [wisely] with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."*

11) *Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.*

12) *But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.*

13) *So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.*

14) *And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor. (NKJ)*

So see they did have much in the way of any free time. They were slaves. And they had to work hard all day long. When you come from a day like that, you're exhausted. You just collapse. Then you've got to sleep and get up and do it again the next day! And that's the kind of life that they lived there.

As we all know, they cried out to God and said, "Hey, please deliver us from this. Take us out of this mess!" And God heard them. He sent Moses to deliver and take them out of that. And again, His objective was to take them into an environment very similar to what the thousand-year reign will be like. He walks them in and tries to give them prosperity, but again tells them how to use this prosperity. And, of course, we know how the movie ends. They don't do a successful job of doing that.

But let's look at what He was to take them to. Turn over to Exodus chapter 23. Exodus chapter 23 and verse 23, it says:

**Exodus 23:23.** *"For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.*

24) *"You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.*

25) *"So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you.*

26) *"No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. (NKJ)*

He goes, "I'm going to make life good for you here."

**Exodus 23:27.** *"I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.*

28) *"And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.*

29) *"I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you.*

30) *"Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. (NKJ)*

What He was ultimately doing here was moving them into already established cities. That was the objective and we're going to see that even articulated a little more clearly in a minute here. But He was moving them into areas that were already developed. They didn't have to develop these cities and build them from scratch. God was actually handing all this to them.

And if they had followed His instructions all the way as He originally intended here, He didn't intend for them to have to go to war or fight. He said here, "Look, I'm going to drive them out before you. I'll send fear and I'll send hornets and I'll push them out of the way." Israel wound up going to war kind of on their own later and then God developed some rules of war. But His intention was to just drive them out and to do it for them. And He would be their leader. He would be their warrior. He would take care of all of this for them.

And then He says, "I'll hand all this to you and I'll even do it slowly" because He knew if he just drove them all out with Israel's population not being big enough to inhabit the land what would happen? Things would break down. There's nobody here maintaining what belongs here to the cities. The animals would take over it. And it wouldn't be the environment He was looking for because He was looking to give them, again, already established cities where all this was already laid out for them and they would just walk in and take possession of it. That was the objective as to why it would be slowly developed and handed to them.

Turn over to Joshua chapter 24 and we'll see this some more here. It would help if I was in Joshua and not Judges. Joshua chapter 24, we'll start reading in verse 12.

**Joshua 24:12.** *'I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow.*

*13) 'I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'* (NKJ)

Now notice, He says, "I'm giving you intact cities. I'm handing you all this and you don't have to do all the work that it would take to develop this." Because think about this. If they go in there and it's just land in a wilderness, then you've got to start cutting things down. You've got to start clearing out land. You've got to start putting up buildings. There's lots of work and toil that goes into that and it takes a lot of time to get everything up and developed before you can really start enjoying it. And what God did was, "No, I'm going to take you in and basically have all this cleared out. It's already developed. You can just walk in and enjoy it. And you don't have to do all this work to put it altogether. So I'm going to make life a lot easier on you."

But why was He doing that? Let's notice in verse 14.

**Joshua 4:14.** *"Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!"* (NKJ)

The reason He was doing all of this was so they would have time to develop a relationship with Him and they would get to learn His way of life and have the spiritual side. Of course, we know that He wasn't calling ancient Israel to salvation as He is the Church, but still the objective was the same of teaching them how to be a model nation, teaching them how to live His ways.

So that's the same objective He's focusing on here with us at the Feast. He's trying to get us to learn how to handle prosperity, to learn His ways, to be preparing us for our future job.

Let's also notice over in Deuteronomy chapter 8. We'll get a little clearer picture of the prosperity that He was giving Israel in taking them into the Promised Land here. Deuteronomy chapter 8 and we'll start here in verse 6:

**Deuteronomy 8:6.** *"Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.*

*7) "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills;*

*8) "a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;*

*9) "a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a*



*land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper.*

10) *"When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. (NKJ)*

And notice it wasn't just intact cities. This was prime real estate here. This was flowing with milk and honey. "And all of the good things are just already here provided for you. The buildings are already built up. The cities are already here. You can just walk in and take it!"

This is a life of ease in many ways, but He says, "Your point here is you've got to remember I'm giving you this for a reason. You need to be obeying me. You need to be developing a relationship with me and learning my ways because that's why we're going this."

Because what tends to happen to us if we forget that and we have prosperity? Because prosperity can be a two-edged sword as I mentioned. It can be a great blessing. It can be a great curse. But what tends to happen over time if we have prosperity when God blesses us with it, we can start taking it for granted. We can start raising our level of normal, you might say. Much of our perspective in life depends upon the standard we use for comparison. If we're like ancient Israel, when you've been in toil and you've been through hard times and all of a sudden you have something good, you like "Wow, I'm so thankful! This is so much better than what I had before. But what tends to happen sometimes over time if we have it good and we have it good for an extended period of time, it becomes our definition of normal.

And then our natural desires of we always want more, well, then we're not so thankful that we have this. We wish we had better because we always want more. We always want something better than what we have. That's our natural carnal desires as humans. So we always kind of increase our level of what we want because so much of our perspective in life depends upon the standard we use for comparison.

Because it's so much easier for us to look at the guy who has it better than us and think, "Man, if only I had what they have!" It's not as easy for us to turn around and go "Man, I've got it so good because look at all the people who don't have it as good as I do. And I should be really grateful and thankful for what I have." No, we generally tend to look at "Why don't I have it as good as so and so? Why does the Joe just across the street have things so much better than I do?" I'm getting ripped off!" That tends to be we carnally tend to look at it.

But God specifically warned ancient Israel about this pitfall because He told them, "Look, I'm sending you into all this prosperity, but I want you to know, I want you to be aware that you need to be using this properly because if you don't, your natural desires are going to be to take this for granted.

Let's pick up here now in verse 11:

**Deuteronomy 8:11.** *"Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,*

12) *"lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;*

13) *"and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;*

14) *"when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*

15) *"who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the [rock of flint];*

16) *"who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end—*

17) *"then you say in your heart, 'My power and [my] might [and] my hand have gained me this wealth.' (NKJ)*

What happens is that we forget that God blessed us and that He made it all happen and we start thinking, "I'm big and bad and I made all this happen myself. And this is as a result of my work." It's kind of like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 when he's walking around saying, "Isn't this great Babylon that I have done with my power and my might and I made it all happen?" And then God says, "Oh, wait a minute. Watch this! I'll turn you into a beast. I'll show you who really made all this happen." Because that's our natural carnal desire!

We change our definition of normal and we decide "Okay, I've done all this" and we get complacent and we start taking it for granted. And we get full of ourselves and think that we did it all because again, that's the other side of prosperity that can happen. That's the other side of the sword.

Let's just pick up reading here, then in verse 18.

**Deuteronomy 8:18.** *"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

19) *"Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.*

20) *"As the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God. (NKJ)*

And we know that's what ultimately happened. He sends Israel into the Promised Land. He gives them all these wonderful things and what happened? They quickly forgot about God. They quickly started taking on the religions of the areas of which they had inhabited. And they totally forget about God. They stop keeping His Commandments. They stop keeping the Holy Days. And they go on.

Well, eventually what does God have to do? He has to send them into captivity. Because He said, "If you do this long-term, you're going to perish. I'm going to wind up taking you out of it." And that's what He eventually had to do because they didn't learn how to manage prosperity. They didn't learn the lessons here that yes, God gave them all these good physical things, but it's just physical. Yes, there is joy in that. It's nice to live the good life and have all these good things.

But if that's all we're looking to, it quickly becomes a curse. It quickly becomes a problem and it becomes to hurt us as much as it helped us. And it can destroy us spiritually if we're not, again, learning how to balance this properly and looking at this from the proper perspective.

We always have to remember that God out of His mercy has given us the prosperity. He's given us this wealth. He's given us everything that we have. We have to always be grateful for that and also realizing that just when He blesses us with prosperity, we need to make sure we're also spending the time to get to know Him and seeking His will in our lives and not letting the physical crowd out everything else.

God wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to enjoy the good things, but He also doesn't want the good things to become a curse and to wind up hurting us. He wants it to be a benefit for us. And He knows our physical carnal nature is we tend to go towards destruction! We tend to turn things negative and to hurt ourselves. It's our natural inclination.

He warns us against this over in the New Testament. Turn over to Luke chapter 12. Luke chapter 12 and we'll start reading in verse 15.

***Luke 12:15.*** *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (NKJ)*

In other words, the physical only does so much.

***Luke 12:16.*** *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.*

*17) "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'*

*18) "So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.*

*19) 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for [you for] many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" (NKJ)*

In other words, "I've won the lottery and I'm just going to enjoy life! I'm just going to sit back and enjoy all the physical things that I have."

**Luke 12:20.** *"But God said to him, '[You] Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'  
21) "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (NKJ)*

So He's not saying that physical prosperity is inherently bad. It's not. Having physical good things is good. It can be an enjoyable thing, but He's pointing out it can be a curse because we as physical human beings can start trusting in it. And we can be so fascinated by that that we forget about God. We forget about how much we need Him and how we need to be developing that relationship with Him. And we get totally focused on all the physical pursuits. And God gets completely pushed out and ultimately winds up destroying us if we don't properly learn how to manage that.

Because you see that's one of the lessons we're learning here at the Feast of Tabernacles is how to learn to deal with abundance, but also make sure that we're developing a relationship with God, that we're using the free time that we have to do that so that we're learning to fear the Lord our God always.

Because we're here picturing the Kingdom of God coming and ruling over this world for the thousand-year reign of that. And although, again, the physical good things are great, we have to realize the Kingdom of God is spiritual. It's not just about the physical goodness that can be provided for us.

Let's turn over to Romans chapter 14. Romans chapter 14 and we're going to start reading in verse 16. It says:

**Romans 14:16.** *Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;  
17) for the kingdom of God is not [food] and [drink], (NKJ)*

In other words, it's not physical.

**Romans 14:16b.** *but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.  
18) For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.  
19) Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (NKJ)*

He's telling us, "Physical things are good." It's enjoyable, but the Kingdom of God is about being spiritual. It's about developing righteousness. It's about developing a relationship with God and becoming like Him and developing His character. That's what really prepares us to fulfill the job that we're here picturing is developing that character.

Yes, it's enjoyable to take part in all the physical enjoyment of it and God wants us to. He wants us to look forward to this and see this time of year as something fun and exciting that we're going to enjoy, but He want us to make sure that we're focused on what it's really all about.

What it's really all about is the Kingdom of God and developing the righteousness, developing God's character in our life, and using the extra time that we have to be able to do that and to further that relationship so that we're actually here to see these prophecies be fulfilled and we're a part of them.

Because if all we do in this seven days is just have a blast and try to enjoy all the physical abundance and try to eat in all the nice restaurants we have and go shopping and do all the fun things—again, nothing wrong inherently with that—but if that's all we do, we've missed the point! We've completely missed the point of why we're here and what we're being prepared for. And worst of all when these prophecies are all fulfilled and when they come to life, we won't be there and be a part of it because we'll have missed the whole point of what it's all about.

Another very big important part of all of this is: Think about the role that we're going to play when all of this is fulfilled. We're all here called as being firstfruits. And if we live our lives right, that means we're going to be a part of the first resurrection. So when Christ returns, we're taken up to the marriage supper, we become part of the Bride of Christ and we're spiritual and part of the reigning government over the earth when this is all fulfilled.

So our role is not to sit here and enjoy the land flowing with milk and honey and all the physical blessings. Our job is to be ministering to everyone else on this planet and taking care of them, helping them to develop a relationship with God through all of this time. That's the role that we're going to be playing. Our role is not just to enjoy all the abundance that's going to be provided. Our job is going to be to provide the abundance and to help everyone else learn how to handle it and how to manage it. And we first have to do that.

See when we're thinking of this Feast and how we handle all of this, we need to be developing that character that we're looking out for the needs of others. It says, "and pursue ... the things by which one may edify another," because that's the point of what we're going to be doing, our job that we're picturing.

Again, we're not being called so we can get ourselves in the Kingdom of God. Yes, that's part of the purpose of what we're doing but we're being called into that role so that we can take care of everyone else. So that we can try to get them into the Kingdom of God and we can work with them and minister to them. And we picture that as well in how we handle this Feast of Tabernacles.

Let's turn back over to Deuteronomy chapter 16 where we started. We read this section when we first started here today. We're going to focus now just specifically on verse 14.

Now we've talked a lot about the physical abundance that we have here at the Feast. And like I said God commands us to enjoy that, wants us to enjoy that.

But notice also He didn't tell us just to rejoice for ourselves and not just have a good time just focused on myself and what makes my heart happy. Let's read verse 14 again.

**Deuteronomy 16:14.** *"And you shall rejoice in your feast, (NKJ)*

But notice what else.

**Deuteronomy 16:14b.** *you and your son and your daughter, your [manservant] and your [maidservant] and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. (NKJ)*

The command wasn't just that we go out and enjoy whatever we like and whatever makes our heart happy. Yes, we were to do that and have a good time and to enjoy it.

But we're also specifically told, "Look out for the needs of others. Make sure that you're sharing this with others. That when you have abundance and you've been blessed with a lot, that you're looking out for the needs of others who maybe don't have so much abundance and what their needs are" because that's developing that mindset and that character that we look out for the needs of others, that we help others when they need it.

Because, again, what are we being trained for? Not to just enjoy the Kingdom and go "Wow! I'm so glad I'm here. I love all this abundance!" No, we're being called into a job. When we get basically placed in the positions of kings and priests, don't think of that as a title. Think of that as a job description.

Oftentimes you can look at a job like that and think, "Well, I'll get this title. I get to be a king. I get to be a priest. I get a badge put on." No, you got a job description is what you got because you're being called for this to do a specific job and to fulfill this function and to serve everyone else. That's the point of all of this—that's why all this took place. Because sometimes we sit and think, "Wow, I'm going to be a king. That'll be so glorious." True, but, again, what does a king do? And what functions does He want us to carry out? That's to minister to everyone else.

Again, we're not called to get ourselves in the Kingdom of God. We're called to help everyone else get there. That's the whole purpose of being a firstfruit is that we get called to being placed into a job to then turn around and immediately help everyone else make it to the same place. And our whole focus during this whole time is these prophecies get fulfilled—the time we're here picturing—is, again, not to just to enjoy it for ourselves, but to be focused on how we can help everyone else learn these same things, how we can help them wind up being a part of the Kingdom of God and to build that relationship with God to handle the prosperity that's being given to them and to have a successful outcome to their lives.

So, Brethren, as we're here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, it's wonderful that God blesses the works of our hands and our produce so that we can have a level of

prosperity here that we don't have the rest of the year. And, as physical human beings, we look forward to that every year. We look forward to the activities that we want to do or maybe side trips that we want to take to and from the Feast and such. And God intended for us to have a good time with that. He intended for that to be a blessing. But let's remember as we keep this Feast of Tabernacles, what our role really is. We're here learning how to deal with prosperity. And we're also being trained for a job that we look out for the needs of everyone else. So, as we're keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and enjoying this prosperity, let's make sure that we're learning to fear the Lord our God always.