

Should We Rule With a Rod of Iron?

Feast of Tabernacles

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We want to talk today about a very important subject that concerns every one of us in the here and now but even more importantly will concern us in the Millennium that we're here to celebrate today. When I first came in the church in the 1960s and over the ensuing years, much was written and preached about God ruling with a "rod of iron," and, in the Millennium that we were going to rule with a rod of iron.

Ruling with a rod of iron in those days—in the early days of the Worldwide Church of God—meant a militaristic style of discipline and order. Orders were given. They were obeyed without question. Title and rank were emphasized and disobedience was harshly dealt with. So, we became used to that. The elders and the deacons followed that example and that model, thinking this was the way that we should rule in this life now and in the life to come.

In my early years as a deacon in the 1960s and as an elder in the early '70s, I did too. I fell in lockstep with all of that because I just had gotten out of four years of military school and a few years in the Air Force. And, I felt right at home. Nothing changed.

Now the questions before us today are: Should we rule with a Rod of Iron? Is Christ going to rule this way in the Millennium and is this the way we're going to be ruling in the Millennium? Is this the way the government should work in God's church today? Yet, are there times when a rod of iron should be used? Or, is there an additional way? And, we want to look at all of that today because this is a critical subject for each and every one of us today and as we celebrate the thousand years of Christ's rule.

The title of the sermon is:

Should We Rule with a Rod of Iron?

The first point we're going to make is this.

1. The world is going to oppose Christ when He returns.

It's important to understand that. We're going to look at a couple of scriptures. We could make a whole sermon on this, but let's just look at Revelation 16 and we'll begin in verse 12. We're going to see how this happens.

Revelation 16:12. *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. (KJV)*

Now Revelation 16 verse 13, this is important here.

13) And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. (KJV)

Notice this. This tells us what these spirits are.

14) For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, ... (KJV)

That's the entire earth. Notice the purpose.

14b) ... to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (KJV)

So, we see here that demons are inhabiting humans to provoke them to battle against Christ when He returns. Now let's see that in scripture, the next chapter over, Revelation 17:12, to see whom they battle. What is the object of their fight?

Revelation 17:12. *And the ten horns which [you saw] are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour ... (KJV)*

13) These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. (KJV)

Notice that they give their power and strength to the beast, who is being inhabited by demons.

Verse 14 tells us whom they're going to fight.

14) These shall make war with the Lamb, ..., (KJV)

That is their purpose. They're being provoked by demons and by Satan himself to make war with Christ when He returns. The good news is:

14b) ... and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. (KJV)

That can only be the firstfruits with Him—*called, chosen, and faithful.*

So, we see here Satan, the beast, the ten kings, and the entire world will attempt to prevent Christ from returning by waging war. And, we see here that humans and their leaders are openly rebelling against Jesus Christ, who is returning to reclaim this world. So, the first point is the whole world is going to oppose Jesus Christ when He returns.

2. A rod of iron is necessary when facing outright rebellion.

Why is that? Why would rebellion be so singled out? Let's go to 1 Samuel 15, a very familiar scripture. We'll read verse 23, the first sentence of verse 23. Obviously, Saul rebelled against God and Samuel is stating an eternal principle. Remember the world is going to be in rebellion against God. And, this is an eternal principle. Notice what it says.

1 Samuel 15:23, *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness ... (KJV)*

Meaning, stubbornly wanting their way rather than Christ's way:

23b) ... is as iniquity and idolatry.... (KJV)

This principle is for all eternity. Therefore, when someone rebels and God says, "It's like witchcraft. It's like iniquity. It's like idolatry," harsh measures are necessary to stop that.

The latter sentence of verse 23:

23b) Because [you (referring to Saul) have] rejected the word of the Lord, ... (KJV)

Again, this is a principle applies to anybody who rejects the word of the Lord, particularly the kings of this earth and Satan himself, obviously, and the beast and false prophet. Samuel goes onto say:

23 continued) he [has] also rejected [you] from being king. (KJV)

This was because of Saul's rebellion of not killing the Amalekites. The principle is that God views rebellion as witchcraft.

Let's go to Proverbs 17:11 and see a scripture that ties in directly about what we're talking about and this principle of rebellion and what is necessary to take it down. This refers to Saul, but it also refers to anyone who is opposing God and Christ. Proverbs 17:11, it says:

Proverbs 17:11. *An evil man [seeks] only rebellion: ... (KJV)*

This is because an evil person is going against God and God's way, but notice the consequence.

11b) ... therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him. (KJV)

The word "cruel" in the Hebrew can also mean *terrible*. How would you like a terrible messenger coming after you or me? We wouldn't like that.

Look at the change in Saul's life after his rebellion. His life totally changed. Look at Korah's end when he rebelled and the earth opened up and swallowed him and all the minions that were following him.

We see here that to those who are in rebellion, a cruel messenger, a terrible messenger is sent against that individual or group of individuals. And, that's going to happen at Christ's return.

Now the term "rod of iron" only occurs four times in the Bible, in the Old Testament. We're going to look at three right now. We'll save the fourth for another point. We're going to see that these three apply to open rebellion. Let's go to Psalm 2 and verse 7. We're going to kill two birds with one stone here because Revelation 2:27 quotes Psalms 2 and verse 7. They are essentially the same, but we'll just go to Psalm 2:7. This applies directly to Christ's return and to putting down open rebellion and wickedness.

Psalm 2:7. *I will declare the decree: the Lord [has] said unto me, [You are] my Son; this day have I begotten [you]. (KJV)*

Referring, obviously, to Jesus Christ.

8) Ask of me, ... (KJV)

Notice what Christ will be given.

8b) ... and I shall give [you] the heathen for [your] inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for [your] possession. (KJV)

Notice what Christ will do.

9) [You shall] break them (the heathen) with a rod of iron; [You shall] dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (KJV)

Why? Because they're rebelling against Him at His return. They don't want His rule. They want to keep doing what they're doing—worshipping false gods and committing evil.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary says about Psalms 2:9 that we just read and Revelation 2:27; I'm quoting now:

A rod is for long continued obstinacy until they submit themselves to obedience.

Long continued rebellion until they submit themselves to obedience to God's law, and until they do a rod of iron is necessary.

Now let's go over to Isaiah 11:4. This is talking about, again, Christ coming and the world opposing Him and what He is going to do. I'm going to read this out of the NIV.

Isaiah 11:4. *But with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.... (NIV)*

Now notice this.

4b) ... He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; ... (NIV)

All Christ has to do is say it and it will be done.

4b) ... He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips ... (NIV)

What will He do?

4 continued) ... will slay the wicked. (NIV)

Referring to those who are opposing Him in open rebellion when Christ returns to this earth.

Now let's look in the book of Revelation, chapter 19 and see the third scripture that talks about a rod of iron, a very familiar scripture.

Rev 19:15. *And out of his mouth [goes] a sharp sword, that with it ... (KJV)*

What is He going to do?

15b) ... he should smite the nations: ... (KJV)

Remember they are in rebellion, provoked by Satan, provoked by demons.

15 continued) ... and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: ... (KJV)

This is the third scripture. But notice:

15 continued) ... and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: (as) he [treads] the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (KJV)

The winepress is their blood coming out as wine comes out of a wine press. Verse 16:

16) *And he [has] on his vesture (his cloak, his garment) and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

17) *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; (KJV)*

This is a different kind of supper. Verse 18, what is the point of this?

18) *That [you (the vultures and carnivorous birds)] may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, ... (KJV)*

Those who attempted to rebel against God and fight against Christ as He returns. And, notice:

18b) and the flesh of all ... (KJV)

The word "men" is in italics.

18 continued) ... both free and bond, both small and great.(KJV)

All who are in rebellion.

Now Clarke's Commentary says of this scripture, "He shall execute the severest judgment on the opposers of his truth," those who rebel against His truth.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary says of this scripture, "This is rule here in a punitive sense," meaning, in a sense of punishment.

Going on in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown:

He who would have shepherded them with pastoral rod and golden sceptre of His love, shall dash them in pieces as ... rebels, with "a rod of iron."

We see here that putting these scriptures together that harsh methods are used by God when He confronts rebellion and wickedness and when people rise up against Him.

They are rebellious because they refuse to repent. Let's see one last scripture under this second point, Revelation 9:20. You would think after they see the miracles, after they see the plagues going on, and all of this, that they would finally wise up and say, "Enough is enough! We can't keep doing this." But that does not happen.

Revelation 9:20. *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship [demons], and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: ... (KJV)*

Today we do the same thing. Maybe it's not an idol of a bird or something, but it could be a building. It could be a bank. It could be gold stashed away somewhere.

20b) ... which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

21) Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. (KJV)

They just won't repent. They want to continue doing what they're doing.

Rebellion is going to occur at Christ's second coming and rebellion must be and will be dealt with quickly and firmly by a rod of iron from God and Jesus Christ.

Now we get to the third point and now we see maybe the complete truth on this subject.

3. Ruling with a rod of iron can also have an alternative meaning that the scriptures tell us.

It's very plain. Let's notice now the fourth scripture beginning in Revelation 12:4. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation. I think it translates a little better. This is a very familiar scripture, which people go over when talking about the place of safety.

Revelation 12:4. *His (referring to Satan's) tail dragged down one-third of the stars, which he threw to the earth. He stood before the woman as she was about to give birth to her child (referring to Jesus Christ), ready to devour the baby as soon as it was born. (NLT)*

Again, Satan opposes Christ at every turn. When Christ was physical and a little baby, Satan thought, "Well, now is my chance." Verse 5:

5) She gave birth to a boy ... (NLT)

What is He going to do?

5b) ... who was to rule all nations with an iron rod (or a rod of iron).... (NLT)

This is pointing in the future. "He will" or "He was to rule" in the future because we see here Christ is, yes, going to rule all nations with a rod of iron, but it, obviously, has to refer to the Millennium because He hasn't done that yet. We see here in this fourth scripture that Christ in the future is going to rule with a rod of iron. He's going to rule all nations.

Does that mean Christ is going to rule with harshness and strictness over all nations in the Millennium and over all time? Is that what it means? [Barnes Commentary](#) has an

interesting point on the definition of rod of iron. Let me quote. This is specifically referring to Revelation 12:5.

[With a rod of iron] ... as a shepherd does his flock. The reference is to such control as a shepherd employs in relation to his flock—protecting, [his flock] guarding, and [his flock] defending...

Going on:

The meaning in the phrase, "with a rod of iron," is, that the dominion would be strong or irresistible [as iron is] -as an iron scepter is one that cannot be broken or resisted. The thoughts here expressed, therefore, are:

...
(c) that it would be rather of a character of protection than of force or violence,...

Against those nations that He will rule. Going on:

... like the sway which a shepherd wields over his flock.

You see the rod of iron can also refer to an iron rod or sceptre that a shepherd has, but rather than thrashing on the flock and beating the sheep, the sceptre is used to protect the sheep from those who would bring harm to the sheep. It's to protect and guard the flock. Christ will protect and guard the flock as the Good Shepherd.

And He will protect those nations from force or violence that would destroy peace and unity and harmony. As we know today, it only takes a few to screw up a group. One or two that are going to cause rebellion. They can create havoc with a whole group of people. They can cause division, rebellion, and upset.

Korah did it against Moses. Remember what Korah said? "You take too much on you. You're setting yourself above the people." Korah got some others that felt the same way and they came in rebellion. We know what the result was. If we look back at our history of the Worldwide Church of God, it only took a few—really compared to the size of the church—only a few to destroy it and blow it apart.

We see here in Revelation 12:5 Christ is going to use the shepherd's rod of iron to protect all the nations in the Millennium from those who would destroy the peace and who would destroy the unity. That rod of iron is used for protection. Not for destruction as we see against those who rebel openly against Jesus Christ.

Look at God's attitude even to rebellious Israel. The subject is Israel, of course. You can see that in verse 9 and other scriptures. Nehemiah 9:17, notice what we're told.

Nehemiah 9:17. *And refused to obey (referring to Israel), neither were mindful of [your (meaning God's)] wonders that [you did] among them (in bringing them*

out of Egypt); *but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: (which was Korah) but [you are] a God ... (KJV)*

Notice this.

17b) [you are] a God ready to pardon, ... (KJV)

The King James in the margin says, "You are a God of pardons." That's one of God's names—a God of pardons.

17b) ... [you are] ... ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and [forsook] them not. (KJV)

God was ready to pardon at the moment they would repent, at the moment they would change their behavior, but guess what? They didn't do it. Just as the world is not going to do it when Christ returns.

Now look at Christ's attitude toward rebellious Jerusalem in Matthew 23. We're going to read verse 37. Christ is standing up—my guess—on a hill overlooking Jerusalem and I'm sure He is sorrowful and He's shaking His head. He's lamenting what Jerusalem has done.

Matthew 23:37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [you] that [kill] the prophets, and [stone] them which are sent unto [you], ... (KJV)*

Notice this. Notice what He says. This shows His attitude.

37b) ... how often would I have gathered [your] children together, even as a hen [gathers] her chickens under her wings, ... (KJV)

He was ready to do that, but He said:

37 continued) ... and [you] would not! (KJV)

"You didn't want it. You wanted to stay in your rebellion." Christ was ready, but they refused. He was ready as a hen gathers her chicks and to love them, protect them, and shelter them. He was ready to do that, but they didn't want any part of it.

So, we see here in these two scriptures God is ready to pardon. Christ is ready to gather. And both of Them are ready to rule with mercy, compassion, and gentleness if humans would only willingly follow Them and not rebel. "If"—that's the big "if."

So, we see here there is an alternative meaning of "rule with a rod of iron." And we see here it involves protecting and sheltering as a shepherd would protect and shelter His flock. We also see here that Christ and the Father are ready to rule in a certain manner

but it's dependent on us. It's dependent on us. If we rebel, there's a certain kind of rule. If we repent and change, there is a different kind of rule.

Thankfully, as we're going to see in a minute God is patient and kind to give us time to decide what we're going to do. Are we going to rebel? Or, are we really going to willingly love Them, follow Them, and want to be in Their kingdom and want to be children of Theirs forever? Obedient, loving children—that's up to us. It's up to human beings all down through the centuries.

That leads to the fourth point.

4. As we celebrate the Millennium and look forward to the Millennium, the question is: What kind of approach is needed for those in the Millennium that we picture this day?

At the beginning of the Millennium, there are going to be a great number of people—certainly greater than we have combined keeping the feast in the whole world today. There is going to be a great number of people who are severely confused, battered, and hurt as they live through the plagues and Christ returns. They will be standing on this battered earth amazed that they haven't died yet. They're confused. They don't know what's going on. They're battered and they're hurt. Do they need a rod of iron with a fuhrer strutting around with a swagger stick and jackboots ready to slap somebody that steps out of line a fraction of an inch? Of course not.

Guess what is needed for those who suffered so much? How about love? How about joy? And peace? And longsuffering? And goodness? And faith? And meekness? And gentleness? And all the fruits of God's spirit that we see in Galatians 5? Would that be more appropriate for these people who come through this awesome time, this horrible unprecedented time? Well, of course.

The fruits of God's spirit are going to be essential at the time Christ returns. These people are just shattered, shell-shocked—absolutely shell-shocked. What God is going to need is spirit beings who treat these people with the fruits of His very spirit. Those people are not there at the end of the Millennium for our aggrandizement. They are not there for us to strut up and down and say, "You had better obey me or you're toast." They don't need that. They need the love, kindness, and compassion that only come from God's holy spirit.

Therefore, and here is the key for us today, God is watching us now to see how we're developing the fruits of the spirit and the mind of Christ to see whether we can do this in the Millennium or are we going to go there to exalt ourselves as has been preached in the past?

All of those who will be spirit beings—and, yes, who accompany Christ from heaven during this whole turmoil on the earth—once the rebellion is put down, once the people

who survive are standing there shell-shocked, hardly knowing what has happened to them, guess what? We will be there as ministers—ministers to these people.

Many people say, when they think of a minister, it's somebody, again, strutting around in a spotlight. That is not what the term means. If you look up the Hebrew word for "minister" and the Greek word for "minister," they essentially mean the same thing. They mean *subordinate*. "Oh, you mean, I'm not in charge?" Of course not. We're not going to be in charge. We're going to look at Christ and say, "What do You want me to do?" And, He tells us what He wants us to do and we're going to go do it with a smile on our faces.

Another meaning is *servant*. "Oh, we're not here to be exalted?" No, we're there to serve as a servant of Jesus Christ and a servant of the people that need us.

Another meaning of this word is *attendant*, meaning as somebody who waits tables. You mean we're coming to wait tables in the Millennium? That's our job? In the sense, yes, that a table waiter is there to serve the people around the table. We're there—we're not going to be part of a restaurant crew. That's not the context, but we're going to be there to serve them, to attend to them, to take care of their needs because they need help. They need to understand what's going on. They need a direction. They need somebody to put their arm around them and say, "Hold on here. I'll take care of you. We'll work this out." We need to shepherd these people to a better life. That's what we will be doing—shepherding them to a better life.

Now, that being the case, we can gain instruction (since we're going to be future ministers) about how we should rule and how Christ wants us to rule in the Millennium as well as today by looking at what God requires of ministers today. He has very specific requirements for a minister today. I think sometimes in the past those requirements have been diminished or overlooked. Maybe some others have been taken out of context and overemphasized.

So, now we're to the fifth point, the last point. And we're going to spend the rest of the time looking at four characteristics of what God wants in a true minister—a minister today as well as a minister in the Millennium. All of us need to pay attention to that—I'm referring to myself—because we will be future ministers in the world tomorrow. So we can use these characteristics not only to strive for them in this life now to show God that we want to be this way, but so that we can use these characteristics in the future to serve these people over a thousand year period.

Reason we have to pay attention to it is if we don't develop these characteristics now, we will have no future because we won't be there. We will either be humble loving servants of human beings in the Millennium or—if we're not willing to do that, like when Christ returns, the people on the earth are not willing to submit to him, if we're not willing to do that--we have no future. We're gone. We're toast—literal toast in the lake of fire.

5. Four characteristics of what God wants in a true minister.

Point A: As future ministers, we must have great, great patience.

This is one of the overriding characteristics. We have to have patience. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4 and look at verse 2. I'll read this out of the NIV. Let's understand that Paul is instructing Timothy who is a relatively new elder and who is relatively young. And he needs all the help he can get. If we make it to being spirit beings and we start this process in the Millennium, guess what? We are relatively young. We are brand new minted spirit beings. And we're brand new minted ministers. So, this applies to us today.

2 Timothy 4:2. *Preach the Word; ... (NIV)*

Absolutely! Stay strict with God's word.

2b) ... be prepared in season and out of season; ... (NIV)

Be ready at all times.

He says, "Correct." Yes, you need to correct people if they're stepping out of line. You need to rebuke people if they're stepping out of line, but also you need to encourage them. Yet, you need to do all three correct, rebuke, and encourage with what? With great patience, the NIV says. The King James says, "with longsuffering."

The Greek word for "patience" here is Strong's #3115 and it means *forbearance; that is, (and this is the one that gets me) to put up with.*

So, what that's telling us to do is we have to put up with people. And we know putting up with people sometimes isn't easy. It's hard. And sometimes we even have a time putting up with ourselves. We get mad at ourselves.

In the past, the quick and dirty way to solve a problem with a brother or sister was guess what? You disfellowshipped them. You kicked them to the curb.

Dorothy and I lived in the northwest for a number of years. Then, because of a job, we went to Lubbock, Texas for three years. Then, we came back. In the meantime, a new minister had arrived. At our first service.... I had a good friend there and all of a sudden, I noticed after a few minutes into the service, I noticed that my friend was not there. And I asked a couple of people and they were kind of quiet about it. So, I asked the new pastor. I had just barely met him. I said, "Where's so and so?" He said, "Oh, I ran him off." I was shocked because he was my friend. Yes, he was kind of hard to deal with sometimes. He was little rough around the edges, but he was my friend.

We have to ask the question as spirit beings, would God want us to run one of His children off? Would He want us to kick one of His children to the curb just because it

makes it easier for us and we don't have to deal with somebody who maybe is a little prickly? Would God want that? I don't think so.

The reality is sometimes a brother or a sister can lose it with a minister. They can just lose it. And it happens in this life and it will happen in the future. It will happen in the Millennium because we're dealing with human beings who have been through a lot.

Sometimes a human being, a brother or sister in the church, can lose it with a minister due to stress, due to the fact that they're in all kinds of pain, due to sleep deprivation, due to grief, due to anger over their own sins because they have not exercised God's holy spirit. So, they have anger over their own sins and guess whom they take it out on? They take it out on the minister, sometimes all the people around them, too.

We need to learn to take it now and in the future because somebody could be having a bad day. Somebody simply could be having a bad day. And we need to be patient with these people because later—maybe the next day, maybe down the road—the individual might not feel that way and later repent of their attitude or what they said.

I had a lady that blew up at me once and I sat there and just let her vent. I didn't say anything much. I tried to encourage her. Ten years later, she came back and she said, "Do you remember we had that conversation in my living room? I am so sorry for what I said. I am so sorry." That was ten years later.

As spirit beings, we need to cut some people some slack. We need to be patient with them because we've all been there. And when somebody, because of a bad day, is giving us trouble, we just need to remember back to the time we gave somebody a hard time because we were having a bad day and cut him or her some slack.

Let me give you an example. I'm going to put Greg Gaetzman on the spot. He's sitting up here in the first row. When Greg arrived at Wausau many years ago, he found upon his arrival in Wausau the brethren were off track. He could have come in swinging a sword, disfellowshipping half the congregation and kicking them to the curb. But, no, he was patient and he was kind. He was gentle. And guess what? There is a wonderful congregation there today. Several people in that congregation have said to me over the years, "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Greg," because he didn't use a rod of iron as has been talked about for decades in the church in the way of harshness and in the way of lack of patience.

So in closing out this point A, we need great patience now and in the future rather than a rod of harshness.

Point B: As future ministers, we have to be gentle and kind because of what these people have been through.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 2 verse 24. This is talking about a servant. Paul is telling Timothy, "Hey! You're an elder now. You're a servant." Now the Greek word for

"servant" is very interesting here. It's the Greek word "*doulos*." And it means a *slave*. It doesn't mean somebody that now has stars on their collar and stars on their helmet, strutting around. It means now you're a slave. Guess what? You're a slave to Me, Christ, and, in a sense, you're a slave to the people you serve.

2 Timothy 2:24. *And the servant [the slave] of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle ... (KJV)*

The Greek means *kind or mild*.

24b) ... unto all ... (KJV)

The word "men" is in italics.

24 continued) ... apt to teach, ... (KJV)

And here it comes; the first point we made.

24 continued) ... patient, (KJV)

The Greek word for "strive" is Strong's #3164 and it literally means *to war*. That is, figuratively it means *to quarrel, dispute, or fight*.

And it says a minister mustn't have a quarrelsome spirit, must not want to go to fight somebody—the people he's trying to serve—or to dispute with them, just have constant turmoil and arguments.

The Greek word for "patient" here is a different Greek word than we read earlier. It's Strong's #420 and it says it means *enduring of ill*.

Enduring of the bad day, enduring of somebody who is out of sorts. Or the enduring of somebody that's just not exercising God's spirit and we have to sit down and talk. We don't punch them in the nose. We just sit down and talk, and reason with them.

We need to keep the door open to the brethren we're going to serve and, as ministers, we need to keep the door open to brethren we serve today and not burn bridges, because, if we fight, we've lost them. And, many have left over the years in the church because they had a blowup with a minister. A minister has to be gentle, patient, kind, and forbearing.

Now, I'm not talking about open rebellion. I'm not talking about that because we've already covered what happens with open rebellion.

We should endure ill rather than strive or fight or dispute. Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 7. Paul is telling the church in Thessalonica how he behaved when he came there. I'm going to read it out of the NIV. Paul is saying to the church there:

1 Thessalonians 2:7. *but we [referring to himself] were gentle among you, ... (NIV)*

How?

7b) ... like a mother caring for her little children. (NIV)

A good mom is gentle with her children. She's not slapping them around, shaking them, shoving them, and kicking them. A good father or a good mother carefully instructs their children with kindness and with gentleness. It just kills me to see parents screaming at their kids. I've seen it in the church. You see it out in the world all the time. They're screaming and grabbing. Their faces are all contorted and their veins are standing out. Their faces are red. They're just screaming at these little kids. Your heart goes out to these little kids because they don't have much of a chance if that's the atmosphere they grow up in.

And there's a lesson for us today. How would somebody who starts the Millennium or even down the road in the Millennium, how are they going to react to somebody out there yelling and screaming at them? Kicking them? Abusing them? Beating on them? That's not God's way. That is not God's way.

We won't turn there but a familiar scripture we quote this time of year, Isaiah 30:21. It says, *when you turn to the right hand or when you turn to the left hand*, meaning getting off the central path, *your ears are going to hear a word behind you* that says, "Nope. This is the way. Walk you in it. No, you should be over here. You shouldn't be over there. Let me tell you what Christ has to say. Let me show you the way to walk."

Calmly, gently, kindly as to how it ought to be done, you don't slap them up the side of the head or whip them on the behind and say to somebody who's been through all that they've been through because that's just more of the same. They need to be taught a different way. We say to them, "Look, this is what Christ says. This is the way it ought to be done. Have you considered this? Now, let's try this and I'll walk right beside you. Let's see how it goes." Not screaming with a whip and a chair, that's not God's way.

We want the people we serve today and in the future, as future ministers, we want the people we serve to internalize the instruction. That means you make it part of you. You bring the instruction inside. In other words, the ultimate goal is to have the people we serve follow God because they want to—not because they have to. If you put a gun to somebody's head, they'll follow as long as the gun is to their head. Then you take the gun away and they are going to go do something else.

It only works when we internalize God's way and obey Him out of joy and happiness. This applies to us today, to our children, and to the people in the Millennium. It's the only way that works. We want them to internalize the instruction.

Point C: As future ministers, we have to treat all people with dignity and with respect.

This is something that in the world today is lacking. And, in the last few years, has gone completely south. It's just not there. That is a problem today. Look at our presidential campaign. How would you like your children to follow either one of them? What kind of example is being set? There is so much prejudice and so much hatred in the world today. And it's getting worse. Most of those living into the Millennium have never been treated with dignity and respect because look what they've been through.

Over the years, it's been a problem even in God's church. It shouldn't have been but it has been. Those people with little education have been looked down on. Those people with handicaps have been looked down upon. Those people of a different race—meaning not white—have been looked down upon.

I remember I learned what it was like to be a black man in a white man's world back in the '60s in Detroit because in Detroit in the 1960s, there were race riots. There were Sherman tanks rattling down the streets of Detroit to restore order. And, because of that, we had to have a separate black church, just because of the trouble and the turmoil going on.

So, I was asked to go speak to the black church. Fine. I had many good friends in the black church when we were all together. That's how I met them, but now they were separate. So, I went to the black church, I got up, and about five minutes into the sermonette, I realized.... It just hit me like a bolt of lightning. "I'm the only white guy in this building! I am." All of a sudden, I knew what "minority" meant and I got to thinking, "Wow! Now I know how a black person or an Asian or Hispanic or somebody like that will feel."

Then, not long after that, a sweet black couple with two little kids—they were the sweetest kids—invited me to go to dinner at their house. We were back to meeting together at that point. It was a year or two down the road. I can't remember now, but they invited me to go to dinner. I said, "I'll just follow you." They said, "No. It's not going to happen." They said, "You need to ride with us and get in the back seat."

So, I was back with the kids. And as we got down into downtown Detroit at a certain point, they said, "Why don't you just slink down in the seat a little bit." I wasn't getting it at that point. I said, "Okay, I'll do that."

We pulled up in front of their house and they had an apartment in a big older home. It probably had four apartments in a wood frame home, white in the front, big colonnades, nice front porch. So, he said, "You stay here." I said, "Okay." And he said, "Get down a little lower." So, I did. Then, he, the kids, and his wife looked up and down. There were a couple of cars coming and so they walked up to the front porch and got the kids in. Then he stood on the front porch and he'd look at me and he'd look up and down.

And then he gestured for me to come in. So, I did and I went inside. I found out during our meal. He said, "We've got some neighbors and if they knew you were here, you'd be in trouble."

So, you see prejudice goes both ways. The fact is, we can't have any of it. God will not allow bigotry or prejudice in His kingdom. He will not allow it. Therefore, we can't have it in our hearts. We just can't have it. It just can't be a part of our character. Let's go to James 2 and read the first verse, very familiar to us. James says:

James 2:1. *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. (KJV)*

Then James goes on to say, say a couple comes in and he's wearing a \$2,000 suit and \$1,000 pair of shoes and she has diamonds and furs. They walk in and there's a Mercedes out in the parking lot. Contrast that to a bag lady that comes in with her shopping cart, maybe needs a bath and the clothes aren't as new. James says that if you contrast those two, you're going to put this one in the high spot and you're going to put this one in the low spot. You are prejudiced. You are a bigot and you shouldn't be doing that. Verse 8:

8) If [you] fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, [You shall] love [your] neighbor as [yourself], ... (KJV)

He says, "You do well if you do that."

9) But if [you] have respect to persons,

Guess what?

9b) ... [you] commit sin, and are [convicted] of the law as transgressors. (KJV)

And, ultimately, that leads to the lake of fire.

If we are to serve all people in the Millennium, we cannot be a respecter of persons. How can we do that to these people? You see that is not God's way. That's not what God intends for future ministers—to be bigots or to be prejudiced.

Let's go to Matthew 18 and verse 10.

Matthew 18:10. *Take heed ... (KJV)*

Notice this, the word he says.

10) Take heed that [you] despise not one of these little ones; ... (KJV)

As ministers, we can't despise anybody. And Christ says, "Especially a little one."

10b) ... for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

11) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. (KJV)

Including all of us. Christ says:

12) [What do you think?] If a man [has] an hundred sheep, and one ... [goes] astray, [isn't] he [going to] leave the ninety and nine, and [go after] the [the one that's] astray?

13) And if ... he [finds] it, ... [he rejoices] more [so than the ones that didn't go] astray.

14) Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish (who go astray). (KJV)

Now the scripture is not referring to those who leave the flock throwing hand grenades. It's not talking about that. It's not talking about people who come in with an agenda to cause division or to promote heresy. It's not talking about that because the Greek word for "astray," Zodiates in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament says it just simply means *to wander*. They've wandered off. They've gotten off the path.

Again, it's not talking about rebellion. It's talking about someone who is confused or misguided. They just don't understand. And these "little ones," it's interesting the term "little ones" is from the Greek word "*mikros*," where we get our English word "microbe" like in a microscope. And, it means somebody who is least, somebody who is small. These little ones are humble. They're small in their own eyes. Yet, sometimes they get confused. And, we as ministers today and ministers in the future, we have to ask ourselves, "Have I done everything in my power to help them and to save them and to help them go into the Kingdom of God?" We need to do what is best for God's children. Love is not always doing what people want. It's doing what is right for them, what is best for them.

Let me give you an example. I had tears in my eyes when I finished with this documentary. It was a documentary on Vince Lombardi. And he was a great NFL coach. He was head coach of the Green Bay Packers in the 1960s. He won five NFL championships in seven years, won the first two Super Bowls in '66 and '67.

But he was not a respecter of persons. Back then in the '60s, he was one of the first coaches to hire black athletes. He was colorblind; by all accounts, he was colorblind regarding race.

And, he drafted a center named Bill Curry. Bill was a white guy and he grew up in Georgia. By his own admission, he was taught whites were superior to blacks. That's the way he grew up. Here's this rookie center that arrives at training camp and he was shocked to see that there were veteran black players on the team. He said in this

interview, "I didn't know how to behave," because he grew up in a segregated school. He lived on the other side of the tracks. He said, "I didn't know what to do. I had never associated with black people before and I had always looked down on them." He didn't know how to behave.

Then, one day out in practice—he's a rookie—he was having a bad day. He was getting beat up and he was getting pushed around. He made some mistakes, some crucial mistakes in practice and he became very discouraged. He was out on the field with his head hanging down and his tail between his legs.

Willie Davis, who was a giant of a man, a black fellow, he was the defensive captain. He was just a mountain of a man. He came up to Curry on the field, just the two of them on the field. They're relating this and Willie said, "You've got what it takes to make this team." He told Bill, "I'm going to help you get there." A black man to a white man.

Bill Curry said, "Willie's comments changed my life forever." He said, "It changed how I viewed blacks. And, it changed how I viewed myself because all of a sudden now, I said, 'Yeah, I can make it. I can do it.'"

This reminds me of the proverb where it says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." That's Proverbs 25:11. The right words at the right time. And, this is exactly how it should be done with us in the Millennium. Right there at the right time with the right words. Not beating people up but putting your arm around them and encouraging them with God's words.

All brethren are the children of God and all the people in the Millennium are the children of God. And, all the people on the earth today are the children of God and He knows every one of them by name.

Let's go to Galatians 3:28. This is a principle under this third point. Everybody has to be treated with dignity and respect and we have to lead the way. This is something we have to learn and we have to internalize it, make it part of our character. Galatians 3:28 says:

Galatians 3:28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, ... (KJV)*

And, that was a huge division in those days.

28b) ... there is neither bond nor free, ... (KJV)

Another huge division in those days. The free people looked down on the slaves, a huge division.

28 continued) ... there is neither male nor female: ... (KJV)

Women were subjugated back then, too, another huge division. Paul says:

28 continued) ... for [you] are all one in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

We have to get that through our heads. We are all one. And, we're all one because of Christ and what He did for each one of us. All brethren, all humans deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We need to treat those brethren in the church, who are not part of our fellowship, with dignity and respect. That doesn't happen in some places, but it happens here and we need to make it happen here all the more.

And, all in the Millennium deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, today in this society, we have to treat all people with that same dignity and respect and not be respecters of persons. I don't care if it's the lady at the checkout counter. I don't care if it's your best friend in the church—the same. Here at God's feast we have to serve all those here and in the Millennium. And, we have to be prepared to do so.

Point D: As future ministers, we have to have love but it has to be coupled with humility.

Let's go to 1 Peter 1 and verse 22. Peter is encouraging the brethren to behave this way. And, this applies to all of us as future ministers in God's kingdom.

1 Peter 1:22. Seeing [you] have purified your [lives] in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto ... (KJV)

What? What's the point?

22b) ... unto unfeigned love of the brethren, ... (KJV)

"Unfeigned" means *sincere, without hypocrisy, not fake, not put on.*

22 continued) ... unfeigned love of the brethren, see that [you] love one another with a pure heart fervently: (KJV)

The word "pure" means *clean* or *clear*—absolutely pure heart. And, this especially applies to all of us as future ministers of those in the Millennium. But you see we have to demonstrate it now. If we're going to be there, we have to demonstrate unfeigned love of the brethren, unfeigned love of all of God's people with a pure heart. We have to demonstrate that today because God and Christ are watching us.

The love has to be applied in the home first. If it's not applied in the home, we're hypocrites. It has to be applied in the home. Then, it has to be applied in our spiritual family, all of us here today. And, then, it should be applied to all of the people we meet out in the world. Even though some of them might be prickly, we can give them a smile and maybe their day will look better, maybe change their frown into a smile.

On top of the love, humility is the key to fulfilling the role of a minister. If a minister now and in the future doesn't have humility, nothing works. Nothing works. Let's go to Philippians 2 and verse 3. This applies to everybody. Ministers are not above the law. It applies even more so to ministers and future ministers to God's people, the world. I'll read it out of the New King James. Humility is the key.

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition ... (NKJV)*

Climbing some kind of church ladder to get to the top.

3) Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, ... (NKJV)

Thinking we're better than somebody else. Ministers are better than members. That's just a bunch of malarkey.

3b) ... but in lowliness of mind ... (NKJV)

That's humility.

3 continued) ... let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)

Yet sometimes today or in the future in the world tomorrow, a minister can feel threatened when somebody asks a question. They're just asking a question. There is no threat in that. If we don't know the answer, that means we're human. We're imperfect. We'll find the answer but the fact is we shouldn't feel threatened about it. Therefore, today, here's what we must be. Look at James 3 and verse 17. This is the way we must be—all of us. In the Millennium as future ministers toward all those people, this is the way we must be.

James 3:17. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, ... (KJV)*

We talked about that. It's gentle. We've talked about that, but notice this:

17b) ... and easy to be [entreated], ... (KJV)

The New Living Translation says, *willing to yield to others*. Thinking of what's best for others. Not ourselves. Not demanding our own way. What is best for the other person, whether it's in a marriage, whether it's with our kids, whether it's with friends, whether it's with brethren in the church.

17 continued) ... [willing to yield to others], full of mercy and good fruits, ... (KJV)

And, here it comes again.

17 continued) ... without partiality (without respect of persons), and without hypocrisy. (KJV)

Because if we have respect of persons, if we think we're better than others, we're hypocrites. The fact is today, right now, all of us are in the same boat. We're all imperfect humans wanting to be in God's kingdom. None of us is perfect. We just aren't. We're all striving to be like Jesus Christ.

Let me go back to a quote from Vince Lombardi that we talked about earlier, who was colorblind as far as race is concerned, but he also understood human nature. He said this about his football team but it applies to the human race—all of us. He says, "Perfection is not attainable." Absolutely, we will never achieve perfection in this life because we're human. We make mistakes. We're not spirit beings. "Perfection is not attainable, but," he says, "if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence."

In other words, we can become more like Jesus Christ every day. We will never be on his level. We will never be perfect like Him, but we can chase spiritual excellence. "If we seek perfection, we can catch excellence." At this feast, that should be our goal. At this feast, all of us and God's people all over, we should get to the point where our brothers and sisters see Christ in us. When they look at us, the thought should occur, "That's the way I want to be. That's the way this should be handled. That's the way this should be done"—seeing Christ in your brother and sister.

I can't tell you the number of people I've learned from—men, women. I've learned a lot about how they conduct themselves, how they worship God, how they treat other people. We learn a lot from each other. So, let's strive to have brethren see Christ in us.

And love and humility are essential to God's servants. Wouldn't we want servants like that? Wouldn't we want ministers like that? Leaders like that, who have love and humility and all that we've described up to this point? Wouldn't we want to be leaders like that? Of course, we would.

So, let's summarize now.

Should we rule now and in the future with a rod of iron? We've seen that a rod of iron is necessary when putting down rebellion. God and Christ are going to do that, thankfully. We're going to come with Christ and help out, but we're just helpers. They're going to do it.

Our job, as future ministers and as servants, slaves of Christ and servants of God's children, requires we rule with love coupled with patience and humility and treating everybody the same. We need to practice that now.

So, the question we come back to is how would I like to be ruled? If I could say how I would like to be ruled, maybe other people would like to be ruled the same way. I think

so. And my answer, the way I want to be ruled is the way Christ rules me right now—with the fruits of His spirit. And God and Christ—and I'm speaking personally with me—have been so patient and so kind and so forbearing and They have put up with me so much. I am so thankful They rule that way!

So, because I'm so thankful that God is a God of mercy, kindness, gentleness that as a result, guess what? We should want to do that to others. We should rule others the same way we want to be ruled with that same degree of kindness and mercy and gentleness and forbearance. We should want to do that.

So, let's rule ourselves and our lives with the fruits of God's spirit. That is what we are here to develop—the fruits of God's spirit and the mind of Jesus Christ. Let's put into practice in the here and now, here at this feast, God's way of ruling. Not with a rule exalting the self with a whip and a chair, but with kindness, gentleness, love, mercy, and all the fruits of God's holy spirit.