

How to Avoid Post-Feast Letdown

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My wife and I got home a week ago on Friday and we were remarking here earlier that it seems like we've been home for two or three weeks! We didn't just get home a week ago. Things get so hectic and so busy and it seems like the Feast is kind of behind us more than just one week.

But I'll tell you; personally, this was our best Feast that we've ever had! There was peace at the Feast. I mean what a concept! It was peaceful at the Feast. The Brethren were all like-minded. God's love was being shed and shared. The Truth was being taught. We had no real problems. You know the occasional hiccup maybe with the hotel or something like that. Or we had a couple of problems getting on the internet and those were just minor. We're thankful for that. But we had a beautiful millennial setting and beautiful weather. And it was just a most blessed time. And I know many felt the same way. And after reading all the comments on the surveys, the people in general were just very, very happy with the Feast. And thank God for that!

And yet, you know we have to come home. We've got to come home after the Feast. And several have commented already this week that they've come home to the same old problems. You know job problems, health problems, coming back into the world.

The nice thing about Kellogg is it's not in a big city and it was a sheltered environment and you don't have to be intermingled with the world in Kellogg. And so we had a time away from the world.

And yet, now we're back in the world and particularly those who live in big cities with traffic and noise and pollution and all of that. People come back to family issues, to financial problems. And sometimes the contrast between the Feast and the millennial setting and then coming back home and getting back into the world can be a big slap in the face. It can be a bucket of cold water on our enthusiasm level.

And then as we get home, of course, it's getting close to the elimination of daylight savings time and the sun's going down faster. It's three to four minutes a day where we live. And sundown's getting earlier and earlier. It's getting darker and so on. And so you're heading into the dark days of winter.

And it's easy for God's people to allow themselves to become discouraged, or in some cases even depressed, after they get home from the Feast. You know the Halls this week picked up their wrecked car that was allegedly fixed. And it turns out it wasn't fixed. It's making noises and pulling this way and that way. So that's just another trial to deal with! And that's common among God's people. So

several people asked during the week, "Could you speak on how we can avoid a post-Feast letdown? And how we can kind of carry the joy and the happiness and the peacefulness of the Feast forward rather than getting depressed or getting discouraged." So if you want a title to the sermon, it's: *How to Avoid a Post-Feast Letdown*.

So let's understand. The First Point we'll make is that:

1. The Feast gives us only a temporary taste of God's world.

And I emphasize the word "temporary." We're only there eight days. And for the set-up crew and tear-down crew, maybe it's a little longer. And so we might have eight or ten days of getting away from the world and away from the problems in the world, but it is temporary.

And the dwellings that we live in are temporary. And the facilities, I know at Kellogg and Gary Klar tells me at Elkhart, the people are very happy with the facilities and they're just wonderful. But the fact is they go away after a while. We gotta come home.

And it's a temporary taste of something we look forward to in the future. And it allows us—the Feast, a godly Feast—what it does is allow us to sample just for eight days what it's going to be like in God's Kingdom, what it's going to be like in the world tomorrow.

And, again, it can be quite a shift when we come back into the world. And it can upset our balance sometimes.

Let's go to Revelation 21 and read verses 3 and 4. This was read several times at the Feast. This is what we are having a taste of at the Feast. And sometimes Feasts don't give us as much of a taste as we would like. And then other Feasts are above and beyond in those tastes. Revelation 21 verses 3 and 4:

Revelation 21:3. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, (KJV)*

And if we place a Feast where God places His name, then God promises to be with us. Christ promises to be in our midst.

Revelation 21:3b. *the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (KJV)*

And for eight days, we get a little taste of that. Verse 4:

Revelation 21:4. *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither [shall there be] crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (KJV)*

And for eight days we can forget about the world and the problems in the world. And because of the Brethren there, we have joy and happiness and it's just a wonderful, wonderful break from the world. But the fact is, the reality is it's temporary. God designed it that way. And we are humans and we are imperfect. And no Feast is ever perfect, but it gives us just a little sample, just a little taste of what it's going to be like in the Kingdom of God.

And because of the huge contrast between what we taste at the Feast and then what sometimes we run into face-to-face when we come home, it can be upsetting to some people. Or it can be a downer in the sense that "Oh, I wish I could go back there! Oh, I wish we could be together!" And someday we will, but God designed the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last, the Great Day to be temporary. And we have to come back to the reality of this world, but we can't lose what we learn there and we can't lose the feelings that we have for God and God's people while we were there.

So the First Point is:

I. We have to understand by design it's only temporary.

That leads us to the Second Point.

II. Coming back to this present world reinforces our understanding that this world does not provide anything lasting.

We come back into this world after the Feast, after a joyous Feast, and we are slapped right up in the face with the understanding that this world does not provide anything lasting! And we have to keep that in mind. And God sometimes allows this contrast, this disparity between a taste of the Kingdom and the world that we live in, He allows this contrast to show us very blatantly and very painfully sometimes and very plainly that this world doesn't offer us anything. This world has nothing to offer that is of any lasting value. I'm not talking God's world. I'm talking this world and Satan's world.

Let's go to Galatians 1 and read verse 4 just as a reminder. I know we all know this, but sometimes it's good to just look in the Bible and have a reminder. Galatians 1 and verse 4, let's understand the nature of the world we live in. Then we can understand the contrast between the Feast and the world we live in. Galatians 1 and verse 4, referring to Christ:

Galatians 1:4. *Who gave himself for our sins, (KJV)*

Why?

Galatians 1:4b. *that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (KJV)*

So let's understand that Christ gave Himself for the purpose of delivery, our delivery, from this world! We need deliverance from this world! This world is not it.

And yet, I remember back in the late seventies talking to a pilot who flew one of the corporate airplanes for the Worldwide Church of God. And everybody was thinking the end was going to come in the seventies. And he said, "I don't want the world to end!" He said, "I'm having too much fun. I like it." And I thought, "Oh man! He might be having a window of maybe some blessings there but this is not it! This world is not it!"

And I remember my first Feast. It was under the tent in Mount Pocono—the very first Feast in Mount Pocono. Maybe some of you were there. Many thousands of people—I think it was eight or ten thousand under this gigantic tent. And, obviously, it was all new and all exciting and all of these people. You know one road in, one road out. And people traipsing in to go to the Feast in this beautiful area of Eastern Pennsylvania.

And it was a wonderful Feast, but after the last day of the Feast and then the Last Great Day, I began to get a knot in my stomach because I knew that I had to go back in the Air Force. And I knew that my application—the first application—had been turned down. And I knew going back that if they called an alert on the Sabbath, I was not going to show up. And then you're going to be court-martialed. And this was before it was fashionable to burn draft cards. And they were pretty hard-nosed about that. And so, I can remember well having a knot in my stomach, worried about going back because I didn't know what this world held.

And many of you are coming back to long-standing trials and maybe will face some new ones. And God, again, is showing us the contrast between His world and this world.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15 and we'll read verse 19. Paul is trying to get across that if our hope is in this life, in this world, we are most miserable people. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 19, he says:

1 Corinthians 15:19. *If in this life only (KJV)*

Meaning: this physical life only.

1 Corinthians 15:19b. *we have hope in Christ, we are of all men [or women] most miserable. (KJV)*

If all we have is to know Christ in this physical life and then there's no resurrection and we die and there's no world tomorrow, we are most miserable people. Then he said in other places, "Let's eat, drink, and be merry because it's going to be all over with!"

But let's understand that God shows us this contrast and demonstrates this contrast to make us understand the reality that this is Satan's world. This is not His world. And what's in this world has no lasting value for God's people. And when we come back sometimes God impresses on us daily, weekly, hourly in some cases the difference between His Kingdom and Satan's world. So let's

understand this. And God designed it this way. It is by His design that we come back into this world after having a wonderful Feast because He wants us to see very graphically, very demonstrably that this world is not it. And He wants us to just—as we're going to get into in a minute—yearn, want, beg for His Kingdom to come.

That leads us now to the Third Point.

III. In coming back to this present world, God is going to test us over the next weeks and months. He's going to test us to see if we are going to come out of this world.

Now we came out temporarily during the Feast, but now that we're back in the world, are we going to come out of this world in our hearts and our minds? Paul said that we can't come out of the world—it's very clear that we can't go up on a mountain top and have a convent or some kind of community commune or something like that—we have to stay in the world, but the point is: Are we going to come out of the world in our hearts and in our minds? Or are going to just come back in the world and get immersed in the world and the world way's and the world's philosophies, and the world's attitudes?

Let's go to Revelation 18 and verse 4. See another very familiar Scripture, quoted several times at the Feast. But we need to realize that God is going to test us and look at us and watch us to see if we're going to obey this! Looking at a time yet future but it's coming. It is coming. Revelation 18 and verse 4:

Revelation 18:4. *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, (KJV)*

This Babylonian System! Why should we do that?

Revelation 18:4b. *that [you] be not partakers of her sins, and that [you] receive not of her plagues. (KJV)*

And we might add: And lose your eternal life if we get back into the world and the world's way of doing business!

God is going to watch us and see what we do. Let's go to another Scripture that was quoted often at the Feast, James 1 and verse 27. This tells us what we should be doing and what we should not be doing. James chapter 1 verse 27:

James 1:27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, (KJV)*

Notice this last part.

James 1:27b. *and to keep himself [or herself] unspotted from the world. (KJV)*

Now a good analogy would be like: You're walking down a sidewalk in one of the cities and it had been raining. And you have a nice suit on or a woman has a nice dress and white coat on. And a car comes by close to the gutter and splashes water and mud and dirt all over your legs or all over this white coat that a woman might be wearing. And all of a sudden, you're polluted! You have this beautiful garment on and now it is spotted. It is polluted.

And what Christ is telling us here through James is "Don't allow the world to do that to you!" The world's crud and muck and attitudes and mindsets are going to come your way, but don't let it stick to you. Don't let it spoil you or soil you or pollute you. We have to be unspotted from the world.

And this time when we come back from the Feast, the lesson we need to learn is that God is watching us to see whether we're going to be influenced by the world. As we go through the next dark days of winter, are we going to allow the world to encroach and begin to affect our thoughts, our minds, our attitudes, our conduct? Or are we going to reject all of that and come out of it? And God is watching us individually because our time of judgment is now as Peter tells us. And we are being watched very carefully and obviously given help through God's spirit.

Let's go to Romans chapter 12 and we're going to read verse 2 and then verse 17 and 18. We're going to read it out of the New King James. God is watching us. Judgment is on the house of God to see whether we are going to do what these verses tell us we need to be doing. Romans 12 verse 2, it says:

Romans 12:2. *And do not be conformed to this world, (NKJ)*

We can't conform ourselves. "Conform" means to be molded or shaped or bent by the world. He says, "Don't do that."

Romans 12:2b. *but be transformed (KJV)*

That means changed.

Romans 12:2 continued. *transformed by the renewing of your mind, (NKJ)*

"Renewing" means to make new, to make your mind new.

Romans 12:2 continued. *that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJ)*

Because God's Law, as we've mentioned before, is self-rewarding. If we obey God we are blessed. If we disobey God, we face curses. And so, we will prove what is good and acceptable by our conduct and then face the consequences one way or another.

Look at verse 17. Again, what we're to be doing?

Romans 12:17. *Repay no one evil for evil. (NKJ)*

Are we going to do that? Are we really going to do that?

Romans 12:17b. *Have regard for good things in the sight of all (NKJ)*

In other words, have our thoughts and our mind on good things, and have regard and hold dear to good things. Verse 18:

Romans 12:18. *If it is possible, (NKJ)*

Because it takes two if there's going to be peace.

Romans 12:18. *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men [or women]. (NKJ)*

As much as depends on you! And so in any interpersonal relations, we don't want to be a stumbling block to anybody. And we don't want God to say, "Well, hey! You're part of the problem." And so we need to be peaceable and we need not to return evil for evil. And that's where the rubber meets the road in applying God's Law. When somebody slaps us in the face, are we going to slap back? Or are we going to turn around and just leave or say something kind?

We can expect trials from time to time. And many of us had trials during the Feast or before the Feast. The Roecks had this horrible farm trial and then you come back and the Halls that I just mentioned and others. We can expect trials, but the trials are there to refine us so that we will be like Christ. We know that He is the Potter; we're the clay. And He's molding and shaping us as vessels that ultimately will look like Him if we allow that to happen.

Let's go to 1 Peter 4 and look at verse 12. Peter is saying—we'll apply it in the Feast setting—"Folks, when you come back from the Feast, don't be amazed if you have some trials. Don't let it get you down. Don't let it get you depressed." 1 Peter 4 verse 12, he says:

1 Peter 4:12. *Beloved, [don't think it] strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (KJV)*

You know, "Woe is me! Why me?" We were talking about that to Joe and Claire and I said, "You know one of things that I admire about both of you" is that during this five-year trial, not one time did they say, "Woe is me!" or "Why is God doing this?" or whining that God's unfair or God's bringing some evil thing upon them. Never said that! And Peter is saying, "Don't think it's strange if you have a trial—even a trial unto death. Don't think it's strange."

Now look back in chapter 1 and verse 7. This is why we shouldn't think it strange. 1 Peter 1 verse 7:

1 Peter 1:7. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that [perishes], though it be tried with fire, (KJV)*

Meaning: a very severe trial!

1 Peter 1:7b. *might be found unto [the] praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Christ: (KJV)*

We need to understand that whatever trial God either causes or allows—now in Jason Scher's case, did He cause the MS or did He just allow it? My guess is that He just allowed it. We'll find out some day, but either way, as we were talking, the point is that that trial is there for a reason. It's there for a purpose: to mold and shape the individual. Yes, because there are lessons—we were talking last night—there are lessons that Jason is going to learn that he could never learn in any other context other than this trial; Joe the same way. There are lessons you cannot learn unless under a certain kind of trial or test. And God knows what lessons we need to learn and He allows or brings upon us trials to teach us lessons that we otherwise could not learn.

And so we have to have faith that the trials we come to when we come home are there for a reason. God didn't take a nap and just allow this trial to slip through and somehow it's on us without His knowledge. He knows and wants it that way so that we can learn the lessons that will mold us and shape us into the image of Jesus Christ. They're there for our good. And that's the key to come away from Point Number Three:

III. God is trying us and testing us to see if we're going to come out of the world,

But we have to have absolute faith that our trials are there only for our ultimate good! Not to punish, not to stomp, not to cause pain and suffering unnecessarily, but they're there for our good, for our development, for our growth. And let's keep that in mind as we go through these coming dark winter days.

That leads us to the Fourth Point.

IV. Coming back to this present world reinforces our desire for God's Kingdom to come soon.

We see the contrast between what we experienced at the Feast and then we come into the world and we say, "Uh oh! This is not going to get it. This does not bring everlasting satisfaction. I want God's Kingdom to come! I wish that what we had at the Feast but magnified a million times or more when we become spirit that we can have that for an eternity! Because I don't want this physical life for an eternity!"

And that contrast teaches us and reinforces the fact that we want God's Kingdom here. We don't want this world here. We want God's Kingdom here. And it also reinforces the fact that God's Kingdom is our ultimate goal not this world. God's Kingdom is our ultimate goal. Not what we have today. This world can never even approach God's Kingdom. And that's why—we won't turn there, you know the Scripture—Matthew 6 and verse 33. It says, "Seek you first the Kingdom of

God." And then it promises all these things that we worry and stress about they'll be added to you if you seek first God's Kingdom.

Now we have to understand a principle. We find that in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 18. There is a principle that we need to keep in mind as we go forward from the Feast. Proverbs 29 and verse 18 says:

Proverbs 29:18. *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that [keeps] the law, happy is he. (KJV)*

And so we cannot lose sight of the vision that we have at the Feast and the Last Great Day of man's ultimate destiny for all the people who have never been called, never had God's holy spirit typified by the Last Great Day. And then what we celebrate during the Feast of a world where Satan isn't there. Man's rulership isn't there. Christ is on the throne. Government, education, financial institutions, commerce—every one of man's systems—is going to be dismantled and going to be replaced by godly systems. And what a joy that will be! And we have to have that vision and retain that vision after we leave the Feast or we're going to get bogged down in the muck of this world. We've got to have our mind on the Kingdom. We have to have our mind on the Last Great Day and beyond that as spirit beings.

Notice Christ's promise in Mark chapter 10. We're going to read verses 28 through 30. I'll read it out of the New King James because it's more understandable. Mark 10, we're going to read verses 28 through 30. Peter is in a way kind of whining and saying, "Christ, we left everything. We're following you. We've given up everything!" Peter is saying. And you can tell by Christ's comments that there's a little bit of kind of whine in the comment, because he's saying, "We've given up everything. What are you going to do for us?" is the implication.

And I think we've all done that! "We keep the Sabbath. We gave up this job or this career. We've done this, done that. Now, God, gimme! What's going to happen?" Notice what Christ said, verse 29.

Mark 10:29. *So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, (NKJ)*

He's obviously looking Peter right in the eyes!

Mark 10:29b. *there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, (NKJ)*

And many of us have done that when we came into the Church.

Mark 10:29 continued. *for My sake and the gospel's [sake], 30) "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, (NKJ)*

But notice what He said!

Mark 10:30b. with persecutions— (NKJ)

Well, somebody could say, "Well, I don't have houses and mothers and brothers and lands. I haven't received all that." Oh, yes, we have! Because what did we have at the Feast? We had Brethren. We had brothers and sisters, dozens and dozens and dozens of those! And they have houses and they have lands and they have children. And if we're all a family, those houses and lands are to be shared if necessary by all of God's people. So if any of you, let's say went to Belleville, there's a whole bunch of people that live there and you would be welcome in their homes. And they would be like brothers and sisters to go visit and stay at somebody's home. That's what Christ is referring to here.

And all of a sudden instead of no children or one or two children, you might have a dozen children if you went to visit a Church area because we all belong together. That's one of the hoots that I had at the Feast is seeing these little kids running around—knee high kids—running around just having a good ol' time! And they were holding hands and they were excited about this and they were talking, yammering about that. And then you'd kneel down and talk to them a little bit. And they're like they're all your kids! You know you love them just as much as you would your own children. That's what Christ is referring to!

And He said, "It's going to come with persecution." That's going to happen, has happened, will happen even more so.

But notice the last phrase. Notice!

Mark 10:30 continued. and in the age to come, [you will have] eternal life. (NKJ)

That's the vision! That's the ultimate goal—eternal life in God's Kingdom. And in that Kingdom, we will have billions ultimately of brothers, sisters, children, grandparents because we're all going to be one gigantic family under God! So let's understand that that the Fourth Point is that:

IV. We come back into this world that should reinforce our desire for that Kingdom to come.

Because there is nothing in this world that's going to compare to having a world where we're all one family! We're all related. We all have the bond of God's holy spirit! And what a joy that's going to be.

That leads us to the Fifth Point that is:

V. Coming back into this present world forces us to focus on what we individually, I, need to be doing to achieve that ultimate goal.

It forces us to deal with ourselves!

And the thing that is frustrating for me sometimes as a pastor is that God's people—I'm speaking the greater Church—oh, they throw darts at this other

group or they throw darts at President Obama or they throw darts the Democrats or the Republicans or whatever, or other Church Brethren. But they never look at themselves and say, "Where do I measure up? How do I stand in God's eyes? Am I in the image of Jesus Christ? Is Christ going to recognize me as His Bride when He returns?"

Notice, let's go to Matthew 6:33. I referred to it earlier, but I want to focus on the second aspect of what we should seek. Matthew 6:33 says: "Seek you first the kingdom of God." And there's a big "and" there because there's something else that we should be seeking. Not just the Kingdom of God, but it says:

Matthew 6:33b. and his righteousness; (KJV)

Not ours! Not the world's! But God's and Christ's righteousness!

Matthew 6:33 continued. and [then] all these things shall be added unto you. (KJV)

Well, what is His righteousness? Well, it's summed up. We won't turn there. You know the Scripture in Philippians 2 and verse 5. What does that say? "Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus."

If we have Christ's mind in us, His heart, His motivations—if we have that in us—then we're going to be what? Like Jesus Christ! And then He's going to recognize us when He returns and He's going to marry God's people if we are like Him. We need to focus on changing ourselves, as we read earlier, transforming ourselves, renewing ourselves, making new ourselves into the image of Christ.

When we come back into the world after the Feast, we realize that the Feast symbolizes the Millennium—and we look forward to that—and the Last Great Day, but we're not going to be there if we don't transform ourselves through the power of the holy spirit to be like Jesus Christ. We have a job to do. And when we come back into this world, one of the things that should focus our minds is the fact that we need to transform ourselves, change ourselves, renew ourselves to be like Jesus Christ.

Notice what Christ said to the Pharisees, the scribes, and those who set themselves up as religious leaders. He had a lot to say to them and He was not happy with them. And we claim to be God's people. We claim to be the firstfruits. And that is wonderful and that is good and we should be thankful for it, but we can't fall into the trap that the scribes and the Pharisees fell into. Let's go to Matthew 23 and we're going to read verses 23 through 28. We, in order to achieve our ultimate goal, we must focus on changing ourselves through God's spirit. Matthew 23 verse 23, Christ said:

Matthew 23:23. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, [He says,] hypocrites! (KJV)

"You guys say one thing and do something else!" And shame on us if we do the same!

Matthew 23:23b. *[He says] for [you] pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have [you] omitted the weightier matters of the law, (KJV)*

Now what are those? He names three:

1. Justice—being fair in our dealings with everyone; not being a respecter of persons
2. Mercy—when somebody offends us or hurts us, we show mercy; we have forgiveness
3. And Faith—and boy are we going to need faith before this is all over with!

Matthew 23:23 continued. *[He says,] these ought [you] to have done [the weightier matters of the Law], and not to leave the other undone [the counting out of the mint leaves, and the anise and the cummin]. (KJV)*

Verse 24, He says:

Matthew 23:24. *[You] blind guides, (KJV)*

He says, "You set yourself up as guiding the people, but you're blind. You're as blind as bats!"

Matthew 23:24b. *[He says,] which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (KJV)*

Meaning, "You just focus on this little itty bitty thing of God's Law, My Law and you ignore the huge things that you're ignoring or avoiding or don't want to deal with or because your blind!" And He says, "As a result, you're trying not to swallow a gnat, but the end result is you swallow a camel! You swallow this gigantic thing, when you're trying to strain out this little tiny thing!" He says, "If you paid attention to the weightier matters of the Law, you wouldn't do that."

Verse 25:

Matthew 23:25. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for [you] make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, (KJV)*

"You look great to the people that walk around. You appear righteous and religious. You say all the right things."

Matthew 23:25b. *but within they are full of extortion and excess. (KJV)*

Sin!

I don't understand how people can get the concept that outwardly they appear righteous, but when nobody's looking, they're anything but righteous. How can

they not understand that God watches, God sees, God knows? God knows our every thought. He knows what we do in private, and yet somehow people can make that distinction. "Well, if I'm not doing it publicly, somehow it doesn't count I suppose?" But it does count. He says, "Full of extortion and excess."

He says in verse 26:

Matthew 23:26. *[You] blind Pharisees, [you've got to make clean] that which is within the cup and platter, (KJV)*

Meaning: in our mind and in our heart.

Matthew 23:26b. *that the outside of them may be clean also. (KJV)*

Because He's saying, "If you're not clean inside, your outside cannot be clean! You're going to slip up. You're going to sin. You're going to do something wrong. You're going to offend. You're going to say something wrong if what's inside you is ugly and dirty."

Verse 27:

Matthew 23:27. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for [you're] like unto [whitewashed] sepulchres, (KJV)*

And we've all seen—we call them today "mausoleums." You know a little small mausoleum. You can walk into some or big boxes that sit there that contain the bones of somebody. And back in those days, they whitewashed them on a regular basis. That was part of the family's duty to keep that gravesite up. And so they were just glistening white like white new snow.

He says, "This is what you're like!" He says, "But you forget inside that sepulcher is foul-smelling stench."

We drive down the highway—particularly if you're on a motorcycle—drive down the highway and you go by something that's dead in the gutter or on the side of the road, you smell it! Boy, just like that! And ooh! What a smell!

And what Christ is saying, "That's what you are inside even though your sepulcher is white on the outside." He says:

Matthew 23:27b. *but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. (KJV)*

All goo and stench and bacteria and all that kind of stuff that comes from decaying bodies!

Verse 28:

Matthew 23:28. *Even so also outwardly [you] appear righteous unto men, but within [you] are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (KJV)*

You see this example and sometimes we think, "Yeah, Christ, give it to them! Give it to them!" and somehow that that's not there for our learning or our teaching. It is! It's there for us. It's not just to rail on the scribes and Pharisees. It's there for us that we don't make the same mistake, that we don't "play church", that we don't have our church face and then our worldly face. We can't do that!

And I've said before I've talked to one fellow in the Church. He says, "I've got a set of rules for the Church and then I've got a set of rules for my business," indicating that "In the world, I've got to do this, but in the Church I can do this." Unh uh! It's all one set of rules! It's all one way of life. We either do it or we don't.

And you see what Christ is saying about the tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, we need to do that. We need to tithe scrupulously down to the penny. We need to attend Sabbath Services and be there on time and show respect to God by how we conduct ourselves and what we wear. It's physical stuff. And we need to abstain from unclean meats and foods and be scrupulous in that. You see these we shouldn't leave undone as Christ said. And these are all physical things—writing out the check, checking our clothes, whatever. Those are physical things.

But He's saying, in addition to doing that, you have to focus—all of us have to focus—on the weightier matters of the Law. Justice, mercy, and faith involve the heart and the spirit—what's inside us, our minds! Are we fair in our minds? Are we fair in how we treat people? Or do we discriminate against people?

I talked about that on the Last Great Day. You know all people are God's people. All people ultimately will be our brothers and sisters, but do we look down on people? Or even within God's Church, do we favor some and then look down on others within God's Church?

God is looking at our heart and our motivation. Is our motivation love? Is the desire of our heart to be fair? And then what is our relationship with God? Christ is saying, "You need to pay attention to the weightier matters of the Law."

And if we're close to God, very close to God and Jesus Christ, we will be just in everything we do. If we're far away from God, guess what? We can sin. So what does Isaiah say? "Your sins have separated you from God and He will not hear you." Well, if we're not sinning and we have the mind of Christ and we're closer to God and Jesus Christ, you see then we will stress and we will obey, not just the mint, anise, and cummin, but the weightier matters of the Law. And the way that we do that is not by our own power, but by the power of the holy spirit.

Years ago—this was, had to be in probably late sixties, early seventies—I was talking to a fellow. He was about my age. And he said, "I cannot overcome this sin. So, God is going to have to do that for me in the Kingdom." And I chewed on that a while and I thought, "No, unh uh." God is waiting for us to change now. Otherwise we won't be in the Kingdom!

He's saying, "I can't overcome this." What he was really saying was, "I'm not going to overcome this. I'm not going to give this up. And I'm just going to ask God to change my mind when I'm resurrected spirit." God's not going to do that. We have to show God now that we will change because God's not going to flip a coin and say, "Well, I'm just going to see if they change once they get in the Kingdom," or He's going to give His eternal life to somebody that hasn't proven that he wants God's way or she wants God's way above all. It's a very, very dangerous viewpoint!

Look at Ephesians 4. We're going to read verses 22 through 24. You see we need to focus now on changing ourselves so that we can be suitable to Jesus Christ as His mate. Ephesians 4 verse 22, notice what Paul says. He's writing to Ephesus, but it is for our benefit today.

Ephesians 4:22. *That [you] put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, (KJV)*

This fellow that said, "I just can't do this." Well, that's not what this says. We have to put it off. We have to get rid of the old ways, the world's ways, the old man, the carnal man.

Ephesians 4:22b. *which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (KJV)*

And then in verse 23, the change, notice the change.

Ephesians 4:23. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (KJV)*

We have a different spirit, a different heart, a different mind. And that mind is what? Philippians 2:5 again—the mind of Christ!

Verse 24:

Ephesians 4:24. *And that [you] put on the new man, (KJV)*

Be renewed and you put on the new man.

Ephesians 4:24b. *which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (KJV)*

These three verses tell us that we have to put off the old way, the old man, the old deeds, the old thoughts and put on the new man, which is modeled or molded or shaped by God's spirit after righteousness and true holiness. We need to make sure that what is inside us is a pure heart, an absolutely pure heart. That we have to strive for. That there's no stench and goo and bacteria and evil-smelling stuff—I'm using a physical example—down inside our heart.

Let's go to 1 Timothy 1 and verse 5. The apostles had a lot to say about a pure heart. And we need to take these admonitions to heart so that we will have a pure heart. 1 Timothy 1 verse 5, very simple statement and easy to ignore. 1 Timothy 1 verse 5, it says:

1 Timothy 1:5. Now the end (KJV)

That means "the goal," or the ultimate end:

1 Timothy 1:5b. of the commandment is [love] out of a pure heart, (KJV)

Not just love, but love from a pure heart!

1 Timothy 1:5 continued. and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: (KJV)

You see our love and the motives behind our love have to be pure and not self-seeking, not selfish. Love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and then faith.

Look at 1 Peter 1 and verse 22. Peter is putting it in a little different phraseology but he's saying in essence the same thing. We have to love out of a pure heart. Meaning we love God with all our heart. We love our neighbor as ourselves. But notice what 1 Peter 1 and verse 22; he applies it to loving one another.

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

That means "not fake."

1 Peter 1:22b. unfeigned love of the brethren, see that [you] love one another with a pure heart fervently: (KJV)

Now I can remember a man telling me—he was lying in a hospital. He had surgery and one of the deacons came to visit him. And he was so happy that this deacon visited him—this was back in the seventies—just really happy—I mean the early eighties. And the deacon said, "Well, it's my job." Oh. Well, that's a downer. What He was saying is, "I didn't come because of you. I didn't come because I love you fervently with a pure heart. I came here because that's my job. I got to!" Rather be home watching TV is the implication!

And so when Peter says, "Love one another with a pure heart" that means that the heart is such that you love this individual so much that you want to be with them. You want to encourage them. You want to uplift them. You want to help them in any way you can because you love them. Not because God's going to smash you like a bug if you don't. There's a difference!

There's obedience out of fear, and that's kind of what we had as the mantra in the Worldwide days. We obeyed out of fear because we didn't want to wind up like the Basil Wolverton drawings in all the old booklets and magazines. And so we obeyed because we didn't want that to happen. And we saw this big hammer, God's hammer, just waiting to smash us like bugs if we didn't do this.

And what Peter is saying, "Look, your motivation for doing good works has to be from your heart out of a pure heart because you have love for Me first of all, and Christ, and then love your neighbor as yourself." Our love can't be self-seeking. It can't be selfish: "We're going and visiting this guy to curry favor so I can be a deacon or an elder or whatever." "I'm going to visit this guy because I love him and I want to maybe through God's spirit make his life a little better."

So let's understand that this Fifth Point that:

V. We have to focus on what we need to do to achieve this ultimate goal.

We're back in the world now, and we want to keep the ultimate goal in mind, but we have to focus on what we need to be doing.

That leads us to the Sixth Point.

VI. Coming back to this present world helps us focus on serving our brothers and sisters and helping them to attain their ultimate goal.

We're a family! We don't want any brothers or sisters left behind! We don't want any brothers or sisters to fall by the wayside. And God looks to us, gives us His spirit so that we can help one another along that path.

Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 19. This is applying to the ministry, but it should apply to each and every one of us, brother to brother, brother to sister, in God's Church. 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 19, notice what Paul is saying. And he's talking about the hope to achieve an ultimate goal. He says:

1 Thessalonians 2:19. *For what is our hope, (KJV)*

And I stressed this in the first sermon that I gave at the Feast. I stressed the word "joy." But notice what he says.

1 Thessalonians 2:19b. *For what is our hope, our joy, or [our] crown of rejoicing? [Is it] not even [you, meaning all the Brethren], in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? (KJV)*

That should be our hope that not one is lost! Not one falls by the wayside. Not one turns against God.

And we can help along the way. Yes, we have to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. I understand that. But we can help one another along the way by setting a good example. If somebody slips and falls, we help pick them up. When somebody is discouraged, we offer encouraging words. God watches to see if we're going to help our brothers and sisters achieve this goal.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Notice that we don't do this of ourselves. When we help somebody, it is not our power. It is not our love. It is God's love in us. 2 Corinthians 1, we'll read verses 3 and 4.

2 Corinthians 1:3. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (KJV)*

But notice who He is!

2 Corinthians 1:3b. *the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (KJV)*

And He will comfort Jason. And He will comfort Joe and Claire. And He will comfort those who are down or those who are in pain. But notice verse 4:

2 Corinthians 1:4. *Who [God the Father comforts] us in all our tribulation, (KJV)*

But there is a reason for it! He does it for a reason. Not only to comfort the individual, who is suffering, He says:

2 Corinthians 1:4. *Who [comforts] us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them [who] are in trouble, (KJV)*

So if we're offered comfort, He says, "I want you to take that same comfort through My spirit and I want you to comfort others. I want you to console others. I want you to encourage others." He says we do so—the last sentence here—by:

2 Corinthians 1:4b. *the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (KJV)*

It doesn't come from us that no flesh should glory, but we use God's spirit and God's love for us and the comfort He gives us and we shed it abroad to those that are in need or that are in trouble. And that's why in Romans 12 and verse 1, we're told to what? Make ourselves, our bodies, a living sacrifice.

Not a dead sacrifice. Ancient Israelites saw plenty of dead animals in their lives. Little kids saw plenty of dead animals. They knew what a dead sacrifice was. The people that were being spoken to here directly knew what a dead sacrifice was. We are not quite as familiar.

But what the contrast is: "I don't want a dead sacrifice. I want a living sacrifice. I want you to live for your brothers and sisters. I want you to live for Me. Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

And the fact is—and I think we had this atmosphere in Kellogg, and from what Gary tells me, it was absolutely true in Elkhart—that we're a family! We're all a family. We're all God's children. And no cliques, no respecter of persons. We're all God's Family. And we give of ourselves to our brothers and sisters. If somebody is hurting, we help them. If somebody is joyous, we rejoice.

Look at 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 26. We had both of these at the Feast. 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 26, it says:

1 Corinthians 12:26. *And [when] one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; (KJV)*

Now Joe and Claire couldn't be at the Feast. This was the second Feast that they had to cancel because of Joe's illness. They thought they were going to be there. They had everything ready to go and the first of September he had a seizure and they just had to cancel everything. So when one member suffers you grieve with them. We send them cards. We telephone call. We try to uplift them. And we had that at the Feast. I mean that card table was busy with people signing those cards! And we knew members were out there suffering and we're kind of suffering with them as we remembered them signing those cards.

And then it says:

1 Corinthians 12:26b. *[When] one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (KJV)*

And I can't tell you the number of e-mails that I've received rejoicing over James Smyda's ordination. I should have brought one. It says, "I know what this man has gone through in his whole life and what a joy it was to see him ordained at the Feast!" And so we rejoice. We are happy for him, happy for the Church and we're rejoicing.

And so let's understand that we are here as family to serve one another, to help one another attain our ultimate goal, which is the Kingdom of God. And we are back in the world as desperate as that can be sometimes, as ugly as it can be sometimes, and yet we're here because God is watching us to see "Am I going to be a living sacrifice? Am I going to love my brother and my neighbor and my Church friend or brother or sister as myself? Or am I going to turn selfish and just look out for me?" We're being watched to see if we can help our brothers and sisters attain this ultimate goal.

Seventh and Final Point, Seventh and Last Point:

VII. Coming back into this present world helps us to see that God and Christ are our only hope!

And if that isn't apparent when we leave a millennial setting like we had and then we come back into the world, if we can't see that there is no hope for this world. There is no hope in the way this world is governed, in the way this world is carrying on. I mean we're going to blow ourselves off the planet. We're going to pollute ourselves off the planet. We're going to cheat and steal ourselves off the planet. This world holds nothing for us. And the only hope we have is God and Christ.

And part of that contrast, God designs so that we see that. We see that with God we have all hope. But in this world if it isn't for God and Christ, we have zero (0) hope. We have nothing!

And we also need to see that at the end of the day without God and Christ, we individually are nothing! We cannot accomplish anything on our own. We cannot do any good on our own. It's got to come from God's spirit in us.

Let's go to Galatians 6 and verse 3. We need to come to this conclusion that apart from God and Christ, we are nothing and we have no hope. Galatians 6 and verse 3:

Galatians 6:3. For if a man [or a woman thinks of] himself [or herself] to be something [to be a big cheese, to be the hot shot,] when he is nothing, he [deceives] himself. (KJV)

And we've all seen it in the Churches—the big shots! Strutting around like the scribes and the Pharisees that they're something to be seen of men! And that was what that lady was saying in one of the comments that I read. She went on very graphically in some things that I won't bring out where people were strutting around elevating themselves above other people. And she said, "We just felt part of the group. That's the first time we felt part of the group! And others weren't up here and we were down here."

And we have to understand that none of us are anything. None of us are anything! Ministers, members—it doesn't make any difference. We're nothing apart from God's spirit, apart from the mind of Christ in us.

And boy if we think we're something, we're deceiving ourselves. And people are blind and deceived if they strut around thinking, "I'm up here and you're down here and I'm going to let you know it by the way." And that's happened in the Church. And we just can't allow that to happen. It is against everything the gospel stands for.

Let's go to 1 Timothy 6 and verse 7. This is something we need to remember and I'm telling you that Joe and Jason and Duncan Robey and others knew before they left this world.

Also I forgot to mention that Carol Robey's out in the audience today and we're very glad to have her here today. And she's going to be attending regularly. And she had to care for Duncan a long, long time.

But notice 1 Timothy 6 and verse 7. It tells us:

1 Timothy 6:7. For we brought nothing into this world, (KJV)

Came out just naked as a jay bird!

1 Timothy 6:7. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. (KJV)

All the possessions, all the toys, all the physical things, we're not going to take those with us. It's not like—if you understand what goes on inside the tomb of the Egyptians. They had all this paraphernalia, all this gold and jewelry and all of

that so that they could take with them into the nether world, into the next world. And we know that that is not the case!

The only thing we will take with us is the holy righteous character that we have developed in this life. And when our spirit goes to God upon death, Mr. Armstrong talked about back in those days it was a cassette, we might say a CD or a DVD or a record rather of who and what we were and what we became that is on record, but that's the only thing. Nothing physical in this life!

Look at 1 Corinthians 13 and the first two verses. We know this is the "Love Chapter", but I want to approach it from the standpoint that we are nothing apart from the spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 13 verse 1:

1 Corinthians 13:1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and [if I don't] have [love], I am become as [a] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (KJV)*

He says, "Even if I have this tremendous gift I could speak like angels"! And there have been many men in the Church that were orators of the first order. And they had a gift, but if love isn't the motivator behind it, it's worth nothing.

Verse 2:

1 Corinthians 13:2. *And though I have gift of prophecy, (KJV)*

And we have seen people that have the gift of prophecy. It's a gift.

1 Corinthians 13:2b. *and [if I] understand all mysteries, (KJV)*

Understand history and archeology and the Greek and the Hebrew.

1 Corinthians 13:2 continued. *and [I have] all knowledge; (KJV)*

Understand all kinds of scientific, historical facts.

1 Corinthians 13:2 continued. *and though I have all faith, so that I could [move] mountains, (KJV)*

Man! If we have somebody like that today, people would want to kneel down before him and worship or before her and worship. He says:

1 Corinthians 13:2 continued: *[If I had all that and I don't] have [love], I am nothing. (KJV)*

And when are we going to learn that? We are nothing apart from the love of God which is the spirit of God. Let's understand this! And our only hope is Christ in us.

Let's go to one final verse under this Seventh Point, Colossians 1 and verse 27. Coming back to this world helps us see that God and Christ are our only hope.

Certainly no hope in this world and no hope in the physical! Colossians 1 verse 27, it says:

Colossians 1:27. *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; (KJV)*

What is that mystery?

Colossians 1:27b. *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (KJV)*

That is the only hope we have is Christ in us. Through His mind, through the holy spirit changes us, transforms us, renews us so that we can be like Him in mind, in character, in deeds and in words. And then, if that is the case, when He returns He will see a human being that He recognizes. "My spirit's there. They think like I do. They act like I do. They have a pure heart like I do. Hey, I want to marry them for an eternity." And that is what we want to happen. And it only comes through God's spirit. Not through anything else!

So what we have seen so far today up to this point is that the Feast gives us just a temporary taste of the world tomorrow—temporary, by design.

And that by coming back, the contrast in coming back to this world it shows us that it doesn't provide anything of lasting value.

And that by coming back in the world and being recharged and energized at the Feast, we come back into this world and God now, Christ now watches us to see if we're going to come out of this world or are we going to immerse ourselves into the ways of the world.

And coming back into this world reinforces the fact that we don't want this world. We want God's Kingdom. We had a taste of it and I want more of that taste. Only I want it for an eternity. I don't want it just temporarily. Therefore, I don't want this world. I don't want anything to do with this world.

And coming back here forces us to focus on what we have to do to change ourselves to be like Jesus Christ. We see others at the Feast. There are people at the Feast that I admire greatly. There are people that I look at their conduct and boy I wish I could be more like them because I see Christ in them as they interact with others at the Feast. And we need to focus on what we need to be doing to change ourselves so that we can achieve our ultimate goal.

And the other thing we learned by coming back into the world is that it helps us focus on helping our brothers and sisters do exactly the same thing. To be a shoulder to cry on, to be an arm to hold onto, to be a consolation in time of grief and a time of trouble, or to be a helper of joy.

And then the final thing we learned is ultimately God and Christ are our only hope. There is no hope in this world. There is no hope in anything physical. The only hope we have is God and Christ in us that we will be resurrected as our elder Brother Jesus Christ was.

Now what we need to do is not allow Satan or our human nature to divert us from what we learned at the Feast and what we had at the Feast. We had peace and like-mindedness and love and Truth. They had it at Elkhart. We had it in Kellogg and I'm sure scattered people around the country had it there too. We cannot lose that! And I'm telling you it takes work! You just can't relax and lay down on the couch and have peace and like-mindedness and love and Truth. It takes work to make that happen. It takes work to exercise God's holy spirit.

So, yes, let's take the good and pleasant times that we occasionally have in this present world and rejoice in those. We should. There's nothing wrong with that. But we need to look to God to get us through these difficult times and we absolutely have to build on what we gained at the Feast.

We have to keep the goal in mind of an eternal life like the Feast only magnified an infinite number of times because of being spirit rather than being physical. So let's keep our hearts and minds on our real hope and that real hope is God's Kingdom in the world tomorrow.

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