

Should We Rule with a Rod of Iron?

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We are going to talk today about a very important subject that concerns all of us as we look forward to the future and the fulfillment of this day. It will concern us in the coming millennium as we will be ruling as helpers of our Father and of His Son, as we mentioned on Trumpets.

As we know, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures, in part, the world's journey towards salvation. Just as the days of Unleavened Bread, in part, picture the Firstfruits' journey toward our salvation. All of that is done through the rulership of God Almighty—God the Father. The question we want to explore today is, how will the Father and His Son rule in the millennium? How will they do that? It's important because we need to be practicing it now, we need to be preparing for how to rule properly, now and in the future.

When I first came into the church and over the ensuing decades, there was much preaching about how the Father was going to rule in the millennium. I can remember under the big tents and in buildings, we heard a lot about how the Father was going to rule and how we should be ruling now. How the church back then should be ruling and it was all centered around the phrase of ruling "with a rod of iron". How many of us have heard that over and over? That we are 'going to rule with a "rod of iron"' and slam goes the fist on the podium. We have heard that many times.

Ruling with a "rod of iron" in those early days of the Worldwide Church of God really meant a militaristic type of rule and types of discipline. Orders were given, orders were followed and obeyed without question, title and rank was emphasized and disobedience was sternly dealt with. That was ruling with a "rod of iron" and it was practiced at that time and it was preached that that's the way it was going to be in the World Tomorrow. Elders and deacons followed that model, thinking it was the way that our Father wanted us to rule in this life.

In my early years as a deacon in the 1960's and an Elder in the 1970's, I did too. I went to four years of military school at Texas A&M and then went into the Air Force and then came into the church after that. So, I felt right at home coming into the church—nothing changed much. So, this day, as we celebrate the start of our Father's millennial rule, we need to stop and ask some important questions. Should humans in the millennium, be ruled with a "rod of iron"? Should we? Is that the best for them? We are going to answer these questions, but I'm just going to throw a bunch of questions out that we will answer before we're done.

Is ruling with a rod of iron the way the Father and the Son are going to rule in the millennium?

Is this the way we should be ruling now?

Is this the way we will be ruling as spirit beings in the millennium?
Is this the way church government should work today?
Are there times when a “rod of iron” is necessary?
Is there an additional way?

Today this is a critical subject for all of us. We need to delve into it as we celebrate this time of the rule of our Father and His Son on earth. These are questions that we, as God’s people, need to answer for ourselves. So, the title of the sermon is:

Should We Rule With a Rod of Iron?

We are going to have four points.

1. Let’s ask the question—and we will get the answers out of scripture—how does the Father and the Son want to rule?

By extension, how would they want us to rule? Let’s go to Isaiah 40 and get a hint of that. Begin in verse 10. As usual, I’ll be quoting from the King James unless otherwise noted.

Isaiah 40:10 *Behold, the Lord GOD [that is the Father, God Almighty, the Most-High God, the Living God] will come with strong hand ... (KJV)*

Jameson, Faucet and Brown in their Commentary say this can be translated as

“with a strong hand or with a hand against the strong, or against the strong one, namely Satan”.

That’s an alternative translation. In other words, the Father—Yehovah—will come with a strong hand against those who would oppose Him.

10 continued) ... and his arm shall rule for him: (KJV)

Brown, Driver and Briggs says “arm is a symbol of strength”. It’s just a metaphor for one’s strength—His arm.

10 continued) ... behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. (KJV)

Notice verse 11.

11) He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (KJV)

Here we see that Yehovah uses the analogy of a shepherd as to how He rules; to give us a picture of how He rules. We are told here that He gently leads His sheep. Let's go back to Ezekiel 34:11. I'm going to read this out of the New International Version.

Ezekiel 34:11 *"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: [the Father, the Almighty] (NIV)*

If anyone listening out there or watching out there, if that is not clear to them, we have plenty of information in our archives, sermon archives, we have papers on our website to support that truth.

11 continued) ... I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. (NIV)

Search for them, look after them. Going to verse 15, I'll read out of the New Living Translation.

15) I myself will tend my sheep and give them a place to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign Lord. (NLT)

So again, we see that we are our Father's sheep. As our Shepherd, He is going to take care of us, He is going to look after us and He wants to give us peace. What a concept for a ruler. Now let's go to Psalm 23, the very familiar scripture that we know David is writing to us today. We will just read verses 1 and 2. Notice the intent of God Almighty.

Psalm 23:1 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (KJV)*

He says, "I shall not want" because the Father is my Shepherd I will want for nothing.

2) He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: (KJV)

The Hebrew literally means "pastures of tender grass". We see that it's the Father's desire to provide for all of our needs, not wants—but needs. Now let's go back to Psalm 4:8, again David is writing. Notice what David says, following this same theme.

Psalm 4:8 *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: (KJV)*

We know, by experience, if we are agitated, if we are worried, concerned or upset, we can't sleep; we can't sleep very well. So, this means says David "I will be at peace so I can sleep". Why?

8 continued) ... for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety. (KJV)

As Gail brought up in the Sermonette, we are learning daily that our Father and His Son are our only place of safety in these very unprecedented, tumultuous times; They are our only hope in safety.

Now going to the New Testament in 2 Corinthians, we see how our Father and His Son want to rule.

2 Corinthians 1:3 *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies [that's part of ruling], and the God of all comfort; (KJV)*

As a Shepherd.

4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (KJV)

We are told here that our Father and His Son provide physical and spiritual comfort for His kids—His children—all of us. Now let's look at Yehovah's attitude, even to rebellious Israel in Nehemiah 9:17. Nehemiah is writing to Israel and you can see that in verse 9. That is who he is addressing, but we're going to read verse 17.

Nehemiah 9:17 *And [referring to Israel] refused to obey [that was typical of them], neither were mindful of thy [referring to Yehovah] wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage [we know that was Korah]: but thou art a God ready to pardon ... (KJV)*

If you have a King James version, in your margin, the King James has a beautiful phrase for a God ready to pardon, it says: *God of pardons*. Yehovah is a God of pardons.

17 continued) ... gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. (KJV)

We see that God Almighty was ready to pardon if Israel had repented and changed. The same applies to us. He will pardon if we repent and we change from our unrighteous behavior. Notice Christ had exactly that same attitude when He walked on this earth. In Matthew 23:37 Christ is looking out over Jerusalem and He makes this comment. Notice His attitude to rebellious Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, [He says that is what He would love to do, but...] and ye would not! (KJV)*

We see that Christ is ready to forgive us, Jerusalem—but they wouldn't have anything to do with that; didn't want it. The Father is ready to pardon. Christ is ready to gather together. They are ready to rule with mercy, compassion and gentleness if humans will allow Them to rule that way and not rebel against that rule. That is the key. It's obvious that the Father and the Son prefer to rule with the fruits of Their very Spirit. But the

manner of their rule, as we're going to see, totally depends on the actions of those being ruled. They would like to do it this way, but it depends on the reaction of those who are receiving Their rule. We'll see that the Father rules depending on how that rule is received. Is the Father's rule met with acceptance and humility? With reverence shown to God Almighty? Or is His rule opposed by rebellion? Which will it be? As we're going to see, God Almighty rules depending on the reaction of those being ruled. As we delve into this subject, let's notice and see if this is indeed the case.

Now we get to the second point—we've seen how the Father and the Son would like to rule.

2. There is this giant problem; the world will oppose and rebel against the Father's coming rule that we look forward to on this day, as we usher in the millennium.

Let's see, as a review, how humans will react to the coming of our Father's rule. We are going to see how humans will react to that. But keep in mind, that at the end of the millennium we know there is this group called Gog and Magog who are going to create some turmoil. So that gives us another indication. Turn to Revelation 16:12. The Father and the Son come to rule, but is the world going to open their arms and welcome this, the solving of all the world's problems? No, we're going to see that it is just the opposite.

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.*

13) And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs [what are these?] come out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

14) [verse 14 tells us] For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (KJV)

We see that demons are going to inhabit and/or provoke humans to go into battle. Who or what are these humans going to oppose? Let's go to the next chapter, Revelation 17:12.

Revelation 17:12 *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*

13) These have one mind [they are united], and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. (KJV)

What will they do with one mind?

14) These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings [of this earth]: and they that are with him [who is with Him?] are called, and chosen, and faithful. (KJV)

Must be the Firstfruits—couldn't be anyone else. We see that Satan and the beast and the ten kings and the entire world will attempt to prevent Christ from returning and they will do so by opposing Him and waging war against Him. Humans and their leaders openly rebel against the Father and His Son's coming rule. Does that affect how the Father will rule, when He meets rebellion? Open opposition? Let's go to Isaiah 11:1. This is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, as we all know. I'll read this out of the New International Version.

Isaiah 11:1 *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch [referring to Jesus Christ] will bear fruit.*

2) The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear [or the reverence] of the LORD—

3) and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;

4) but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. [Notice this] He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. (KJV)

Christ will kill those who rebel. We have to remember that coming up, the whole world is going to rebel and oppose the coming of the Father and His Son.

That leads us to the third point, that we're going to look at today and see out of scripture.

3. Ruling with a “rod of iron” will be necessary to put down rebellion.

Always has been true today and will be in the future. Why is that? Let's look at a physical example that we find in the Bible. That was Saul's rebellion. You recall the instruction that Jehovah gave to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:3 to completely destroy Amalek. He said destroy everything; from the donkeys all the way to the king—everything.

1 Samuel 15:3 *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy [does it say a portion of or some of? No.] all that they have, and spare them not; [then there were specific instructions] but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (KJV)*

Everything! That was the instruction. But what did Saul actually do? Verse 8.

8) And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

9) *But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them [they wanted that for themselves, the selfish Israelites that they were]: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.* (KJV)

What was Yehovah's reaction? Verse 11. Yehovah is now speaking to Samuel. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

11) *"I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has again [this was the second time] refused to obey my command."* (NLT)

Now verse 23, the first part out of the King James.

23) *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness*

[The NIV translates *stubbornness* as "arrogance"; meaning "I am going to do it my way, not Your way, no matter what you tell me"]

is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (KJV)

God Almighty views rebellion as idolatry. Why? Because we are putting our desires ahead of His and that is idolatry. We are putting ourselves in front of Him. That is an eternal principle that we all need to remember, every minute of every day. Because of Saul's rebellion and his idolatry—putting his desires above His God's, God Almighty's desires—harsh measures were necessary. Look at Proverbs 17:11; this is an eternal principle that we all need to keep in mind and it directly applies to what God Almighty did or allowed to happen or caused to happen, to Saul.

Proverbs 17:11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore, a cruel messenger shall be sent against him. (KJV)

The Hebrew word for *cruel* can also be translated "terrible".

"You are evil, you want to rebel? You are going to have a terrible messenger come your way".

This is what we are being told. Look at what Saul's end was and look at what Korah's end was; violent deaths in both cases—horrible deaths. That is the what the result of rebellion is. Getting to our point, the term "rod of iron" is only used four times in the Bible. Under this third point, we are going to read those four times and see the context in which they occur. We are going to see that they all apply to rebellion. In Psalm 2:1 David is prophesying for our day today. David was not only king of Israel, but as we know he was a prophet. Apply this to the days set before us and what is coming ahead of us.

Psalm 2:1 *Why do the heathen rage [and the heathen are on a rage today, all over the world], and the people imagine a vain thing? [Vain meaning “selfish; for the self”]*

2) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed [Jesus Christ], saying ... (KJV)

They come back to earth together.

3) Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. (KJV)

Does this sound like rebellion or not? Verse 4, notice the Father’s reaction.

4) He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.

5) Then shall he [Yehovah] speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. (KJV)

Now Yehovah actually speaks in verse 6.

6) Yet have I set my king [He’s referring to His Son] upon my holy hill of Zion.

7) I will declare the decree: the LORD [now Christ is speaking] hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8) Ask of me, [ask of the Father] and I shall give thee [referring to Jesus Christ] the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. (KJV)

If you want to write down a reference scripture you can go to later, Daniel 7:13 and 14 corroborate this. They talk about the same thing. The Father is giving the heathen for Christ’s possession. Notice what He says.

9) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. (KJV)

Why? Because they oppose and rebel against the Father and the Son. Now let’s go to a second scripture, Revelation 2:25. This time Christ is speaking, but again this is a second scripture that quotes ruling with a “rod of iron”. We will begin to see the context of all of this. Revelation 2:25.

Revelation 2:25 *But that which ye [referring to the Thyatira, an era in the church] have already hold fast till I come.*

26) And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (KJV)

Those are resurrected saints.

27) *And he [those who are resurrected—us] shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. (KJV)*

We see that the saints will help the Father and the Son rule with a “rod of iron”. Jameson, Faucet and Brown in their Commentary, tie Psalm 2:9, the one we read before this one and Revelation 2:27, together. They say this:

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

A rod is necessary for rebellion until they get the message and say, “I’ve had enough, I give in, you’re the boss, I’m going to do what you tell me to do.”

Now let’s go to a third scripture, Revelation 12:1.

Revelation 12:1 *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

2) And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3) And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon [we know that to be Satan], having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. (KJV)

Verse 4 out of the New Living Translation.

4) His [referring to Satan] tail swept away one-third of the stars [of the demons] in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth [to Jesus Christ], ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born. (NLT)

Remember what Peter told us in 1 Peter 5:8, that

“Your adversary the devil is a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour.”

Satan wanted, at all costs, to destroy that baby, which the Father obviously would not allow him to do. Going on in verse 5.

5) She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. (NLT)

We see that Christ is going to rule all nations with a “rod of iron”; this obviously applies to the millennium because this is yet to happen. Keep that in mind and let’s go to the fourth time this phrase is used, to Revelation 19:15. This tells us why and under what circumstances will Christ rule with a “rod of iron”.

Revelation 19:15 *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations [we've already seen these are nations that are in a rebellion and opposing His return]: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (KJV)*

His Father; He's doing this at the direction of His Father. Verse 16.

16) And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (KJV)

That is one of His titles. Over the kings and lords of this earth.

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)

Here is a gruesome picture coming up.

18) That ye 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, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. (KJV)

When it says all, it's obvious the context is referring to those who are in rebellion to the rule of the Father and the Son. They face this fate. Clark's commentary says:

He shall execute the severest judgment on the opposers of His truth.

Jameson, Faucet and Brown's commentary says:

Rule here is a punitive sense. He who would have shepherded them with a pastoral rod and with a golden scepter of His love, shall dash them in pieces as rebels with a rod of iron.

So now we have covered the four scriptures that reveal ruling with a "rod of iron" by God Almighty and His Son. We see it's obvious, ruling with a "rod of iron" is reserved for the rebellious and for the wicked. They are in rebellion because they refuse to repent and refuse to change. That's a lesson for all of us today. Let's go back to Revelation 9:20 and see that the fact is, a ruling with a "rod of iron" is necessary when people have this attitude. Human beings have this attitude, demons and Satan himself have this attitude—that we find in Revelation 9:20.

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

Turn on a TV, just about on any channel, on any network, on any satellite and what do you see? Murders, sorceries, fornications and thefts. If that doesn't describe our society today, I don't know what does. Closing out this third point, we see that rebellion is going to occur in opposition to the Father's rule and His government. It's going to happen and such rebellion must be, will be, dealt with quickly, terribly, firmly, decisively. It has to be stopped. We see by these examples that ruling with a "rod of iron", applies only to those in rebellion; those in opposition to the Father's rule and to His Son's rule.

In the fourth and last point—we ask a question.

4. What kind of approach is needed for those who will be resurrected during the millennium and those of course, who live over into the millennium that we picture this day?

What kind of approach is needed for those people? In the beginning of the millennium, we are going to have great numbers of human beings who are severely confused, battered, hurt, shell-shocked, numb, you name it. As humans who are resurrected in the millennium, they are going to be resurrected into a different world to the one they left. Most of the time the world they left was violent and evil and they are going to be shell-shocked. Many of them, frankly, are going to be warped and perverted. There is going to be a need for a degree of healing that must take place before these resurrected ones can even start on their path to conversion.

Given that fact, what approach is needed for those people in such a state? We have to think about that because as Gail pointed out, if we plow through the brick walls in front of us, we are going to be there and this will be our job—assisting the Father and the Son in doing this. So what approach is needed? How about love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control—the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Do you think that might be a good approach to deal with these people who we are picturing this day?

Our Father is going to need spirit beings who will treat these blasted, shell-shocked, confused human beings with every fruit of His Spirit. Therefore, the Father and Son are watching us now and are judging us now to see how we are developing the fruits of Jesus Christ. How are we developing the fruits of the Spirit, that is the common Spirit between the Father and the Son? How are we doing with this? How are we progressing in that area? All who will be spirit beings at the beginning of the millennium, are going to have to be ministers and servants to the humans on this earth, shepherding these people to a better life; under Christ the Good Shepherd and under His Father, the Chief Shepherd. If we are going to be assistant shepherds and They are going to rule with the fruits of Their Spirit, it seems like we should be developing those same fruits so we can be prepared to rule as They want to rule.

That being the case, we can gain insight into how we should rule in the millennium, as well as how to conduct ourselves today, by looking at what the Father requires of His ministers today. Today we are going to look at four characteristics of a minister and what God wants of a true minister. What He wants today is what He is going to want tomorrow, except we will be spirit beings. We won't be spirit beings unless we develop these characteristics. Like it or not, all of us are going to be ministers in the World Tomorrow. All of us are going to be assistant shepherds in the World Tomorrow. All of us are going to be servants in the World Tomorrow. We need to be developing these characteristics today so they can be used tomorrow. If we don't develop these characteristics today, there will be no tomorrow for us. We need to take that with the utmost seriousness.

Point A. The first characteristics of a true minister and as future ministers:

4A. We have to have great patience.

Remember who we are dealing with here. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:2. I'm going to read this from the NIV. Paul is instructing Timothy, who is a very young Elder and obviously is going to benefit from Paul's experience. These are some of the qualifications that an Elder should have.

2 Timothy 4:2 *Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage —with great patience [the King James says long-suffering] (NIV)*

The Greek for *patience* from Strong's means "forbearance", which means "to put up with". We need to do that in this life with each other now. Can you imagine some of the conditions we are going to come up against in the millennium? People resurrected and they don't know anything except their past lives. We can't write people off just because they might not get it in the first ten seconds of our confrontation. In the past, a quick and dirty way to get rid of a problem for a minister—who had a problem with a brother or sister, was to disfellowship them—problem solved, let's go on to the next one. We can't do that.

When my wife and I lived in Yakima and then went to Lubbock, Texas for three years and then came back, there was a new minister in Yakima. I found my good friend no longer was there. I asked the Pastor, what happened to so and so and he said, "I ran him off". My good friend was a little eccentric and headstrong from time to time and yet we were good friends and my heart sank because my good friend was "run off. That was the easy way to take care of it, rather than work with him. Let's just get rid of him. Do you think our Father is going to allow that to happen in the millennium with us? I don't think so. As spirit beings, would God want us to run His children off, even if they are a bit difficult to deal with? Maybe if they don't get it at the very beginning? The reality is sometimes and let's look at ourselves too—I look at myself—a brother or sister can lose it. Lose it with a minister, lose it with a friend and it's going to happen in the future. Sometimes we can lose it due to stress, due to pain, due to sleep deprivation,

due to grief, due to anger about our own sins and we take it out on other people, including a minister. A lack of exercising the Holy Spirit. We take it out on those around us sometimes, including a minister, but as future ministers and as God's children today, we need to learn to take it from somebody who is having a bad day. And just let it sit and don't come back at them with a hammer and a chisel. Later, the individual might feel totally different and repent of what they said to us. I remember a member came back to me ten years later, after they lost it with me and she came back and looked me in the eye and said, "I am so sorry for what I said to you ten years ago". We can't burn bridges; God doesn't want us to burn bridges. As spirit beings we have to learn to cut people some slack because we have all been there and we have to remember that. We will need great patience now, and in the future, rather than a "rod of iron".

Point B, another characteristic of ministers today but also of us as future ministers:

4B. We must be gentle and kind.

Back to 2 Timothy 2:24.

2 Timothy 2:24 *And the servant [the word for servant is the Greek word *doulos* and it means "slave"] of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle [the Greek means "mild" or "kind"] unto all men, apt to teach, patient, [that was point A] (KJV)*

To be gentle, mild, kind. The Greek word for *strive* means "to go to war". Figuratively, it means "to quarrel, dispute or fight". We must not do that. Someone who is ready to go to battle and fight is not going to have a place in the Kingdom of God. That is just a fact. God our Father is looking for gentleness and kindness and patience. The Greek word for *patient* also means "enduring of ill". You endure something that is not good coming your way. We must keep the door open and not burn bridges, in this life and the next life, because if we fight, we've lost them. Many have left God's church because of a fight with a minister. Because he just dismissed them, kicked them to the curb—done deal. We need to understand that I'm not talking about open rebellion. We are to endure human frailty, rather than strive or fight. We all exhibit human frailty—we just do. When human frailty is launched at us, we need to realize, that they are having a bad day; let's see what it's like tomorrow. Maybe things will change tomorrow. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7 out of the NIV. Paul is reminding the church at Thessalonica and reminding us today about how he behaved.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 *Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children ... (NIV)*

A good father or mother carefully instructs their children with kindness and with gentleness. When I'm out in public it kills me to see a mom or dad just screaming at their children. It's like someone stabs you in the stomach treating little kids that way. Where gentleness and kindness are really required, and patience is required. But rather it's a whip and a sword because "I'm the adult and you're the child and you are going to do what I say come hell or high water—that's what you're going to do".

We have to remember Isaiah 30:21—we won't turn there—but it's often quoted at this time of year. It is where the people hear a word behind them saying, "This is the way, walk you in it". That's going to come from us as spirit beings, but it's calmly, gently, kindly, teaching them how it should be done. If they rebel, harsher measures may be necessary, you could just freeze them up.

"You can't move right now because I'm not going to let you misbehave so just listen to what I have to say. Move your eyeballs up or down, yes or no, and let me know if you agree or not. Here is what you're going to do—are you going to agree? Then we will unfreeze you right now."

I'm just speculating of course. But we will tell them that this is what Christ said, this is what Christ did—this is what we want you to do. Have you considered this, versus what you are doing right now? A counselor sitting down with each one, not screaming with a whip and chair. Sometimes in Worldwide that seemed to be the approach—jack booted, swagger stick approach—"You are going to do what I tell you to do or I'm going to turn you to ashes." That is not the approach that God uses with us, is it?

We want humans to internalize instructions. We want them to obey because they want to, not because they are forced to, because that doesn't work.

Point C, The third characteristic of ministers today and for us as future ministers.

4C. We have to treat all people with dignity and respect.

This is obviously a problem—a giant problem—in the world today. As our nation and other nations become more divided, treating people with dignity and respect is not a common thing. What we see is prejudice and hatred. Most of those living over into the millennium have probably never been treated with dignity and respect, certainly, a great number of them. We can never allow prejudice to be part of our character today—we just can't do that. We don't have time today but both the apostles, Peter and James, remember they said—I'm paraphrasing—"you do well if you love your neighbor as yourself. But if a man has respect of persons, you commit sin". If we are to serve all people in the millennium, we can never be a respecter of persons. That's not the way the Father intends ministers today or future ministers to conduct themselves. Let's go to Matthew 18:10. This is something that has been violated over and over in the churches of God and yet these words were there the whole time. They are words we need to pay attention to.

Matthew 18:10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; 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.*

12) *How think ye? if a man has an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, [we'll talk about what astray means in a second] doth he not leave the*

ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? (KJV)

Going into the mountains—that's difficult—it's not easy, to look for a lost sheep.

13) And if so be that he finds it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. (KJV)

Now the application comes to us today.

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

Yet in times past, some of those little ones have been “run off”. This scripture is not referring to those who leave the flock throwing hand grenades. Or those that have an agenda to cause division or those who promote heresy. We're not talking about that. The Greek word for *astray* is Strong's #4105 and Zodiates and his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament says it simply means “to wander; to wander off the path”. You don't have a howitzer in your hip pocket, they are just wandering off the path. Not talking about rebellion but someone who is a bit misguided and might be confused. The Greek word for *little ones* is Strong's #3398, it's the Greek word *mikros*, from which we get our English word “micro”—as in microscope—and it means literally, “least, less or small”. The little ones, they are confused, they have gotten off the path. The little ones are generally humble and small in their own eyes. I'm not talking about someone walking out with a high hand. Sometimes they get confused or even get agitated. They need a gentle, kind, bit of guidance.

We cannot kick them to the curb—we just can't do that. We, as future ministers, and when looking at those in our charge in the Day we look forward to today, we will have to ask ourselves, “Have I done everything in my power to save them and get them back on the right path? Have I done everything in my power?” All that a minister does should be for the benefit of God's children. Love is not always doing what they want, but it's doing what is best for them.

Let me give you a very poignant example—a true example—of how this should be done. Vince Lombardi, I think most of you remember his name, he was the great NFL coach, the Head Coach of the Green Bay Packers during the 1960's. He won five NFL championships in seven years. He won the first two Superbowls. He was not a respecter of persons. As his name implies, he was Italian. He was one of the first NFL coaches to hire black players. He was by all accounts, color blind regarding race. He didn't care what anybody's color was, he cared about their character or molding their character. He drafted a center out of college named Bill Curry. He was a white man who had grown up in Georgia. He was taught from youth that whites were superior to blacks. He lived in a segregated area of the country and had no interaction with blacks. They were on the other side of the tracks as far as he was concerned. This is what he had been taught. So, he came out of a white college, came to Green Bay Wisconsin and

was a newly drafted player and he comes into the Green Bay training camp and several veterans were black. He had never been around black people before. By his own admission, he said he didn't know how to behave around blacks, he just didn't know how to do it. It was a difficult time, plus he's learning to be an NFL center, all the playbooks and everything else he was learning.

One day during training camp he had a very bad practice and became discouraged. A man named Willie Davis was the defensive captain. He was a black man—a mountain of a man and he took him aside on the field. He saw he was discouraged and he said this—Willie Davis is telling him this and Bill Curry is quoting, “You have what it takes to make this team.” He put his arm around him. “I will help you get there.” This is the first time a black man had really approached him and he put his arm around him and told him this. Billy Curry said, “Willie's comments changed my life forever. How I viewed blacks and how I viewed myself.”

This reminds me of Proverbs 25:11—we won't turn there—but we are told that:

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver”.

That is precisely how people ought to be taught. Pick your time, say the right words, exercise the Father's Holy Spirit. All humans and all brethren are children of the Father. What do we read in Galatians 3:28? Paul says:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there's neither male or female, we are all one in Jesus Christ”.

We are all equal in our Father's and in His Son's eyes. All brethren deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, even those not of our fellowship. What a concept. What about all humans in the millennium? With dignity and respect is how they deserve to be treated. Now, here at our Father's Feast and when we go back home and all of those in the millennium.

Now we come to the last—Point D.

4D. As future ministers and ministers today, we must have love with humility.

Love and humility go together. 1 Peter 1:22 out of the King James.

1 Peter 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth [we've been through that—repentance, baptism and laying on of hands] through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:* (KJV)

The word *unfeigned* in the Greek means “sincere without hypocrisy”. Love that is sincere; not to get something but to give something. That especially applies to us as future ministers. We must demonstrate the love from God and the love of God in our

personal lives today. It should be applied in our homes first, between a husband and wife, between parents and children. How can you apply it outside but not the inside of the home? Then love for our spiritual family, then love for our neighbors. Humility is the key to fulfilling that role. Remember Philippians 2:3

"Let nothing be done through strife or selfish ambition but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."

That is love but it doesn't work if you are haughty about it because that's not real love. It has to be done with lowliness of mind and each esteeming others better than ourselves.

Yet, today some ministers can be threatened when somebody asks a question. It has certainly happened in the past. Each one of us today and in the future need to follow what we find in James 3:17. This is something that we have to make part of our character. This is our Father's attitude and His Son's attitude and something we must have if we're going to serve our Father and His Son in the millennium, as ministers and servants.

James 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, [the New Living Translation says willing to yield to others, not insisting on our own way] full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (KJV)*

We have to have love and humility without partiality. Today, we're all in the same boat. We're all imperfect human beings, aren't we? All striving to be like our older Brother Jesus Christ.

Vince Lombardi had another notable quote, he said,

"Perfection is not attainable but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence".

What we are chasing is the example of Jesus Christ. If we exercise the Holy Spirit, we get a little closer every day to that perfection. In this life we will never be perfect but we want to get as close as we possibly can each day that God allows us.

At the Feast, we should see Jesus Christ in each one of us. Love and humility are needed from servants of God. Wouldn't we all want leaders like that if we were resurrected in the millennium? Wouldn't you want a leader who had love, humility, patience and kindness and gentleness? Wouldn't we want to be leaders like that?

Let's summarize. How should we rule now and in the future? Do we do it with a "rod of iron"? Do we swagger around with a stick and jackboots and a "look at me because I'm your leader, fall down and worship me" approach. A "rod of iron" is necessary when putting down rebellion and the Almighty and His Son are going to do that. We've also seen that the way God and Christ want to rule is really dependent on us. Whether we rebel or whether we willingly submit and say,

“Father just tell me what to do and I’ll do it. I don’t want to do what I want to do because I know it just doesn’t work. I just want to do what You want me to do.”

Thankfully our Father and His Son give us time so that They can see what we will eventually do. We have that time here now, at the Feast.

Our job as future ministers, as future servants of God’s children, requires a rule primarily of love, coupled with patience and humility and not being a respecter of persons. We need to practice it now and the answer to these questions of ruling with a “rod of iron” comes back to, how would I like to be ruled? How do I want to be ruled as a human being? The answer is the way we are being ruled now by the Father and His Son; with the fruits of Their very Spirit. We should be really, really thankful, as God’s children that our Father is a God of mercy and a God of kindness and has never kicked any of us to the curb and will not do so, unless we rebel. As a result, we need to do the same to others as He and His Son are doing to us.

Let’s close with one final scripture in Romans 13:10. Does this scripture ever apply to us today. Paul is writing to the church in Rome but he’s writing to us under the inspiration of God Almighty.

Romans 13:10 *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.* (KJV)

Verse 11 I’ll read out of the New Living Translation.

11) Another reason for right living is that you know how late it is. Time is running out. [As Paul thought then and it’s a lot closer now.] Wake up for the coming of our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. (NLT)

In my case it’s fifty-five years nearer and I thought it would all be over with by now.

12) The night is almost gone. [It’s really dark in this world right now but it’s almost gone.] The day of salvation will soon be here, so don’t live in darkness. Get rid of your evil deeds, shed them like dirty clothes, clothe yourself with the shining armor of right living, as those who live in the light. (NLT)

Here we are, starting the Feast in Post Falls and we have this family sitting right here in this room. As I said we have ten to fifteen times more who are watching and listening right now or who will watch or listen later today; let’s rule ourselves and rule our lives with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Let’s put them into practice now, the way that we should be ruling in the millennium, in the World Tomorrow and let’s, at the end of the Feast, look at each other and say, I see Jesus Christ in her or in him and the way they have behaved at the Feast and the way they have treated me. So, let’s put that into practice as we begin this wonderful Feast of Tabernacles.