

What Are You Going to Do with Your Life Between Now and Passover?

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Nothing is simple these days; we learn this every day, every minute of every day. Back at an earlier time when I was growing up in the 1940's, on the rare occasion we would go get some ice cream, we had three choices: chocolate, strawberry and vanilla and that was it. What do we have today? We have businesses that brag they have over 30 flavors and you have all these choices. More and more, there are demands on our time, complications with our time—with the choices we have to make—everything seems to take more time and is more complicated.

I couldn't help but think back to when we were growing up, in the late '40's, mom put us in the car to go down to get gas. We went to our local gas station, an art deco Texaco station on the corner not far from the house. You would drive up—for those who have never experienced this, it was quite a treat and normal back then—and at this particular station, “big” John would walk out and he was about 6'4” and around 240 pounds and he would amble out really slow and say, “Hi Mrs. Railston, how are you doing? What can I do for you today?” She would say to fill it up and he would ask if she wanted regular or ethanol back then and we would take regular. He would put the pump in and then wash the windshield and pop the hood—there was no interior lock—check the oil and if you hadn't checked them, he would kneel down and check all four tires. Then when he was done, you would pay him, he would put it in the cash register and he would bring back the change and then you'd be off on your way—that was how it was done.

Today, we drive up to what? A machine—a box. I had one the other day and I was in a hurry and the machine asked me if I wanted to apply for a savings account. No, I don't want to apply for a savings account. Would you like a gift card? No, I just want to get some gas. What's your zip code? Then, this zip code doesn't apply so do you have another zip code? This is all before you pump the first drop. In the meantime you're straining to see the display because the sun is shining and you can't really see the machine. All the while you are dealing with a machine; what a contrast. Complications—try to make a phone call to any company. “Please listen carefully to our menu as it may have changed.” How many times have we heard that? Press 1 for this, 2 for that and after you get through about 15 of them, they haven't addressed your problem yet. Sometimes out of frustration you're almost screaming into the phone, “Can I please talk to a human?”. It's hard to come by these days. The point is, part of Satan's devices that he uses against humanity and against us in particular is an attempt to make our lives so complicated that there's little time for what is really important.

Satan is a master at complicating even the most mundane things so that our lives are filled with things that are not important and it gets our minds off those things that are

really important. Passover is only about 10 days away and I'm coming up on my 60th pretty soon. If we're not careful with our overly complicated lives and out of habit, it becomes easy to look at Passover as just one more thing to do. I think sometimes we've all been guilty of that. I have to unleaven here and I have to do this to the cars and then I have to bake unleavened bread and the list goes on and on about things that need to be done. Therefore, Passover becomes an event that has to be gotten through or a chore that has to be done, rather than the intended meeting. Satan would just love it if we would view Passover as something that just has to be done. Or that "I just have to get through this." He would smile all the way to the bank on that. It gets our minds off what is really important.

We have to ask ourselves,

"Will we let the Passover sneak up on us or will we plan for it? Will we allow our complicated lives to push it off—our thinking and meditating about it—or will we plan for it and make proper preparations for it?"

This leads to our title today.

What Are You Going To Be Doing With Your Life Between Now and Passover?

We're going to cover this in 4 points and the first by far is the most important.

1. Between now and Passover we need to study to understand the importance—the significance—of Passover.

We need to remind ourselves what we believe and why we believe it. We get an opportunity to do that every year. Let's go to John 3:16 and read the most quoted scripture about the Bible. Jesus is answering questions from Nicodemus who was a ruler of the Jews. In answering these questions, Jesus says the following.

John 3:16 *For ... (KJV)*

Then the next word is the Greek word *ho* and it means "the" and is not translated.

16 continued) ... [the] God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (KJV)

We have to stop and ask the question,

"What kind of God would offer His only begotten Son so that human beings that this God created, could have eternal life? What is the character, what is the makeup, what is the nature of a God who would do that?"

Let's follow that logic in 1 John 4:9. I'll read this out of the NIV. The Apostle John is writing to us today.

1 John 4:9 *This is how [once again a Greek word *tou* is not translated, meaning “the”] God showed his love among us: [How did He show His love?] He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*

10) This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us [He loved us first, before we even knew Him] and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (NIV)

Verse 14.

14) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (NIV)

The fact is that this Being that we know as “the Father” has offered His only begotten Son as a manifestation of His love for each one of us individually. Now let's see what Paul had to say in Romans 5:8, we'll begin there. Paul is writing to the church at Rome but by extension to us today.

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (KJV)*

Think of what kind of God would do that.

9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved [this is a promise, this is a fact] from wrath through him.

10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

*11) And not only so, but we also joy in [once again the word “*tou*” is not translated] God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (KJV)*

So, we see that Christ's death allows us to be at one with the Father; with no barrier, no veil between, direct access between a human being and God Almighty, a Spirit Being. That access is of course by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. All of us have the opportunity for salvation. So again, come back to the question, what kind of Being could conceive a plan like that? Where the eternal Creator loved His children so much that He would offer his only begotten Son to suffer torture and then suffer death, that His children—the human beings He created—could have eternal life in His Kingdom. I find it beyond my wildest imagination that a human being could conceive such a plan of salvation. It had to be divine, from a loving God who wants children to dwell with Him for an eternity. This plan comes to fruition starting at this time of year and our Father gave us—gave humanity—a way to remember that plan. He instituted the observance of the Sabbath and the Holy Days.

When I came into the church in the mid 1960's, without a Worldwide background, Mr. Herbert Armstrong was the head of the Worldwide Church of God—the Pastor General. He wrote in the 1960's something that was fundamental; that just hit me right between the eyes. It was within the first year or two I had been attending services. He said, "Keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days keeps us in the true worship of the true God". So, what does the Bible have to say about that? Particularly, who is the true God? Let's go to John 17:1, we'll read the first 3 verses. This again tells us about this eternal Spirit Being who has a plan for people like us—human beings.

John 17:1 *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

2) As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3) And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (KJV)

So, the Father created the Sabbath and the Holy Days to keep us in mind of Him as the true God and of His Son and of His plan of salvation. Now let's go back to Leviticus 23:4 and see the first annual festival of our Father, to help us keep this in mind—this plan in mind. Notice it's very plain and not confusing at all.

Leviticus 23:4 *These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations [holy gatherings], which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.*

5) In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's passover. (KJV)

That is the first festival of Yehovah; it says so right here. The first one is on the 14th.

6) And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread [that is the second festival] unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. (KJV)

Passover is the first festival, the first holy convocation. Nothing can proceed in the plan of God without the Passover. That comes first. It's not by accident that it is first. Nothing can proceed going forward from the plan of the Father without the Passover. For us, as Firstfruits of God Almighty, Christ already having died and been resurrected, Christ becomes our Passover; our personal Passover. Look at John 1:29; we're walking into the account where John the Baptist is seeing Jesus for the very first time and notice what he says.

John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (KJV)*

Under inspiration from God Almighty, John the Baptist knew who He was looking at. Notice what Paul says during the Days of Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5:7. This book was written during the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread and there are references throughout 1 Corinthians about the Passover.

1 Corinthians 5:7 *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover [just like John the Baptist said] is sacrificed for us:*

8) *Therefore [because Christ is our Passover and He has been sacrificed] let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (KJV)*

So Jesus Christ is now our Passover sacrifice; He has replaced the lamb of the Exodus passover which looked forward to His very sacrifice.

Now let's think a minute and see what Christ did for us. Let's go to Ephesians 2:12. Paul is addressing the Gentiles but He is explaining to them what Christ did for them. Just superimpose "us" in place of the Gentiles and some of us are Gentile in background and some are not. The fact is, we are such a Heinz57 variety of mixtures by these end days that we're probably all part Gentile and part Israelite. Notice what Paul says to the Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:12 *That at that time ye were without Christ [as a Gentile and before we were called, we were certainly without Christ], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (KJV)*

That was us before we were called.

13) *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

14) *For he is our peace [between Jews and Gentiles], who hath made both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (KJV)*

That middle wall of partition was a stone fence that was erected to keep the Gentiles from having contact with the Israelites in the courtyard area of the temple. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary says this:

There was a balustrade of stones which separated the court of the Gentiles from the holy place. Which it was a death sentence for a Gentile to pass.

They would be stoned if they went into that area. So, Paul is saying that middle wall of partition has been torn down.

15) *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [meaning Jews and Gentiles] one new man, so making peace;*

16) *And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

17) *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

18) *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

19) *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (KJV)*

This is what Jesus did for us. Made us one regardless of whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are one with our Father through His blood, His sacrifice and His death. Then, what He did as we are covering this first point of remembering why we are here and what we believe and why we do what we do. He then changed the way we are to commemorate Passover in keeping with His death and His resurrection. Let's go to Luke 22:15. I know this is old territory but one reason our Father has the annual Holy Days is we can refresh our minds and reinforce our beliefs year by year by year.

Luke 22:15 *And he [Jesus] said unto them [the disciples and later the apostles], With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: (KJV)*

The word *this* in Greek means exactly what it is supposed to mean. *This* specific one. *This* specific Passover. What is *this* Passover that Christ is speaking of? Verse 16.

16) *For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

17) *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:*

18) *For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

19) *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. (KJV)*

This is the Passover He was speaking of—*this* Passover. It's the taking of the bread and the wine. It is not a onetime event, never to be memorialized or repeated. We are told the Holy Days allow us to remember the plan of God. So, in order to remember that plan of God, we have to do it annually. When else would it be done to commemorate what Christ did? When else would it be done except on the anniversary of when that happened?

Now let's go to 1 Corinthians 11 to see that the Apostle Paul followed in Christ's footsteps and notice the similarity of the wording. Paul is writing about Passover.

1 Corinthians 11:23 *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you ... (KJV)*

We know Paul was in the wilderness being trained directly by Jesus Christ. It happened after the road to Damascus incident in Acts 9. What Paul is saying is, "I'm not giving you

my opinion, I'm telling you what Christ told me directly." He said, "What I'm about to tell you came directly from Jesus Christ."

23 continued) ...That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: (KJV)

Just like we read in Luke 22. Christ tells us the specific time of the Passover and He's doing it through Paul almost 25 years after His death. So, this is continuing on. The apostles, as we're going to see, didn't change a thing. When was Christ betrayed? When He was betrayed, He took bread. When was that? That was the beginning of the 14th, verse 24.

24) And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (KJV)

Paul is saying this 25 years later and quoting almost exactly the same words that Christ used in Luke. The words are almost identical. Nothing has changed.

25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (KJV)

This do in remembrance of Me, showing forth His death at the time that He died; that same time of the year according to the commandments of God. Here, Jesus instructs us the time and the symbols that He wants us to use in commemorating His sacrifice. Not the Old Testament lamb sacrifice, His sacrifice. Jesus specifically tells us how and when to keep the New Testament Passover so that we will always understand the importance and the significance of His Passover sacrifice. So, between now and Passover, we need to study to this end of understanding the significance and the importance of His sacrifice.

Now let's go to the 2nd point.

2. Passover is the only festival to require a make-up.

Therefore, this festival, this first festival is unique and it must be very important to be the only festival that requires a make-up. Let's go to Numbers 9:4. This is the institution of the second Passover.

Numbers 9:4 *And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover.*

5) And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even [Passover is on the 14th, the Bible says that over and over] in the wilderness of

Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

6) And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day:

7) And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? (KJV)

We're being kept back, we want to make the offer, what do we do?

8) And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you. (KJV)

These men were between a rock and hard spot. They needed to take the Passover, they had to take the Passover but on the other hand they were defiled to the point that they couldn't take the Passover so they are in a no-win situation. So, they ask Moses for help.

9) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

10) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. (KJV)

You shall keep the Passover unto Yehovah, no excuses, no reasonings, no exceptions.

11) The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. (KJV)

As Gordon pointed out in the sermonette. So, we see here the institution of the second or make-up Passover. Now let's see an example of that actually happening. Let's go to 2 Chronicles 30:1. Hezekiah has just become king of Judah. He is a young man, mid-20's and instituted many, many reforms. He took the abominations out of the temple, he tore down the high places, he destroyed the groves and desperately wanted to keep the Passover, as he had just come to power.

2 Chronicles 30:1 *And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, [he was king of Judah but sent messages to Israel; the kingdom wasn't divided yet] and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.*

2) For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3) For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. (KJV)

There just wasn't enough time, so rather than postpone Passover a full year, because of his zeal and enthusiasm, in verse 15.

15) Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month:
(KJV)

So, the fact is, the Passover is the only festival of God Almighty that must be made up if missed. Of all the festivals, it stands alone in that regard. There is none other like this in that regard. Therefore, Passover must be extremely important—essential. Otherwise, why would our Father require a second Passover. That is why we keep the second Passover to this very day.

There is an argument about the keeping of the Passover, that because Christ had to die, He had to move the Passover temporarily to the beginning of the 14th because He would be dead later on the 14th. Therefore, we should revert back and keep the Passover later on the 14th. Well, think about this: If the New Testament Passover is to be changed from Christ's clear example—because He would be dead as some promote—then Christ could have told His disciples to take the Passover at a different time, as opposed to the beginning when He was with them. He could have told them at a different time down the road that we kept it at the beginning of the 14th but because I had to die, I want you to keep it at the middle or the end or wherever—some other time. He could have done that, but there is no record at all of Him doing that. He just didn't do it. That year, the year that He died, the second Passover was 26 days after Christ's resurrection. Remember He was with His disciples for a total of 40 days after the resurrection so He was with them on the very day of the second Passover. If Jesus wanted Passover to be changed to a different time because of His death, do you think He might have told the disciples, "Here we are it's the second Passover—couldn't do it right the first time because I was going to be dead, so now we have the second Passover so let's do it right now—or revert to later in the day in keeping it in accordance with when I died." But that didn't happen. If Jesus wanted the Passover to be changed to a different time, do you not think He would have kept it on the new time at the second Passover? He had all the opportunity to do so but He didn't do it.

He did not keep the second Passover with His disciples, why? Because of the time and place He has already established and He established it permanently. It's a permanent example; there was no need to change it. Let's always be aware of the special, special nature of the Passover; this first festival, this first holy convocation.

Now to the 3rd point. This is nothing new, you hear it every year.

3. Prior to Passover we need to spiritually evaluate ourselves.

We need to make the necessary changes if we see that those changes have to be made. Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 11; Paul is writing about Passover. I'll read this out of the New King James. Paul is telling us what Christ told him directly. He is passing on this understanding to the New Testament church.

1 Corinthians 11:27 *Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* (NKJV)

Let me read this from the Amplified, it expands this a little and adds to it.

1 Corinthians 11:27 *So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is unworthy of Him will be guilty of profaning and sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord.* (AV)

This is a warning from Paul, directly from Jesus Christ, that if we casually take the Passover without fully discerning the meaning of His sacrifice, without spending the time to study, meditate and to pray about what happened, what He did for us, His Father's plan and how His Father had to watch all of this. If we casually take the Passover and we don't spend that time, then we can be guilty of again causing Christ to die. In other words, we only get to do that once. When we were first called and we repented, we repented of our sins that necessitated the death of Jesus Christ. Once we do that, you only get to do that once. What Paul is saying is, if we casually take the Passover and don't appreciate His death, resurrection, life and suffering, then you're putting Him to death a second time because you're not appreciating what He did for you. We have walked away from that; we have diminished that. We won't turn there for time's sake but in Hebrews 10:26, we're told that if we deliberately continue to sin after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there is no more sacrifice. What Paul is talking about is, if we understand the significance of the Lord's body and His blood when we were baptized and then later by our conduct—20, 30, 40, 50 years down the road—it becomes a habit and we just don't pay attention to it and go through the motions, we are diminishing that sacrifice and guilty of the body and the blood of Christ again.

Paul then goes on to tell us how to avoid taking the Passover in an unworthy manner. Going on in verse 28.

28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29) For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (NKJV)

Meaning not discerning the significance of His sacrifice.

30) For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31) For if we would judge ourselves [meaning examine ourselves], we would not be judged. (NKJV)

Now let's go to 2 Corinthians 13, Paul's follow up Epistle to what we just read and look at verse 5; he says this again as a form of emphasis.

2 Corinthians 13:5 *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (KJV)*

He says, “Examine yourselves in order to prove yourselves.” The Greek word for *prove* is Strong’s #1381, *dokimazo* and it’s from the Greek word *dokimos*, which we’ve covered before, three digits away, #1384 and it means “to test, examine, to see whether a thing is genuine or not, as in metals.” We know if something is *dokimos*—a coin for example—it is the proper weight and the proper composition and therefore a legitimate coin. So the word implies that we should test and examine ourselves to see if we are legitimate Christians. Are we playing games or are we doing it from the heart? The second meaning of the Greek word *prove* means “to recognize as genuine after examination.” We’re told to examine ourselves with the sole purpose of asking the question, am I a genuine Christian? Am I really doing what I need to be doing? Am I becoming more and more like my Father and His Son?

We know the tools that our Father has given us to examine ourselves—prayer, study, fasting and meditation—all of which we should do between now and then to look at ourselves and to examine ourselves to see if we have any weak areas—because we all do. We are humans and all have weak areas. Sometimes it’s difficult, but helpful, to ask your mate if you happened to be married, or a good friend or family member—someone close to you—if you could change one thing about me, what would it be? Expect and want an honest answer. What would it be? We want to know what our weaknesses are because Satan attacks our weaknesses and provokes our weaknesses, wanting them to get worse. We need to ask God to show us our weak areas and our blind spots. We all have blind spots. We’re just humanly ignorant in that sense—sometimes willfully so. Look at Psalm 19:12, just one verse. David writes—of course he committed some horrible sins and is speaking with authority.

Psalm 19:12 *Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. (KJV)*

What does he mean by that? The Hebrew word for *secret* is Strong’s #5641, the Hebrew word *satar* and it means “hidden” or it means “concealed”. Sometimes we think we can commit a sin and God doesn’t see. Or somehow God winks at it or gives us a pass. We have blind spots; we have weak areas. What are some common blind spots or sins that are not acknowledged. Some sins are really hard to acknowledge for us as humans. Self-righteousness is one. Respect of persons, pride; selfishness is another big one—putting the self first. Hypocrisy, and of course in these very end days, a lack of Godly love. All of those are really wrapped up in putting the self first. Notice what we find in Matthew 24:10, Christ is prophesying about the latter days, the days we are in today. He is saying some bad things are going to happen but notice the cause of the bad things—one of the causes of the bad things.

Matthew 24:10 *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *offended* is Strong's #4624 and it's the Greek word *skandalizo* from which we get our English word *scandalized* from. It has a different meaning than we think of the word *scandal*. It means "to entrap". *Many shall be entrapped*. A second meaning is "to trip up" or "to entice to sin". *Many will be tripped up; many will be enticed to sin*. It says specifically to apostasy, meaning to go into false doctrine. We are told this is going to happen. They will be offended, they will be tripped up, they will be enticed to sin, to apostatize, they will betray one another and hate one another.

11) And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (KJV)

He's telling us how these people will be offended—scandalized—enticed to sin, in part, because of false prophets.

12) And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (KJV)

These are the times that we are in and these are the things we have to watch out for. We have to ask our Father during this time of examination,

"Show me how to be a better husband, or a better wife, or a better friend, or a better parent, a better son or a better daughter. Above all show me how to be like Your Son. Show me how to follow in His footsteps. Show me where I am lacking, where I come up short, in this time."

As we examine ourselves, we also need to realize where our battle lies. Sometimes we can get our focus off the source of our battle. Let's go to Ephesians 6:11. Paul is writing, I'll read this out of the NIV.

Ephesians 6:11 *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (NIV)*

Satan has schemes—our weaknesses, our faults, our sins—he attacks them.

12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (NIV)

We do not fight a physical fight. It's easy to take it on a human level and ignore the spiritual aspect of sin and of the source of sin but we're told right here where our battle is. This is the source of it. We're told that we are responsible—just us—for the fruit that we produce. We see in the world today where criminals don't take responsibility for what they do. People defraud other people, they don't take responsibility, they lie, they don't admit it, they don't take responsibility. We're living in an environment and a society where nobody is responsible anymore. Flip Wilson, a comedian in the '60's said "The devil made me do it." That's what people do—it's not me, it's the devil. The devil is the source of it, yes, but we have a choice whether we follow that source or some other

source. Notice Galatians 6:3. We have to realize we are in a spiritual battle and are responsible for the fruit we produce.

Galatians 6:3 *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (KJV)*

All of us are the “weak of the world”, we are not the mighty or great. If we think of ourselves as something we are really deceiving ourselves.

4) But let every man prove [this is Strong's #1381, dokimazo] his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5) For every man shall bear his own burden. (KJV)

So, we see in this third point we have to examine ourselves to strive to see ourselves as our Father sees us. Not as we want to see ourselves, not as we want to be seen, but as how our Father actually sees us. Then we make changes, looking at how Christ behaved, looking at where we are and identify the changes that need to be made, we begin making those changes and walking on a path that becomes closer to Jesus Christ's example and the mind of the Father.

The 4th and last point today.

4. More than ever we have to make our Father an integral part of every facet of our lives.

When we were, remembering back to when we were strong in our 20's and 30's or late teens, when we came into the church as young people, thinking of myself because I did it, when we are young and strong it's easy to compartmentalize God. In other words, we know we should have a relationship with God, we know we need to study every day and pray every day. So, we, as young, strong people, get in our prayers in the morning and then think, I've done that—put God in His box, close the box, put the box on the shelf in the closet, close the closet door and then go to work. Then the rest of the day we don't think about God or Christ, we just do what we need to do by our own power, by our own wits and strength. We wind up doing with God, as we do with other things in our lives—doing it by compartmentalization and by doing it under our own strength. I can remember going a whole day almost without thinking about God. You just get involved with what you are doing, the demands at the time and you go through the whole day and don't even think about God. That's a bad habit to get into, where we compartmentalize God. He gets this part of my life, but I've got all this other stuff over here. This is God's part; this is my part. The fact is, we should be making our Father and His Son our partners in dealing with everyday life. As we get older and our strength wains and capacity wains—a benefit of growing older is we finally realize that “I can't do this.” My Father and His Son have to do it in me or through me because I don't have the strength or the wherewithal any longer.

As we evaluate ourselves between now and Passover, we need to keep that in mind that we want a closer relationship, a continual relationship with our Father all day long. Notice Psalms 73:28. This is the understatement of the Bible probably. It is so profound and yet is so understated in that sense.

Psalms 73:28 *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.* (KJV)

The understatement is: *It's good for us to draw near to God*—yes—it is essential. We must in order to endure what lies ahead. Notice Romans 12:12; Paul uses a very interesting phrase. It's the only time it's used in the Bible. Referring to a relationship with God Almighty.

Romans 12:12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; [here comes the interesting phrase] continuing instant in prayer;* (KJV)

You have to continue to be *instant in prayer*. The Greek word for *instant* is Strong's #4342 and it means "to adhere to one", meaning "to glom (become stuck or attached to) onto one, hold onto someone, to be constant to one. Paul is telling us to be *instant in prayer*, meaning to continue *instant in prayer* is to be constantly in contact with our Father. Constantly having him on our minds, constantly having this link going between us and Him about our thoughts, deeds, and how we are doing today. The challenges of the day— "Help me here.", Show me what to do here.", Show me what to say there." It's a continual, everyday thing. I find as I get older, it is more continual with every passing day. Because we realize finally that we are nothing without God Almighty and we are nothing without the sacrifice of His Son.

It's easier to remain in a constant contact with our Father when we realize that He is constantly looking after us. We often forget that. He is continually looking after us. Look at Psalm 139:1. This is a Psalm of David. I'll read this out of the NIV. As we read this, notice we have a Father who is continually looking at us, looking for us, looking to take care of us.

Psalm 139:1 *You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.* (NIV)

That means our Father has spent time in order that He might know us.

2) *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
3) *You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.* (NIV)

You know me inside and out.

4) *Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.* (NIV)

He understands our minds—He reads our minds.

- 5) *You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.*
6) *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. (NIV)*

Meaning how can I as a stinking human being have a relationship with the Supreme Being—the Creator of everything—and yet He has time to care about me and look after me and have love for me? He says it's just too wonderful for me. "It blows my mind", as we would say today.

- 7) *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*
8) *If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*
9) *If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,*
10) *even there your hand will guide me, [counting on the Father to guide him] your right hand will hold me fast. [You'll hang onto me when I slip and fall, you'll lift me up when I need it.]*
11) *If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," (NIV)*

Like I'm trying to hide my secret sins from God Almighty.

- 12) *even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (NIV)*

Our Father is the source of all light.

- 13) *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
14) *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. (NIV)*

You can't read this and not come away with the conclusion that we have a Father who really cares about us, He really knows us, He wants the best for us. So, closing out this 4th point, we should walk with our Father every minute of every day. Walking beside Him, communicating with Him and holding His Hand because He will guide us as we just read.

Let's summarize now. As I said in the beginning—Satan's way, the world's way—is complexity, chaos and confusion. Television, cell phones, texting, internet surfing, social media, video games, and the list goes on and on of things that are trivial, yet they take up our time and get people confused and off on the wrong track. None of us wants to come to the night of Passover feeling unprepared or looking back and saying, where did the week go or where did the time go. I wish I had studied more or prayed more about this night. None of us wants to come to Passover in that state of mind. So, to not properly discern the Passover, properly prepare for the Passover, the one thing we need to do is uncomplicate our lives. To get control of our time because one of Satan's weapons is to overcomplicate our lives to the point that our time is manipulated and

monopolized to get us off track. So then we aren't paying attention to putting first things first.

We need to uncomplicate our lives and get control of our time. We know God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)—we understand that. Let's go to Psalm 90:10. This is a Psalm of Moses. Moses is writing to us today. If anybody should understand life and death, wandering in the wilderness and all of that and coming out of Egypt, Moses would.

Psalm 90:10 *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. (KJV)*

We have an expiration date; we have a limited life span as humans.

12) So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (KJV)

Don't waste time; this is not the time to waste time. This is the time to apply our hearts to wisdom—Godly wisdom. Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 5:15.

Ephesians 5:15 *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *redeeming* is Strong's #1805 and it's an interesting meaning. It means "to rescue from loss". "To rescue the time from loss". Particularly this time of year, we cannot afford lost time. We need to establish a routine in our lives that works for us so that we get in the prayer and the study and meditation in extra amounts as we approach the Passover. We need to establish priorities and stick to them. Sometimes being humans that we are, we need to cut back and realize we can't do everything. We have to realize what should come first and what should be back in the back. If we apply ourselves now, think about this—this could well be the most important Passover that we have ever kept. Because it would reflect our awe over the Son's sacrifice of Himself. He loved us so much before we were ever conceived, He gave His life in horrible pain, suffering and death—for us. We need to think about that. If we understand it more fully, and understand and have gratitude for our Father's plan, that human beings can be eternal in His family forever and we can be in His Presence forever, this could be—if we realize that—the most important Passover that we have ever kept.

Let's spend the time between now and Passover understanding the importance of and the significance of Christ's sacrifice. Let's understand that Passover is the only festival to require a "make up". That means it's really, really important. We need to spiritually evaluate ourselves and make changes between now and then. We need to make God an integral part of every facet of our lives—our Father and His Son. If we do that, we

can come to the Passover in a discerning manner. And more fully maybe than ever before, discerning the body and blood of Jesus Christ.