

## We Can Make It!

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I am going to give you a sermon that I have given before. It has been a good while since I gave this sermon, but the very first time that I gave it was in 1969. I had just been made pastor of the Anaheim congregation of the Worldwide Church of God and I believe it has a good theme to follow a Feast of Tabernacles with. It has a “make sure we have our ducks in a row” theme to it, and it is also helpful because of the seriousness of the times.

It fits both categories I believe fairly well. It is going to concentrate on making the best that we can of what we just experienced, as well as making the best of what we have experienced in the past, by making the right kind of use of it. Its overall purpose is to help us *focus*. We need to be reminded on why we have given our life to God. This is ultimately because the enemy is stepping up his pressures on us that he finds necessary to his purpose to destroy us.

A major resource at the time that I first prepared this was the publication of a book titled, *Final Exit*. It was a serious work promoting euthanasia published in the hope, not only of the author making money, but that many Americans might be spared the discouragement of a painful and lingering illness that not only makes life no longer worth living for them, but also in many cases completely depletes any estate that they may have built up, thus leaving heirs financially destitute because they have to pay the medical bills that were left over from the hospital care.

I did not actually read the book, but a radio talk show was on while I was driving around Southern California. They were having people call in and they were discussing the book and apparently quite a number of people had read it because they were calling in with questions about it as they discussed various aspects of the book.

The one most intensely discussed was, why should such a book be available to the public? What if a depressed teenager reads the book and commits suicide as a result? I am in no way promoting suicide. My concern is that the loss of spiritual focus occurs because the spirit of the times, which I mentioned in my last sermon at the feast, is intense enough to seriously motivate God's children to commit *spiritual* suicide through simply drifting away because of the difficulties of being a Christian.

*Final Exit* was written because the author discovered that many Americans were so

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discouraged by the long-running turn of events in their lives that the statistics were beginning to become truly alarming to him. I do not think that his solution was good at all, but at least he became alarmed enough that his research consisted largely of interviews of those left behind to deal with the aftermath of a suicide in their family.

He found that those people's assessments of the reasons for the suicide were almost constant. The author found that those who became candidates for suicide were those who saw no possibility that their circumstances would ever change for the better. He also found that they not only wanted out of the burden of life as they saw it, they were filled with condemnation and accusation against various professions and institutions of business and government that they felt not only permitted discouragement to occur, but seemingly encouraged it.

Discouragement is a very real factor in everybody's life including ours. We of all people should be the least of mankind effected by it, but it does occur to us as well and indeed there are times when the most encouraging book ever written seems to provoke it.

I am not going to give you a large number of statistics. In fact I do not know that I am ever going to give you a statistic in this sermon regarding suicide, but I am telling you that it is now occurring so frequently that it is considered a major cause of death in the United States of America. The rate is rising and more men succeed at committing suicide than women, but more women attempt it than men, they just do not succeed. So this guy came to the conclusion the reason women were attempting to commit suicide is because they just want to get some attention.

We are going to begin in I Peter 4. Peter is generally considered to be the most hope filled book in the Bible, and it is the theme that runs through it.

**I Peter 4:17-18** [This is in the thought of the Bible provoking sadness and discouragement and disappointment in people] For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

The wrong mindset might actually promote spiritual suicides, this is a reality. It is a truth that we all must face because despite being God's children, having been given His Spirit does not mean that we will not ever become discouraged, it does not mean that we will not have to face the specter of depression, because we do.

In I Peter, it says that the righteous are scarcely saved! That does not leave you with much wiggle room, does it? Do we really consider ourselves righteous? In the process of our spiritual education we come to see a greater depth of evil within ourselves than we ever thought possible and that adds to one's discouragement.

We are taught to be careful about how we feel about ourselves, because humility has a very good side to it, but feeling, 'boy I am really wretched,' can push us over the cliff if we allow it. So the things we hear and evaluate regarding ourselves has to be tempered with understanding that also comes from God's Word.

In addition to what it says here in I Peter 4, we also see God, the righteous judge. For judgment has now come to the house of God, and we know that God so hates evil, and the damage that it creates, that out of love He must deal with it. Thus we know God is judging and we can easily conclude we will never make it if He judges me and I cannot escape it. He will and He is, so we get an unbalanced effect in our own mind that we do not take the proper steps to control, and we can be discouraged and depressed, and sometimes there is a lack of faith there, and with the lack of faith it is easy to become discouraged.

Sometimes going to services seems to make matters worse because the sermon reveals additional flaws in our character makeup that we were not aware of before, and thus we become even more discouraged.

I am just painting this to show you that there are reasons for feeling discouraged, and there are reasons for believing that the Bible, the most encouraging Book there is, can also be used, if we are in the wrong kind of mindset, to make us feel worse by far than maybe we actually are.

There is another aspect to look at regarding this, and that is other people and what they seem to be accomplishing. Here in II Corinthians 11 is a report regarding the apostle Paul.

**II Corinthians 11:23-27** Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness

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and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness

It is very easy to get the thought there: if God could put such a righteous man, such a dedicated laborer, one who literally spent his life in the service of others, and yet He allowed this righteous and zealous man to go through painful pressures, what reason could God find in us to do things in the same way? Would we endure them? So we fear them and are discouraged by them. It is very easy to become negative and contemplate spiritual suicide, because we can feel trapped and that is the reason others physically commit suicide, and we could permit ourselves to commit spiritual suicide.

Here is a fact one should have as a solid plank in the foundation of his spiritual defense: one should know that either being encouraged or discouraged are merely attitudes that are strongly, powerfully affected by one's perspective. Paul did not get discouraged by the things that he went through, and if *he* did not get discouraged by them, why should we not go through our trials without getting discouraged?

It is obvious that God did not test Paul above what he was able, and we know that God is fair—just—in everything that He does, and that He will not allow us to go through something like that either, but will always supply the need. The perspective makes a difference. It is the way we look at it, thus to one person a problem is a challenge meant to be overcome, to another it is an impossible burden, unable to be surmounted.

**Proverbs 23:6-7** Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

That is something that we are all subject to and have the power to overcome if need be, but what the miser does here is he brings this out of his own heart and that is where our thoughts and attitudes, emotions, actions, flow from as well. Now perspective is built by what one allows himself to dwell on and we are told by psychologist that they begin these thoughts early in life.

Sigmund Freud founded a school of psychological analysis, on the basis of his conclusions that mankind is driven by attitudes that we do not even have to be conscience of. These attitudes, according to him, form our perspectives, he concluded, and then engraved on our hearts from childhood experiences.

I do not know whether he was entirely correct, but his conclusions do indicate that how we think of ourselves and our relationships will go a long way toward determining how we face life. It is a place from which to begin an analysis of the self. How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as a pilgrim, or an exile? Do you see yourself as a pilgrim on a great quest meeting challenges that you accept, of achieving what lies ahead? Or do you see yourself as an exile cut off from all of the excitement going on around us, banished and fleeing for your life and stumbling from one overbearing burden to another. That will go a long way toward determining what we think about ourselves.

A Christian is a pilgrim. That is the way we should think—the goal lies ahead, and certainly we accept this way knowing that there are going to be challenges that are to be faced before we ever get to the goal. So we enter into a covenant with God knowing this, probably not knowing it as well as we should, but knowing that the challenges lie ahead, and that we must meet them and strive, with the help of God, to overcome.

The exile will never make it, because the perspective is wrong to begin with. We are not exiled from anything but evil, and to go into the evil is not going to be good for us at all.

Part of the discouragement might arise from a question all eventually ask themselves during times of discouragement, and that question is, where is God in all of this? The very fact that we even have that thought pass through us our mind, is a measure of proof that we need the trial we are going through to strengthen our faith.

I want you to recall with me how God dealt with Jacob in a very difficult part of his life. This is going to take us back to Genesis 27. Jacob himself was part of the cause of the problem.

**Genesis 27:41-43** So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.”

Drop down to Genesis 28. You know full well that Jacob was fleeing, he was in exile, very discouraged, but he had gotten himself into this trouble by deceiving his blind father, and taking advantage of that decision, that action, being so deceptive in what he did, now it was boomeranging back on him because brother Esau was a man of the

forest and he was a great hunter, and also a man harder of mind than Jacob. Jacob was tricky, but Esau was brutal, it could be envisioned that way. So Jacob fled at the suggestion of his mother. Remember, his mother was part of this scheme as well. She did not want to lose Jacob, so that sets the stage.

**Genesis 28:10-15** Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said; "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

He was in exile from his family and fleeing for his life, but God communicated to him that He was with him. God has not done this in literally the same way that he did with Jacob but He has communicated the same basic things to us as He did with Jacob. What God communicated to him played a major role in turning Jacob from an exile to a pilgrim.

In a major way nothing physically about his life changed, he kept on traveling until he got to Laban, but otherwise on the surface he still looked like an exile. There is something important here. Jacob believed what God said, and it really was the beginning of the change of direction in his life.

The change was not rapid, it grew on him. It nonetheless had a start and it was the beginning of faith in his life. What was it that changed him? It was the way that he perceived the situation. His perspective had begun to change. We know it did not change completely for a long period of time, but nonetheless it had a beginning, and this is the way it begins—God intervenes.

We have to hang on to that. God intervened in our life in order to change our perspective from the way it has been to the way God wants it to be, because if we change to the way God wants it to be, we will do something about our situation.

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Jacob did something about his situation. For Jacob it was not a matter of instantaneous recognition of the significance of the vision that filled him with courage and righteous conviction, but rather, even though it took a long time, it became a major plank in the foundation for steady growth toward what God wanted him to become. Now he is one of the fathers, not just physically but also spiritually. He is an example of an overcomer—that is what his name means, one who overcomes with God, Israel.

You see, it started in sin, but as it proceeded, God rescued him from that, but in a sense all God did was change his perspective. Jacob had to carry on from there as a pilgrim rather than as an exile. The ladder is a symbol of real and uninterrupted fellowship between God and His people on earth. Jacob must have had intimations of that in his mind, his life still had God within it.

Remember, angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. That also encouraged him a bit, gave him a better perspective, and again the same thing is being done to us. Jacob made the proper connections and that is what was important. There is tremendous encouragement in something like that so that we do not bottom out in the wrong direction. We might hit the bottom, but we bounce back up, because we gather ourselves together once again with the knowledge that God has given to us and we begin to make the change internally, in the way that we think.

God also gave him tremendous encouragement. He said, “I am with you.” Is He with you? Of course He is, just like Jacob. Jacob was far from perfect and many difficult trials lay ahead, but he needed to know that God was with him in a completely unbroken way. Notice the ladder had no breaks in it, the angels were going down, and the angels were going up, so the ladder with the angels on it in movement shows that there is constant communication between God and His people. What a support something like that can be to our perspective!

I will give you Adam Clark's interpretation of Hebrew 13:5. According to him that verse is virtually untranslatable, because it has five negatives in it. If we translated it the way that it actually says it, it is: “No, I will not leave you, no, neither, I will not utterly forsake you.” If we paraphrase what He says there, I will never, never, never, never, never leave you! That is pretty strong encouragement.

We will take another step in the right direction regarding moving away from discouragement.

**Proverbs 29:18** “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.”

**Proverbs 29:18** [Living Bible] “Where there is ignorance of God the people run wild, but what a wonderful thing it is for a nation to know and keep His laws.”

That ‘run wild’ might throw you for a loop. It does not necessarily mean people are going to be like a bunch of screaming meemies. What did it say? Without the knowledge of God people are aimless about their purpose in life. That is a correct understanding of what is being said there. I have to reflect back on what happened to Jacob that we just read about, when God did what He did He put Jacob’s life into an entirely different purpose and perspective. It turned him from an exile into a pilgrim.

Even though it took a long time, he was no longer aimless about life and he turned, really, from a money-grubbing thief, to a man who was very willing to diligently work. Which showed, he made money for everybody he worked for and he came out of that very wealthy.

We will make very clear what this verse means. Simply, people are without godly direction, without vision. Without the revelation, godly direction is not there, and it is the godly part that is meaningful to us. People without that revelation are aimlessly wondering through life with no overriding pure spiritual purpose to accomplish. It is like trying to get somewhere that you have never been without a road map, or worse still, to be given a map by a person you trust and it gives you wrong directions.

If we sometimes feel ourselves in spiritual exile, it is sometimes because there is no clear quest before our eyes. Jacob was not only a wanderer, but a guilty, burdened, and remorseful one. He did not *deserve* a vision, but God gave him one and he has given us one.

I will give you a listing of things to think about. They require doing our part, there is much that we can do to help ourselves along the way so that we do not become discouraged to the extent that we contemplate giving up. Perspective is determined by what one permits himself to think upon.

I am going to give you some positive selfless reasons about things that we should be thinking on as to why you should strive to be there in God's Kingdom. I hope that they will give direction to your life so that you will not be wandering aimlessly, getting discouraged at every turn of events because you feel life is careening out of control. These are reasons we must think upon, and like with Jacob they are not quick fixes.

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The first reason you want to be in God's Kingdom: is to expand the rule of God in individual lives. That is what Proverbs 29:18 is saying. Those people do not have God in their life, so we should have within us the desire to expand the rule of God in individual lives. We can get fodder for this by listening to the news. Look at the mess L.A. County is in, it is not the nice place it used to be to live, it is being taken over by foreigners, and now the people who have lived there most of their lives must feel like they are in a foreign country.

**Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greeks.

We will define some words. Salvation is a restoration to soundness. Paul confirms this in II Timothy 1:6. It can also be defined as deliverance to safety, or it can be defined as rescued from bondage. We always think of Egypt, and Israel being rescued from bondage. It is all three of these definitions at the same time depending upon the individual's situation.

We can use the apostle Paul: he said he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul had a fervent desire to preach because he knew by experience that the power of this good news working in those who believe, transforms lives.

If you begin to chase this concept out you will find power here is emphasized. He says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God." He did not say, this is a book about the power of God, he was saying the gospel is the power of God.

**I Corinthians 1:18** For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

**I Corinthians 1:24** But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I mentioned that Paul does not say it is a message. The gospel is not a message about the power of God. He says, the gospel itself is the power of God. Here comes the good news: the gospel in its basic identity is nothing but words, that is all the gospel is, it is good news that is coming from God. Words, power, and belief are emphasized in this declaration that he makes there in Romans 1:16.

There is a logical sequence there. Jesus said that the words He speaks are spirit and they are life. Spoken words, like I am doing to you right now, are invisible and immaterial. That is the way spirit is. It is invisible and it is immaterial, but they are powerful because they are the symbols we use to identify other things and to convey meaning.

Words convey meaning. This is because they are what we use to think and make choices from, thus words make us do, or not do. Words can energize, encourage, discourage, activate, make us hesitate or stop entirely. Words calm, excite, all by means of something that is immaterial, depending upon whether or not we believe them.

Paul was confident that when he preached people were going to believe what he said, that God was with him, and because they believed they would begin to use the information and it would change their lives. That is how powerful words are! What a gift that God has given us, in making us able to communicate with one another, to communicate with Him, and we do it through words—words of appreciation, fear, responsibility, they impact on our minds and we take action.

Christianity might be defined as a way of life which one deliberately chooses to submit to the rule of God as communicated to Him. From the Garden of Eden, Satan has been challenging that concept, and his arguments are sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, but they almost always follow the basic line that one can have a wonderful reward now, without cost, if one just goes *his* way.

We have God on one side, communicating one thing, we have Satan on the other side communicating another thing which disagrees with what God says on His side. Which shall we choose? You shall not surely die, says Satan. Look at the results, look at the record of history. The experience of man is strewn with the wreckage of things gone wrong. God says it so simply, Jesus Christ came to release, deliver, save, those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

By using a different metaphor, we spend our life always trying to dodge the bullet, and human nature using different words for its appeal, keeps forcing us to act and react, to jump, to jump the wrong way, both before and after we hear that click. Men apart from God have seen this problem, it did not take God to stir up their mind, they just read history and they believed it. But history does not give any solutions. The real problem is how can the endless cycle of fear, pain, anxiety, violence, and death be broken? Men formulate the philosophies which undergird the cultures of this world, but none of them have the power to really work.

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Here is the God connection: He not only has the words, He has the power to convince men's minds to follow what He says, but man still has to make the decision. The gospel—the good news—is indeed the power of God unto salvation. Once you think it through, what Paul says really makes sense.

What we see is something that is missing right from what it says in Romans 1, that is, that the context must have God's involvement. The gospel is power because it offers truths not found in any of the philosophies and religions of the world—truth about this creation, truth about man's purpose, forgiveness, and hope for all of mankind greater than anything man and his wildest dreams could image. Truth about time, choices never before possessed—all of this exists within the presence of the living God who backs what His Word says, along with His forgiving grace, that He desires to give so that we are empowered when we follow His Word. His gifts are given to enable us to do God's will.

It comes down to this: do we really believe that we have the truth that can break our bondage to the past? There is power and there is faith. With God's involvement, the break from the past and its bondage can be made in our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God. It requires our co-operation, there is not doubt about it. It requires our thoughtfulness, comparing spiritual with spiritual, and coming to the decision that we are going to do what God says with our life. We have the opportunity and God is with us, involved with us, just as He was involved with Jacob.

Do we really believe that we have the truths that can break our bondage to the past? Do we believe that through Christ we can apprehend that which we are apprehended for? As Paul says in Philippians, confidence, not discouragement, comes from the knowledge contained within the good news. God is offering deliverance, salvation, from moral, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual sickness. Rescue from the constant fear of danger and freedom from the bondage of Satan, sin, and eternal death.

This is something to glory in, in the right way. It is not that way completely yet. The world is in an appalling condition. There is an easily attained tendency to detach ourselves from it and allow ourselves to be hardened to it, but God says, be alert, we are not putting on those characteristics, be alert, because the right perspective helps keep us headed in the right direction in the right attitude.

Can we have empathy for those who are still in the condition, in bondage to this world that we have left and have the opportunity to attain the freedom that God wants to give us. Empathy has been described as 'your pain in my heart.' The world is mostly made up of people who are totally ignorant of the meaning of what is going on, of those who

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are aware but choose to ignore, and those who are aware but have no idea where to turn.

We are in the middle here, and all of these groups I just mentioned are out in the world. They are still there, so as I began this section, we should have the desire to introduce people to the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Can we project ourselves into those peoples' situations? We have difficulty doing this because we think too much of ourselves to take time to think about the trials of poverty, disease, starvation, deformity, deception, murder, rape, incest, and on and on it goes.

All of those are being carried by those outside, without life, without the power of the gospel to motivate them. God has called us to prepare us to become a king and priest in His Kingdom, to bring about a world of peace because we have removed the occasions for war so that none are afraid. That is when the Kingdom of God comes.

We are going to fill this earth with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. This is a marvelous thing to think on—our future.

A second reason why we should have our mind turned in the direction that I just mentioned, is to restore peace to the creation. I received an email recently, it was about something that involved something that was done in April of 2006, in which a man, a renowned man, gave a speech on something similar to euthanasia, but it was far more widespread than that. These people later, in this same meeting, made him the recipient of the highest honor that the state of Texas could give to somebody in his scientific position, he was the man of the year.

Do you know what he said in his speech? One thing he said was, we human beings are not better than bacteria. He later went on to say, and he received a standing ovation for this: He laid out a plan to remove all but one million people worldwide, end their lives. He said that AIDS was too slow, he also mentioned Ebola, and he says now we can kill people in practically no time at all.

There are screwballs who sincerely want to do these things, you are witnessing these things occurring in the United States of America. Our liberties are disappearing because these people are gaining power over our lives, they are in government, medicine, and so forth. It is interesting that all of these people while making these screwy things that they want to do, never want to be part of it. They just want to run it, so that they do not get caught up in their own plan, but they are going to waste us in order that their vision for the world succeed.

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I went into this because this particular point in my message is that we should desire God's purpose and plan to go forward in order to restore peace to the creation.

The man who received this standing ovation is called an evolutionary ecologist, and his solution is to get rid of the people. It is people who are messing things up, there are too many people, we have to get rid of them, and when we get rid of those people, then the rest of us can make this a wonderful place to live.

Whose mind do you think that came from? That is the mind of *the* murderer, and people stood up and cheered for this man, and applauded his proposals, and this man does not stand alone, there are big names that you probably hear at least once a week, American citizens of great wealth and power, who are of the same general mindset.

It is interesting because the population of the earth is decreasing already, not increasing. Women are having less babies, it is that simple. They are not doing what God says to do. God said to reproduce, multiply. We did for a while and now things have turned in the other direction, and the population of the world is actually decreasing.

There is no doubt that conditions on earth, in nature, are not what they used to be, but even so despite six thousand years of man's destructive efforts there are still places of beauty left, places that give one a sense of serenity and well being, a feeling of being at one with God and His purpose, but one often has to travel far to find that.

**Romans 8:21-23** because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

I want you to think about the unrest in nature, weather patterns are erratic and extreme, even the winds sometimes seems to moan a song of despair. The world is one where beauty fades and loveliness decays. We live in a deeply troubled and dying world where things have gone radically wrong. We live in a world that glorifies ugliness, that is easily seen in our cities. There is ugliness in music, art, architecture, a world in which disharmony seems to be the intent thus keeping people anxious and disoriented. Mankind has done this deliberately, that is the bad part of it.

The creation had much of the penalty imposed upon it. Cursed is the ground for your

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sake, God said to Adam in Genesis 3:17, as He assigned the fault directly to sin. The contagion of our evil has spread beyond the confines of our lives, and infected the whole creation. Mankind must learn that we cannot neatly divide ourselves away from the rest of God's creation as if what we do does not matter. Anybody who walks the streets, as I do, becomes very aware of the tremendous amount of garbage people thoughtlessly toss from car windows, cigarette butts are everywhere, hamburger wrappers, paper and plastics sacks, soft drinks, coffee cups, all appear everywhere defiling the beauty.

We must remember there is a unity in God's creation. A disaster in one area reverberates and impacts on others as well. It cannot be contained because each section of God's creation depends partly on that which it is adjacent to.

**Revelation 11:16-18** And the twenty-four elders, who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God. Saying; "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

Mankind is going to get its comeuppance. He is going to destroy those who deliberately destroy the beauty of what God has created. Think about all of the industries that exist on this earth, and how those industries have defiled the beauty of the land that is there. People often conclude, by observing nature, that God is cruel when weather disasters strike. God is not cruel, He is kind. God did not denude the forest of its trees, or cover the land with concrete. God did not use strip mining techniques that pollute the streams and the rivers of the entire earth. God did not use the rivers of the earth to produce acid rain.

People observe the law of the jungle and the viciousness of lions and tigers, but it was not that way in the beginning when God ruled. If rightly understood the way things are now ought to testify to us of our nature.

**Romans 8:18-23** For I consider that the sufferings of this present times are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest, expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but

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because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

This section shows that the rest of creation is bound up with not only man's corrupt nature, but also man's destiny. You have to read that carefully in order to pick the destiny part up. When mankind's deliverance begins, nature too will experience a rebirth from bondage to ugliness, into glorious beauty. The whole world, even nature, is waiting for you to put it at peace. That is what it is waiting for, and that is what we are going to do.

The third reason we should want to be in God's Kingdom: we owe it to our loved ones. It is becoming more and more obvious that it is not just for ourselves that we have been called into this way. It is to prepare us to teach this way. We know this but all too often we think of it in a vague, general way. It is for those *out there*, that is the way we generalize it. We know it is going to be for those who are out there, but what about those who are closest to us? Are we pushing our way, as it were, toward the Kingdom of God because we want those we love personally also to be in God's Kingdom and even now to have the knowledge of it in our mind and begin to see some of its power?

There is something about family that makes it special above all other relationships. You can see this so plainly, God Himself wants a family. He wants to be related to everybody that is a part of His creation. That filters down to us and there is a special communication between those who are part of the same family. There is something about a family that makes it special. God did that. Above all other relationships there is an acceptance of what we are and the way we are that makes us feel close, and also responsible for their well being. You want to live eternally with those you love.

Remember these are some of the people who cause us the biggest problems, but we want them too to be in the Kingdom of God. Maybe a husband, a wife, children, who are not called at this time.

**Matthew 10:34-36** “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be those of his own household.”

I know that some of you have been involved in situations where your family that you formerly were at peace with—when you were called, became converted, became part of Worldwide Church of God—dropped you like nothing. Evelyn and I had to experience this once we became part of the church. They just about wrote us off—and it was a good relationship! Richard and I had an experience last year. We went back to Pittsburgh, and there was one aunt that when I was a kid, I particularly liked her, she was always so funny, she was pretty, she liked to play with all the kids. She is 95 years old now, and one of the reasons I went to Pittsburgh is because I wanted to see her, but she would not see us *because of the church*. She told my cousin who showed Richard and me around the area that I lived in growing up that she was afraid that I would try to convert her!

This is kind of what I mean. I could be angry at her but I am not, she does not understand, she is just an old widow. She still retains a fear of the church of God that tore us away from the family.

**Matthew 10:34-36** “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be those of his own household.”

It was God who set up the conditions that these people responded to, and they respond by just being hard towards us, they did not want to spend time around us, that kind of thing, and either Evelyn or I could have got angry about that, but we did not. We just bore with it and we treated them as kindly as we could under the circumstance.

Sometimes these things happen right within the church. Somebody that we formerly had a good relationship with, something happened and the relationship becomes bad. Instead of there being peace, there is a feeling of antagonism or whatever it might be that is there. That is a dangerous condition, when it happens right within the family, I mean the church family. Things have to be done in order to make sure that the church family, the whole thing, is brought into God's Kingdom. God said that is one of the things that He hates above all others—somebody who is creating division.

God has not given us the choice about being unforgiving and accusing. We *have* to forgive, that is His order. So there is pressure, and all too frequently we do not act or react in a godly manner so there are accusations and frustration, sometimes leading to such bitterness one wonders if there ever will be forgiveness.

**Luke 16:25, 27** “But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.’. . . Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house.’

Now that he was facing being put out all together, into the Lake of Fire, he was concerned but it was too late. That is the point of the parable, it was too late. There is another point: what would you feel like if it was the other way around? What would they feel if everything was over and you did not make it because of them? They are in and you are out. The rich man gave up, he committed spiritual suicide. The parable shows that the rich man was indolent and self indulgent. He did not do anything against Lazarus, he simply did nothing. That is the lesson.

It was what the rich man did *not* do that earned him eternal death. He did not care about Lazarus, even though he had the means to help him. He did nothing, and that earned him eternal death. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

**II Corinthians 5:17-21** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This third point is, we should want to be in God's Kingdom in order to share it with others. That has to be in us.