

Keeping God's Standards

Living by God's Ways

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Early in my selling career, in fact it was the first territory that I was given, they moved me down to Fresno, California, which is in the center of the San Joaquin Valley. And then one night every week I would go either up north to Modesto, Merced, Jamestown, and Sonora, and sometimes Yosemite. On the opposite week I would go down to Visalia, Taft, Hanford, and Bakersfield. Our company sold liquid oil vegetable shortening and they sold plastic shorting, which is the Crisco type, and they sold frozen items and spice. Spice accounts were always the hardest accounts to get. I happened to have an exceptionally fine one down in Bakersfield. It was Mr. Gelb's Butcher Supply.

Now Mr. Gelb was a really neat guy to call on. He was just a gentleman and I really enjoyed calling on him. But the other reason I enjoyed calling there was that he had a lot of good stuff in his butcher supply house. He had cutlery, all types of cutlery. He had big mixers, small mixers, he had sharpeners, he had all types of things, but he had quite a few scales. And many times when I would call, I would see the Department of Weights and Measures and their step-side pickup truck out in front of Mr. Gelb's Butcher Supply. In the back of their pickup truck, they would have weights: 100 pound weights and 50 pound weights and 25s and 5s, down to ounces and grams. Of course, he was there for the simple reason that he was going to check Mr. Gelb's scales to make sure that they were up to the standard of the Department of Weights and Measures.

It is extremely important that there are standards like that. Can you imagine what it would be like to try and do business or to invent anything without proper standards? If you were to make a rocket to go to the moon, you would have to put X number of pounds of fuel in the rocket, but you would not be sure what a pound was and you would not be sure how many miles or exactly what the term mile meant. And so it would be destined to disaster.

Well, I got started on this, and I got thinking about standards, and so I looked in an encyclopedia concerning the standardization of weights and measures and I would like to read you some of it because it took a long time for the world as we have it today to come into standardization on this type of a thing. It reads:

The earliest units of weights and measures were derived from the human body and from natural surroundings. The cubit, for example, was defined as the distance between a man's elbow and the tip of his middle finger. This unit was probably originated as early as 3000 BC and was standardized so precisely that the Egyptians could build the pyramids to measure volume or capacity or a container seeds and other objects often were used. For example, the caret, a unit still used to measure precious stones, probably evolved from the carrot seed. [And he also adds here], that rocks were common objects of measuring weight.

Many of the units of weights and measures that came down to be used throughout the Western world first developed in Babylon and in other civilizations of the Middle East through trade and other contacts, they passed from ancient Greece and Rome. And after the Roman conquest of Gael and Britain, these units gradually passed into other parts of the world. The Romans made important contributions to the development of weights and measures. They used a base-12 system and divided both foot and pound into 12 *munkai*, parts, from which we derive the words that we use today, inches and ounces. And the Romans established 5 feet as a pace or a double step, and to measure the long distances, they adopted a *mille* or what we would refer to as the mile or 1,000 paces or 5,000 ft.

During the Middle Ages, after the fall of the Roman Empire, many variations in weights and measures developed in Europe. Different standards and sometimes different units were used by the various regions, towns, and guilds. An example of the lack of uniformity can be seen in the directions for establishing the length of a rod as given in the 16th century treatise [on vein?] [You going to like this. This is sort of cute. This is the particular rule that they had set up]

It said stand at the door of the church on any Sunday and get 16 men to stop, tall ones and small ones, if they happen to pass out when service is finished. Then make them put their left feet one behind the other and the length thus obtained shall be a right and a lawful rod to measure and survey the land with, and the 16th part of that will be 1 foot. [So you can see how accurate that was. It would be a dandy.]

The word acre developed from the word field. The furlong was originally a furrow long which was the length of a plowed strip of land in the division of the medieval manors. The rod came from the length of a plowman's pole used to measure a furl in the yard and twig represented by the length of a man's arm. So there were attempts during the Middle Ages to standardize, to establish a uniform standard of weights and measures at the European trade fairs, which attracted merchants from all parts of the continent. Exact measures or exact standards were required. The troy units of weight and measures, for example, originated from the fair at Troy, France. But merchants continued to use their own weights and measures in local commerce. It was important that proper weights and measures be established.

Deuteronomy 25:13-16 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God."

What he is saying here is that when you have two sets of weights and measures that you are tempted to cheat, and he said that is an abomination. God saw to it through England that a worldwide standard of weights and measures was established because of their far-flung trade and their dominance worldwide and the fact that the sun never set on the English Empire. They established the first worldwide system, which was the British Imperial system of weights and measures.

All of us can see that without proper standards of weights and measures that world commerce would be in chaos. The world understands that it has to have standards for business. A lack of accepted standards worldwide in business would produce chaos and confusion. Now, the world provides and enforces these standards because they bring them money. It is a monetary thing with them and it is because of their desire for wealth. But the world is not motivated to live by right standards. They have no motivation to do that.

So what is it like to live in a world where every nation, every people live by a different set of standards in religion, in government, and in human rights, where the standards that we value are not held to be important by others and in fact, are looked down upon, and where their standards are not held important by us. What, brethren, has this lack of everyone living by the right standards produced over these last 6,000 years? It has produced 6,000 years of war, prejudice, suspicion, hatred, perversion, greed, abuse, dishonesty, a lack of right character, backbiting, destruction of the planet, starvation, sadness, wrong education, broken homes, battered wives, beaten children, shattered human rights, crimes of all sorts and a complete breakdown of the moral system of the world. This is what all of this has taken place from.

Why has it come about? It has come about because mankind has rejected what God has set forth as the right way to live.

Please turn over to Romans 1. We will start in verse 21; very insightful as to what has taken place.

Romans 1:21-31 Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even the women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one toward another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. [Of course, we have AIDS everywhere today.] And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, and unmerciful.

And then we find out in II Timothy 3 that it is going to get worse than that in the end time. Let us turn over there.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come [And I think we are at the beginning of those or we are already here]: For men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such turn away.

This is what is on the horizon at this time. All of this has and will continue to come upon us because we as a world cannot agree upon the same standards to direct our lives. We all want our own ways to live and act as our desires dictate. It reminds you of Judges, the end of Judges, every man does what is right in his own eyes. But the time is coming when Jesus Christ will impose His standards and values upon mankind, and He will impose them, and they will live by them, and they will learn to live by them.

Turn over to Isaiah 11, verse 9, please, just for a little background. This is where God's Word will fill the earth.

Isaiah 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

That day is coming!

For a little further amplification of that, Jeremiah 31:31-34. What he is saying is that I will write it in their hearts and that everybody will know, that they will not go to their neighbor and say, "Do you know the Lord?" Because everybody is going to know. He said that He will forgive their sins and that the land will be blessed because of the standards that God sets forth for all mankind to live by. "I will put My law in their minds,. . . no more shall every man teach his neighbor" because they are going to know who God is. But until that time, the people of God are the ones that must not only maintain God's standard but live by them. We must do this in a society that is falling apart faster than we can possibly imagine.

You know, when we were all in the Worldwide Church of God, we had the advantage of a peer group that was all trying to do the same thing. We may not have been doing it correctly and certainly God had to scatter the church, but there was an advantage there for us because we were all together. But now church is scattered. And because of this, people can let down the standards of God and they can slip and they can wander away from the truth.

II Timothy 4:3-4 [and we can see what has been taking place] For the time will come [and I think the time is here] when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears from the truth, and shall be turned aside to fables.

In other words, they will turn to wrong ideas, wrong interpretations, and concepts, and they will think they are true and will wander off from the truth of God. Of course, there is not a lot to do about that when that happens.

The definition in the *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedia Dictionary* for standard is this: "any type, model, or example for comparison; a criterion of excellence; a standard of conduct." And this is the particular definition that we are looking at.

Now, what are the standards that we are to maintain? What are the standards that the world is going to live by? In Matthew 19:17, it says, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." This is going to be the base for the entire world in the near future. God's standards are the Ten Commandments, the beginning, the solid base that everything else emanates from.

I would like to take a quick review of these standards because they are important to us because we are told to hold them and to hang on to them at this time. So if you please turn over to Exodus 20 and you can follow along. It is going to be a very quick review because there is a lot of material that I would like to cover here.

Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me."

And it is good for us to review this. Like I said, in essence, God and His laws and statutes and desires are always to be first in our lives. Thus everything else: job, possessions, hobbies, friends, our desires will always be second to what God wants. God *always* comes first. And because God and His laws come first, our lives will reflect His very nature in dealing with each other, with the environment, and with every aspect of living. You see, that is what this calling is about now, for us to take on that nature.

Exodus 20:4-6 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above . . ."

Bowing down to them. A lot of the world does bow down to graven images and that will cease. And of course, we are not to. So we are not to bow down to any religious idol in worship. Nor are we to let the desires of other individuals or groups lead us into disobeying God. Anything we give first place, in place of God is an idol. And in doing so, we are committing idolatry. In the *Forerunner*, the definition of idol was this, "An idol is any object of ardent or excessive devotion or admiration." You see our excessive

admiration and devotion should always be for God the Father and Jesus Christ. That is where it should be.

Exodus 20:7 "You will not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

This commandment sums up what we are or what we should be. It is true that we are not to use the name of God and say gee, gosh, and golly, and all those euphemisms. But God's name identifies what we are and God said if we live in a manner that does not respect that name, that He will not hold us guiltless or that He will not hold us to be not guilty. So we are to carry the standard of God's name in all we think and do and speak, and therefore, to do that, we must totally order our lives before God to carry His name properly. We must come under all of God's law.

Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Quoting from the *Forerunner* Bible study (and I trust that you are all doing those because they are exceptionally fine and they are encouraging):

"Because God rested after six days of labor, the Sabbath is also our day of rest and a memorial of Creation. He wants us to remember, not only what He did in the physical creation, but also that His spiritual creation continues in us now."

That is what this world is going to find out. For us, we have to keep the Sabbath holy. God blessed it. He sanctified it. He made it holy. He set it apart for us and for His use. And we are instructed to keep it holy. Of course, this means we are going to keep it holy from sunset Friday through sunset Sabbath—not doing our own thing, going to work at our employment; or to keep it holy by our dress, by our conversation, our activities. In every way we are to put forth effort to learn more about God each Sabbath.

So the first four are that we are to keep God number one in our lives and bring everything under Him, every single thought, every desire under Him. Secondly, we are not to allow any idol of any kind to take us away from God. And we are to respect His name and we are to carry it with honor and

with righteousness, that we reflect Him in everything we do; and that we are to keep the Sabbath. The first four are how we show love, and affection, and belief, and trust, and faith in God.

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

We live in a world today where that standard is far disappearing because older people now are sort of frowned upon and just held to be repugnant and nobody seems to really care. But when we do honor our mother and father, we establish a right relationship with them and thus the right relationship carries over to God as well and we respect Him.

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder."

As I was preparing this, I saw the headlines, "Suicide bomber in Israel detonates bomb and kills 15." Human life is cheap. This is an abomination to God because God gives life and to take someone's life is a terrible thing. In this, God's standards dictate that we control our anger because God knows that anger leads to hatred, and hatred leads to marital strife, to all types of strife, to war, and to killing. The world that we live in does not control its anger and it is going to be evidenced by the fact that it is going to bring the world to the very edge of destruction. There will be no flesh saved the life. This is what is taking place.

Of course, in the Kingdom of God, you can picture what will happen. All construction, city layout, everything will be promoted to promote life and to promote the good life. There will be no more wrong additives in food. There will be no emissions from automobiles or factories that would cause anybody any harm. We saw in the paper this morning that they expect that 75,000 possibly will get cancer from the atomic bomb testing in the Nevada test site. And that it went as far back as I believe Illinois. See, there will be none of that in the Kingdom of God because everyone will think, "I can't kill. How do I protect and how do I keep life?"

Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery."

We live in a society that really promotes this. Just as Balaam promoted the Midianite women to come to Israel and to seduce them so God could curse them, this society push themes at us, themes continually in the movies and television and everything else. We are living in a nation full to the brim with fornication and adultery, and going along with it, sexually transmissible diseases. What will this law being kept mean? It would mean no illegitimate children. It would mean there would not be shattered homes with children left without a parent, and in some cases, homeless. There would be two parents to train up every child and it would be wonderful. In one example, happy marriages set for children of the nation. It would be a beautiful example because when you see a happy home and a happy marriage, you can begin to picture your marriage with Jesus Christ and being part of the Family of God.

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal."

If this world kept this one commandment, there would be nobody taking any other country's land or people or possessions. Locks and alarm systems would not be needed. And what would it mean to governments if nobody stole taxes? What would it mean to the people if the government did not steal money from the people? What would it mean to employers if the employees worked hard? What would it mean to the employees if the company paid for them to work hard rather than to try and cheat them on wages? What would it mean if every man valued his neighbor's property and went out of his way to return anything that might be lost or misplaced?

Now, all of us can remember when the man found the bag of money that spilled out of the armored car and he returned it and he got hate letters. How could you be so stupid? I had a much smaller experience. I was at a restaurant show. I went to buy an all beef hot dog and I paid my money and the man gave me too much change. And I said, Here you gave me too much change, and he snarled at me. And then the man behind me said, Boy, that was stupid, giving him back his money. And I felt like I was surrounded by someone. . . I mean, nobody cared. But God expects us to care.

Exodus 20:16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

In Richard's recent article, it said one lie is told by the average man every eight minutes, seven lies per hour, 40,000 plus a year. And if he lives 70 years, it is estimated that the average man would tell 2.8 million lies in his lifetime. That is almost unbelievable. What would "You shall not bear false witness" do to the scandal sheets at the checkout stand? They would be empty. What would it do to politicians? I would love to see it. I really would. But what it would promote would be honesty rather than just hurling epitaphs. In the Middle East people would start to trust each other because they knew what they said would be truthful. And this type of thing, obeying this standard, would promote character and trust and it can certainly be a long way into coming into peace, go a long way into that.

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."

This commandment of not coveting does promote peace. Because coveting promotes idolatry as the thing one covets takes God's place in importance. Coveting promotes stealing or war to obtain what one desires.

These are going to be the standards in the World Tomorrow that everybody is going to live by. But at this time, God has seen fit to give these standards of living to us.

Please turn over the I Corinthians 1, verses 26 and 27. We will see what is being done here by God. Because brethren, you are special, you have been selected by God for a special purpose. We are going to see that.

I Corinthians 1:26-27 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.

I want to read you what *Barnes' Notes* says on this:

The design of the apostle here is to show that the Gospel did not depend for its success on human wisdom. His argument is that in

fact, those who were blessed by it had not been of the elevated ranks of life mainly, but that God has shown His power by choosing those who are ignorant, vicious, and abandoned. [And here comes the key] And by reforming and purifying their lives.

If there had to be an SPS for the sermon that is what this is today. We are to be reformed and have our lives purified. Continuing:

God has not consulted the wisdom and power and wealth of men regarding the establishment of His church. God chose those He esteemed foolish among men, those regarded as unimportant with no power, those considered as the little people of no significance to confound them, that He might make them ashamed. By thus overlooking them and bestowing His favors on the humble and the poor, and by choosing His people from the ranks which the leaders of this world despised, and bestowing upon them the exalted privilege of being called the sons of God, He has poured dishonor upon the rich and the great.

See, you have been called and you have been exalted with the privilege of being called the sons and daughters of God. We have had a great honor conferred upon us. The apostle Paul deeply understood this as well.

II Corinthians 4:1-6 Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. [In other words, because this has been given to him and all the encouragement that he gets from it, he said, we just do not lose heart.] We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully [What he is doing here is he is telling the truth. He is obeying the commandments.], but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. [Paul is fully aware here that God has him continually in sight as He has each of us in sight.]

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose mind the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach

ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul makes the comment that it was God Himself who commanded this light to shine out to the ministry, to be given to them that they might teach us; to be put into the ministry's heart to give the light or the knowledge. One of the commentators made the comment, "It is the same God that said, 'Let there be light.' [And he said] Light has always been a symbol of right knowledge, purity, truth, and love, just as darkness has been a symbol of ignorance, error, sin, and wickedness."

Then in verse 7, Paul repeats in a different way what he said in I Corinthians 1:26-27. He said,

II Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

Normally you store a treasure in something very special. But here Paul says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Paul refers to those who possess the truth as earthen or common vessels. That is what we are. And why? "That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." But as we change and grow, and people notice and see, it will be God's power in us that is doing the job. We are not the wise of the world.

I Thessalonians 2:1-4 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God with much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God tries our hearts.

What Paul said here is that He has been put in trust and so have we. Now, the ministry may have the greater responsibility, but all who are called by God

are entrusted with living up to the standards that will make this world a new wonderful place to live. We have been given God's Word in trust, we are to keep it just as the ministry, just anyone that God has called is in this category.

You see, brethren, God wants us to feel the weight and the responsibility of our calling. And He wants us to understand that, as we change and grow and become like Him, He is going to be glorified and we will share in that glory later, of course. How we have been specially prepared by God to receive this truth. I think so many times over the years we tend to think that, well, this has been going on for a long time and maybe it is not so special, but I assure you it is.

I Corinthians 2:3-6 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with persuading words of human wisdom [he is saying this does not come from man], but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

Paula is saying here, "We speak the wisdom to those who are perfect, to those who are mature, of full age, adults in their thinking, fully grown in mind and understanding." And then a commentary made a remarkable statement here. He said, "We speak true wisdom to those who have been fitted by God to receive it and understand it." You see brethren, you are special. You have been fitted by God to receive this word and understand it. In other words, those who have been called by God the Father to bear His name and His standards are special. Paul says that he speaks not the wisdom of the age, but he also brings out that all of man's plenty is going to come to nothing. But what we have been given is going to be forever. It will never be useless. It will always be precious.

I Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in mystery, the hidden wisdom which God has ordained before the ages for our glory.

These things have been hidden from men, man does not understand it. But it has been *revealed*. The things you understand could not have come any other way. It has been revealed to you.

I Corinthians 2:10-12 But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except by the spirit of man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from of God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

We are special. In all the world it is we who have been given this truth in trust. It is special. It has been given to us by God. Out of [at that time] 5.5 billion people, His truth has been given to us. He has chosen to do this and we have held it for whatever period of time we have had in the church. But with the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God and the resulting chaos and confusion, many are going after strange ideas, as was mentioned in the sermonette, concerning government and doctrine. And many more are just letting down and relaxing the standards that have been set for them to live by.

I think it is easy to feel that the church is getting smaller and smaller and smaller and it is easy to feel that we are just barely hanging on. But there is encouragement here because Peter tells us that this very chaos and confusion should encourage us because it tells us that we are, in fact, in the last days. Turn over to II Peter 3, please. We will spend a little time here.

II Peter 3:1-7 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder) [he said, I want you to stop and think what I am saying here], that you may be that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first [this is really important]: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts [What he said here is that during the time when this world's end time events are about to be wrapped up, there will be scoffers who will change doctrine, who will put down

the return of Jesus Christ.], saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? [Why has He not come?] For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

What he is saying here is that there will be those that will come and say, where is the fulfillment of His promise? Where are His signs? Implying that nothing is going to take place. This prophecy has failed. They will say the prophets that told this message who lived and they have died and nothing happens. The weather patterns are basically the same, the sun comes up in the morning and down at night and things continue as they always have.

These men are willingly not paying attention to history. The elements have not always been the same, is what Peter is saying, because God changed the elements to produce the Flood and wipe mankind off the face of the earth. He said, so you are not paying attention. You have forgotten what the truth is. He ordered the elements to produce the Flood that destroyed man. And by His word, He can do the same thing with the elements and He will again destroy the earth to punish the ungodly. He said, now do you not forget it!

II Peter 3:8-10 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. [What he is saying here is that man's promises over a period of time may fail, but God's promises will not fail. Jesus Christ *is* going to return and these things are going to happen.] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

It would be as if you were sitting in the house at night and all of a sudden somebody smashed in your front door and all of a sudden you found your house full of robbers, as a thief in the night. I Thessalonians 5:3 states that when they cry, peace, peace and safety, when everything is fine, then comes sudden destruction upon them and none shall escape. Peter says here that all of the works of man are going to be burned up—all of them, every one.

II Peter 3:11-14 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness [He says, seeing these things are surely going to take place (and he really means that), then how should you be conducting your life in this life and the calling that we have been given?], looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? [What he is saying here is that we should be looking forward to that with anticipation. We should have our mind on the coming of Jesus Christ and be ready for it.] Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

Has this been a time, brethren, when we see people—who are putting off overcoming and going back into the world—state that they see that Christ delays His coming? Do we see some believing in a manner that indicates they are not really concerned with an event that seems to be so far off in the future? You bet we do. About two years ago, I was talking with somebody from the Worldwide Church of God, I do not know who it was, but they said, "We don't think Christ is coming for 470 some years, if he comes at all."

See, this is part of the sign. These are some of the signs of the end time. And yet as Peter tells us, this is a time for our final refinement. And he is saying, with so many in confusion and letting down Peter warns us that this is not the time to let down but to really press to finish the race. This is not the time to say it is too much. People have gone off, they say, I feel helpless. He said no, this is our time to become perfect as God wants us to be.

One of the reasons it is so difficult at the same time is we have this thing called the separation of church and state. Years ago, the state used to do much of its law and so forth based on the Bible, but it is not that way anymore because God's way gets pushed further and further into oblivion and the world's ways get pushed more and more to the front where God's people begin to let down.

When I was a boy growing up in the 1930s (How old am I?) I was old enough that when I was at my aunt's ranch in the [?], they did not have electricity. We had a phone but we had coal oil lamps. I used to watch the moths fly around the lamp and if I turned off the lamp, the moths would go away. But if I left the lamp on the moths would fly into it and eventually be killed.

You see, this is what God is going to have to do for His people. He is going to have to take the world away from His people so that they will start to focus on Him once again because the world has gotten many of God's people hooked in one way or another. And so God will take that flame away in the world and God's people then will begin to focus on God. Once again, this is what God wants. But you see, for us, those that are here, we have the opportunity to come out of this world by faithfully living *now* by the standards of God, by the standards that are going to be taught to all of mankind in the future.

Mr. Armstrong talked about the gun lap and that was to keep him going and it was to keep us going. He always talked about the gun lap and I do not speak to the church personally, but I know that I feel that we are in the gun lap. I really do. What is a gun lap? If it is a foot race over a measured distance, as soon as the finish line is seen, or if it is going around a track on the final lap, the runners see the finish line coming up and they give it everything they have. They put out every bit of reserve to strive to win the race. And to me, this is an analogy that we all need to take to heart. We need to put out every bit of reserve we can now because at least I feel I can see the finish line of this world coming up. The author of Hebrews tells us what we are supposed to do.

Hebrews 6:1-6 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection [or let us be carried

forward to perfection], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

This calling we have, brethren, is special and it is very serious. We have got to be careful how we handle it. Back to Hebrews 6, verse 1. I am going to read from *Barnes' Notes*.

Hebrews 6:1 (Barnes' Notes) Therefore, you ought to be capable of comprehending higher doctrine of the Word of God since you have been in the church for so long a time. Quit lingering around the basics, the beginning words of Christ. Let us leave the doctrines concerning the beginnings of a Christian life and go on to higher understanding. Let us no longer linger here but go on to higher attainments. You must either advance or fall back. If you do not go forward, you will fall back.

So many today, I think, just feel "if I keep the Sabbath and the holy days and tithe, I am alright." This is not what is being said here by the author of Hebrews. He said, you have to go *on to perfection*. This is what running toward the finish line in the race is all about. We are to go on to perfection. The term perfection, this word is used in the most absolute sense. It denotes complete freedom from sin. It denotes that we strive for holiness, to be perfect, to be righteous in all we do. You are to make an honest attempt to be holy, even if we feel it is impossible with all the hangups and the problems that we have. We are to reach for it for them. This is what God wants. God is not fussing around and we will see this.

Barnes' Notes: "No man can accomplish much who does not aim high. If you do not aim for the gold ring, you will get what the little boy shot at: nothing."

II Peter 3:17-18 [I think you will find this really interesting.] You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware [this is the same chapter we were in concerning those that said that Christ was not coming, that the world was going to collapse] lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked [Those that no longer want to continue God's ways, those that come up with strange things. He said you better be careful]; but grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

I do not think I would be paraphrasing this incorrectly by saying grow in the grace and the use of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is very touching what I am going to read here. It is from Adam Clarke.

The life of a Christian is growth. [I could probably stop right there. But he continues.] He is the first born of God and is a little child, and then becomes a young man and then a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant and had he not grown, he would have never been a man. Those who content themselves with the grace they receive when converted to God are at best in a continual state of infancy.

What did it say in Hebrew 6? Let us forget those basic things. Now this this does not mean, do not misunderstand, that we do not keep the Sabbath. He said go on from there.

They are in a continuous state of infancy. But we find in the order of nature that the infant that does not grow and grow daily too is sickly and soon dies. So in order of grace, those who do not grow up into Jesus Christ are sickly and will soon die, die to all sense and influence of heavenly things.

In this society would say if you do not use it, you lose it. And he continues,

There are many who boast of the grace of conversion; persons who never were more than babes and have long since lost even that

grace because they did not grow in it. Let him that reads, understand.

They are pretty profound words. How many have we seen give up? Quite a few. I received a letter in the mail from an old friend that sings in the choir and she said when she stands up there and looks out over the congregation, she cannot believe how small it has gotten. People are leaving right and left, doing their own thing. They are going away from the trunk of the tree, from the faith that has once been delivered.

II Corinthians 6:16-18 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." [What business do we have with things that pervert the temple? We better not have any business with those things.] Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." [God expects us to put sin out of our life—all of us.] "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty."

And what a wonderful thing that is, to be called the Family of God, sons and daughters of God.

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Because of the wonderful promises of God, he is saying, let us cleanse ourselves, be diligent, and make strenuous effort to put away the pulls of this world and overcome our sins. To remove all defilement and to separate ourselves from anything that corrupts us. Controlling the source of wrong actions, our minds from any wrong thoughts of hatred, power, lust, and revenge. Perfect holiness to bring an end to, to finish, to complete the calling we have been given. The intent here is that holiness has been started in us, and thus, we should make every effort to complete it realizing we are constantly in the presence of God.

Where do we find instruction that will lead to perfection? We are to live by every word of God and we know this. But in the Beatitudes, we find the essence of how we are to live. We are to live in a way that is unnatural as far as our human nature is concerned. Turn over to Matthew. This is going to be a very quick, cursory look at the Beatitudes. Just picking out a few points. But you see, we should all be mature enough to say yes, this is what I am or this is what I am not and to make the changes,

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Those that are humble and that long for the Kingdom,

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn." And cry for the world, you are concerned about it.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." This is what God wants from those who are mature. Those that He has called. He wants us to hunger and thirst for it.

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart." Pure and clean in heart.

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers." Are you one that argues, causes division or problems? Well, then in that case, it is something that you can work on. Do not do that. This is something that you need to understand. You need to promote peace.

Matthew 5:20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

What did we just hear in Hebrew 6:1? Do not just hold the old things. Go on to the weightier matters of the law. Go on to perfection. This is what he is saying. The scribes and Pharisees did not do that.

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old,
'You shall not murder.'"

Now He is saying, do not be angry by saying, "whoever is angry with his brother without cause." We are not to be angry.

Verse 23. This is really mature stuff here. He said, if you are about to pray to God, to bring an offering to God, and if someone has something against you, you better get off your knees and go correct the situation. In God's Kingdom there will be peace. Grudges will not be held.

Matthew 5:27 "You have heard that it was said to those of old,
'You should not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever
looks at a woman [or a man] to lust for her has already committed
adultery with her in his heart."

If this is a problem with you that you better take steps to overcome it. Get rid of your television, stay away from the wrong influences. And He covers it here in verse 29.

Matthew 5:29 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and
cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your
members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

So He says, I am requiring you to take steps. If you are an alcoholic, do not have it in the house. Stay away from bars. Do not associate with people to do those things. The ball is in your court.

And then perhaps the most unnatural one:

Matthew 5:43-44 "You have heard that it was said. 'You shall love
your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your
enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate
you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

You see, this is going on to perfection.

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you."

God expects us to forgive. Forgiveness is the pathway to peace and God expects us to employ it.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous. . ."

See, that is what the calling is all about. How are we to accomplish this?

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need of milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [or mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Strong meat or the weightier matters of what God is doing in each of us belongs to those who are mature. And that maturity comes from using God's Word to change ourselves from our nature to His nature, from our thinking to His thinking, from our mind to His mind. And the phrase "by reason of use" means by reason of habit. His way of life is to become our habitual way of life. The term exercised" here relates to the games they used to play, the gladiatorial games. Those participating trained or practiced in the moves they wanted to accomplish in the arena. And that is what we are to practice, what we are to eventually become by obedience to God. We have to take the steps to do it.

He goes on to say that when we are working to become like God, then our senses are heightened to see the value of God's way of life and we are more able to discern good and evil. We become greater and greater. This is what it is all about.

Brethren, God fully expects us to overcome. (Matthew 25.) Now in Matthew 24, toward the end, God talks about if He finds His servants doing well, that He will bless him and give him many things to control and take care of. But of the evil servant in verse 51, He says,

Matthew 24:51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion to the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 25:1-4 "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

Now, when we think of the term lamp here, we think of something like Aladdin's lamp, a small oil lamp. But these lamps were not like that. These were a cast iron basket and they were full of rags and these cast iron baskets sat on top of a long pole, 5, 6, 7 feet, whatever it was. The rags were soaked with oil. And so the unwise virgins brought their rags soaked with oil and they waited a long time. The wise brought their rags soaked with oil, but they also brought an extra vessel of oil. And so what they would do is they, they would simply light the rags. And then as the fire dimmed out, they would bring the basket down and they would shake off the burnt part, add more oil to it, and refresh their fire. That is how it worked. They would march, I believe, to the groom's house and it would be a very marvelous procession. So you have somewhat of the setting here.

Matthew 25:5-10 "But while the while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out and meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [We did not have enough oil on the rags, give us more oil.] But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'"

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut."

The report cards were in, grades were tallied, and the door was shut. That was it. There was no more of a chance to do anything. It was finished.

Matthew 25:11-13 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

See, God is not messing around. Those who were ready went in. Those who were not, did not. Five were prepared and ready to meet Christ no matter how long it took. And they took oil in their vessels along with their lamps. And five did not. They all slumbered and when the call came, they rose and trimmed their lamps. The unprepared virgins asked for oil because their lamps were going out and the wise declined to give what they had lest they not have enough.

What was asked for that the wise could not give? Was it knowledge about God? Was it knowledge about prophecy? Was it some new doctrine or concept? Some new truth? The wise knew the value of what they possessed and they would not allow themselves to be sidetracked, I will say in this case, with foolishness.

We all know that oil is a symbol of God's Spirit. In these verses, the understanding of the symbol is expanded. It was the one thing that one person could not give to another. It was overcoming; it was the achievement of godly character. It was the character and the mind of one who had yielded to God. This is what made them acceptable to come into the marriage. They had gone on to perfection.

The foolish virgins thought that Christ would come much earlier. And when He delayed, they let down, not putting their hearts into obedience and into humbleness and overcoming. They just sort of went their own way and thus the result is that they missed out on the Kingdom of God.

With all these warnings and admonitions, what action should we be taking?

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

The key here is that we work *out*, not *for*, our salvation. You see, our salvation is sure. It is a gift of God if we do not reject it. I have the definition of the word "work" here. It means to "work out, to affect or produce, to be the cause or author of." What we are being told here is to make the most of the calling that has been given to us and to really work and overcome. That is what he is talking about.

Now, all of us want unity and this is, by the way, the way to achieve it. This is our individual opportunity to yield to God in faith to all of His instructions. Doing so we become at one with God the Father and Jesus.

John 17:13-23 "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word [the truth]; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. [the special thing that you have been given, the truth] As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctified Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [And that is, of course, what we are doing.]; that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they all may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

You see, we will all be one with God. When we are all in unity with God the Father and Jesus Christ, we will all be in unity with each other, because we will all be living by the standards of God.

Philippians 2:13-16 For it is God who works in you both to will and do for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and disputing [do not get in vain arguments and stupidity], that you may be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life [that can mean holding forth the word of life for the world to see.]

I would like to turn over to Proverbs 4, verse 14. Concerning the light; it is a warning here. It says,

Proverbs 4:14-19 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it. Turn away from it and pass on. [Do not even go near it. Do not even go near the way of the world.] For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and they drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. [What he is saying here is, it is a bright light that belongs to the just and it gets brighter as we draw closer to God until the day. Verse 19 depicts the world] The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

They just do not know what is wrong because, you see, they do not have God's Spirit and it has not been given to them.

What purpose is all of this for?

Matthew 11:25-27 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes [that is us]. Even so, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things

have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father. and no one knows the Father except the Son, and the one to some the Son will reveal Him."

Brethren, our job in the Kingdom of God is going to be to reveal God the Father to this world in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:5-6 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood [depicting the price that was paid for each of us], and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Each of us are going to have a governmental role and a spiritual role. We will be teaching the practical, physical aspects of the law of God to the people that do not have the foggiest idea of what is going on. And we will be teaching the deep spiritual things of God to a world that is blind to the standards that will give them a good life now and a wonderful life in the Kingdom of God.

How soon after the return of Christ do you think you will be taking over your cities and your new responsibilities? You think it will be after a two-year crash course in city management? I will tell you, I doubt that. I think it will be immediate. Why? Because, you see, we are in school now to learn and to be perfected that we might teach. We are to learn how to live by the standards of God in this perverted world. At the time, when it is the culmination of the sins of mankind, we come upon the earth and we are going to see it. We will understand it graphically that we might really understand before we able to teach them in the Kingdom of God and the World Tomorrow.

I think we should have to realize as well that things are going to get worse before they get better. Satan is going to do all he can to separate the people of God from the truth: by craft, by deceitfulness, by discouragement, in whatever way he can, causing them to lose out on the calling they have been given and the salvation has been promised. If we are to stand up to this as individuals, work out your own calling individually, we are to take the

admonition in James 4 and we are to fast, pray, study, and draw close to God. Because then Satan will pull away from us.

So brethren, let all of us remember that we have been honored with the greatest calling and purpose possible. We will be used to teach the world to live in unity with God and live in peace with their fellow man. We will be used to bring God's standards to mankind.

I would like to close with the final prayer in Hebrews that was given by the author of Hebrews, the last couple of verses.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up [he is talking about God the Father here] our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.