

Don't Go Out Of The House!

Remaining with the Church

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This is a sermon that I have given before. Perhaps you might have heard it. I first got the idea for this sermon all the way back in the early 70s. It must have been 1970 or 1971, from a sermon that I heard given by David Antion. However I did nothing about it until the idea came in mind again in the spring of 1975 when Evelyn and I were pastoring the Norwalk, California congregation. Then I put it together for the Days of Unleavened Bread. I titled it, *Go Not Out Of The House*. That is a command that appears in the Passover instruction given in Exodus 12:22.

At that time when I was preparing it and delivering it, I was most impressed by the symbolism in that statement, and I thought of preparing and giving the sermon *then* about singular individuals who from time to time gave up and dropped out of the church, but I never dreamed at that time of neither the broad departure that has taken place over the last seven or eight years, nor the scattering that has taken place as well in the church, and that there might be application in this sermon of far more people than I ever dreamed possible.

As I mentioned to you in my announcement this morning, there has been a pretty wide-scale departure from United [Church of God], and that kind of points to what is happening within the church. How many of these people are going to survive, I do not know. I have no idea, and it is kind of with that thought in mind that I am giving this to you, because we are one of those scattered groups.

Now the truth of this command, "Go not out of the house," is just as applicable today as it was when God gave it through Moses. This sermon also has a direct connection to the sermon that I gave on the last holy day ["Examine and Come Out"]. You might recall that I mentioned toward the beginning of that sermon that what I was giving was broad principles that play a large role in keeping us on the track with God's purpose throughout the year. It is sort of like guard rails that we can bump into when we go to an extreme somewhere, to help bounce us back if we will think about the truth that is contained within these principles.

It is interesting that we are going to begin with a verse that Mike Ford used right toward the end of his sermonette in I Corinthians 10:11, only I am going to read this to you from the *Living Bible*. The translation that they have put on it is kind of interesting in light of the translation that you will find in the *King James* or in the *New King James* or in the *Phillips*, from which I believe Mike read it. It gives you some sort of an idea of the way these verses can be tweaked to help us understand what the author, in this case Paul, is trying to get across.

I Corinthians 10:11 (TLB) All these happened to them as examples [Now here comes the difference], as object lessons to us, to warn us against doing the same things. They were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end.

All of us are familiar with the fact that the Bible uses many symbols and types, and that there is a great deal of instruction contained within them. In fact, the sermon this morning was built around this very concept, that God could write down one thing and it had to do with, let us say, something literal

and physical, and it has *spiritual* meaning to us who are in the church in the last days just prior to Christ's return. Well, it is types and symbolism that enables this to be done. Most of us quickly recognize some of the most common ones. "Zion" is a type of the church. "Jerusalem" is a type of the church. "A pure woman" is a type of the church. This does not mean that these things cannot mean what they literally are, but it does help us to explore the spiritual lessons for us today.

We are going to be dealing with two types that are used as object lessons, especially in light of that verse in I Corinthians 10:11. We will see that this is an object lesson for us. The Israelites literally went through these events, but the *real instruction* is intended for us today. I have given a Bible study, as far as I know, in every one of the groups around the church with Lamentations as its centerpiece, but the real instruction in that is to show you and me, to prove to you as conclusively as I can, that the Bible is written for the end-time generation of the church. It was also written for the first century church. In its broadest sense it was written for the church, but there is nobody in all of history that it has ever applied to more, and more completely and specifically than it has to the end-time church because we have it generally available to us in a way that the first century church did not.

When Paul writes there that these things were written for us for examples, for object lessons, for those of us who live in the last days, as this age comes to an end, he means exactly what he says, and so this instruction in this Book is for you and me. In the future when these people whom God literally walked through these events are resurrected, *then* it will apply to them, but now the spiritual lessons, the spiritual instruction, applies to you and me.

An object lesson is a striking practical example of a principle in concrete form. A principle is a rule. Did your teacher in school ever tell you how to tell the difference between "principle" and "principal," in using "ple" as opposed to "pal"? The "le" means *rule*. Whenever you want to use principle/principal, and it pertains to a rule, it is "principle"—rule. The "pal" means *main* or *capital* or *number one*. The principal object is "pal."

What sets an object lesson apart from abstract instruction is that the lesson, the instruction, is especially vivid. It is so striking that one wonders whether the instruction can be missed. It is arresting, and so it grabs our attention. In the *Living Bible* they decided to say, "Well these things weren't merely examples, they were *object lessons*." They were *striking* examples, and it is easy to see the instruction contained within them. What makes an object lesson what it is, then, is that it is virtually, literally, acted out, as it were, before our eyes.

Now a "type" is a model, an impression, and it is usually something that bears a strong similarity to what it is a type of. In biblical usage it can be a person. David was a type of Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ. It can be an event. The resurrection of those people at the time of Christ's resurrection is a *type* of what is coming in the very near future when God's children are resurrected. It can be an object. All the furnishings in the Tabernacle were types that teach us something spiritual. The tabernacle is a type of the Temple of God, and of course we are that temple. The immediate intent of a type is to provide us with a measure of spiritual instruction helpful towards the Kingdom of God. It is like something that will add to the abstract lesson that we have.

A symbol is something chosen to stand for or represent something else. There is not a great deal of difference between a symbol or a type, but usually, although not always, there is a resemblance in quality or characteristics, and it is used to typify an abstract idea. I will give you an example of this. A man walking down the street may look like an ordinary citizen to you, but if he reaches into his pocket and he pulls out a policeman's badge, what does it symbolize? Authority. The badge

represents authority even though the man himself may look very ordinary and no different from anybody else. That badge that he has in his hand represents the city government, the state government, the federal government, whatever. The flag of the United States of America and the flag of Canada are symbols that represent those nations. There are very many of these things, and I will not go into them any further.

Let us go back to the scripture I mentioned at the very beginning, Exodus 12, verses 22, 23, and 27.

Exodus 12:22 "And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until morning."

There is the command.

Exodus 12:23 "For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you."

Exodus 12:27 "That you shall say [i.e., when your child asks you about this], 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' " And the people bowed the heads and worshiped.

What lesson is there here for us? What does it mean? What about the door, and what about the house? It is interesting to note before going on to other verses that in verse 23 there is more emphasis on the *blood* and on the *door* than there is on the *house*, and the command appeared in verse 22, and again in verse 27.

The door in this context represents the entire house. This is not too unusual because we use the word *door* today in very much the same manner as God used it here in writing Exodus 12. We ask a person where they live, and like as not they are liable to say, "I live two or three or four doors down the street." They might say *house*, but they might also say *door*. If somebody wants to describe what kind of work that they are doing, they are a salesman that goes from door to door. They go from house to house, but they use "door" to represent the entirety of the house. The idea here in verses 22, 23, and 27 is that if the death angel, the destroyer, cannot get past the door, he cannot get into the house. That makes logical sense, does it not?

God uses "door" to represent the entirety of the house, so it is something very interesting here. There are Jewish scholars who insist that originally the Passover lamb was slain right in the door, not out in the field somewhere. It was slain right in the door. To back up what they say, there is ancient art that depicts lambs having their jugular vein cut right in the door of a house. Then its blood was not caught in a basin like you might think, that you put a basin under there and catch the blood. No. The Jewish scholars say it was not done that way, but rather the blood was allowed to run out of the lamb's neck right onto the threshold of the door where it puddled. Then the hyssop was taken, dipped into the blood that had puddled in the threshold of the door, and it was then splashed onto the doorposts and to the lintel. It is very interesting that the Hebrew word for basin and threshold is exactly the same. They are one and the same word. If you want to look it up later, it is *Strong's* #5592.

[*Strong's #5592* (Hebrew) *caph, saf*; in its original sense of *containing*; a *vestibule* (as a limit); also a *dish* (for holding blood or wine):—a basin, bowl, cup, door(post), gate, post, threshold.]

The Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Hebrew Testament, there translates this word *threshold*, not basin. If this is true, and I personally think that it is because of the spiritual picture that it gives to us, that the way into the house was completely surrounded by the blood of the lamb —the threshold, doorposts, and lintel. There was no way for the destroying death angel to sneak in past the blood at all, because he would have been surrounded by it.

Now for what abstract reason were they not allowed to go out, and why did God specifically say, "Don't go out till morning"? Why did He not say, "Anytime the death angel goes through, you're free to go out"? Well, you will see as we get toward the end of this sermon that if He had permitted that, He would have destroyed the symbolism. He would have destroyed the type that is contained within the door and the house and the blood. The three of them together have a very powerful lesson for you and me in this time of very deep trouble for the church.

Now let us turn to Psalm 105 and verses 26 through 38. This is an historical psalm. By the time we get here to verse 26 we are up to the Exodus.

Psalm 105:26-38 He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. They performed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they did not rebel against His word. He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish. Their land abounded with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and lice in all their territory. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He struck their vines also, and their fig trees, and splintered the trees of their territory. He spoke, and the locusts came, and young locusts without number, and ate up all the vegetation in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land, the first of all their strength. He brought them out with silver and gold, and there was none feeble among His tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.

If you will, try to take yourself back in time to when that was occurring in the land of Egypt (and if you want to maybe get a picture in your mind of Moses and Joshua walking through the land, as well as Aaron, remember *The Ten Commandments* movie), just try to put yourself back into that situation for a little bit and suppose that you were an Egyptian citizen during this period described in verses 26-38, when Egypt received the plagues. These people witnessed Egypt's devastation, and these things were not puny insignificant events that were done in a corner.

Now "Joe Egyptian" surely must have heard of the confrontations that took place between Moses and Pharaoh, and the plagues that followed immediately after that. I will tell you why I am sure of that, because verse 27 can very easily be translated that, "They showed the words of his signs." I am going to show you something else that shows to me that they did not merely hear of the confrontations, but they heard the *substance* of what was spoken between Moses and Pharaoh.

Turn with me to Exodus 9 and verse 20. We will just pick out one plague here. This is the plague of hail, and notice what it says there. We will go back just a little bit to verse 18 so we pick up the sense.

Exodus 9:18 "Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now."

God is speaking to Moses, meaning that he should pass this on to the Israelites.

Exodus 9:19 "Therefore send now and gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die."

Notice how this word was gotten out to the Egyptians as well.

Exodus 9:20 -21 He who feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. But he who did not regard the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

We do not need to go any further. They died! The plagues on Egypt were not done in a corner. God, in His mercy to these people, made it *published* throughout the land so that they could be prepared to see whether they would fear the Lord. We know of course that some of them did, because there was a mixed multitude that went out with Israel when they went out of Egypt, and you can be pretty sure that those people left because they felt that it was in their best interest to do so.

I wonder whether "Joe Egyptian" heard in advance the final prophecy of the killing of the firstborn. I think they did, that they also heard that one as well. The dread of Israel was upon them, not because of Israel itself, but because of God. It is entirely possible that "Joe Egyptian" also heard about the lamb's blood, the doorposts, the lintel, and the hyssop, and the splashing of it on the walls, and not leaving their homes until morning. Did he openly wonder about safety and deliverance? Some did.

Just a little bit earlier I said in reference to Exodus 12 that "door" was put for, or represented, the whole house—not to go out the door. So what was necessary for the entire house to be painted with blood? The literary device used here is called *metonymy*. It is a figure of speech (and you may use it frequently and not even know the word for what it describes), which means when one thing is put for another.

I will give you an example probably used every day that you hear on the news. "The White House said. . ." Since when do houses talk? What does White House stand for? It represents the executive branch of the government. It may specifically represent the President of the United States. It is a metonymy. It is a figure of speech that is put in place of the President. The city of Washington is used to represent the entire nation. "Washington said today to Great Britain . . ." Well, cities do not talk, but again we know that the federal government acted on behalf of the country and said something official to those in Great Britain. "National pastime" is used for baseball. "Turf" is used for racing.

Now metonymy is very often used in reference to "house." In this sense, when metonymy is used in reference to house, the thing containing or holding is put for, or represents that which it contains—family. The English word for *house* has a very interesting origin. According to *The Origins of English Words* by Joseph Shipley, *house* is derived from a root which means hollow, cover, hide, conceal. Other familiar words, some of which you may use fairly often that come from exactly the

same root are *hell*, the ever-burning place, or the pit in the ground. The English word *hell* comes from the same root as the English word *house*—hole. Sometimes we put the two of them together and say *hell hole*.

Hole comes from the same root as the word *house*. A "holster" is that in which you put a gun. "Helmet," as in football helmet. You put your head inside a helmet. It comes from the same root. "Hutch." What do you put in a hutch? Dishes. The hutch goes in the dining room. "Hutch" comes from the same root as does the word "house." "Hosiery." What do you put in hosiery? You stick your foot and your leg inside hosiery. There is also the word "enclosure." There are other words as well. I give these because you can see the basic usage of that root as being a receptacle or container for something else, and a house is a container of a family and its activities.

Let us go back to the book of Genesis 7. We are leading up to the Flood here.

Genesis 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation."

My *King James Version* says "house." You may have a *New King James*, and it may say "household." You may have another translation of the Bible, and it says "family." Now let me tell you that the *King James Version* is the one that is most accurate in terms of the literal meaning of the Hebrew word that appeared there, but those other two I mentioned, "household" and "family" are not wrong, because that is what is intended in the context. It is metonymy, where "house" is put for "family." "House" is put for "household."

Noah was not instructed to take the building that he lived in into the ark. He took his house, or household, or family, and they can all be used interchangeably if the context permits. Keep track of this all the time if the context will permit, because as I said earlier, there are times when the word literally means exactly what it says, but there are other times it is a type or a symbol and you have to be careful in making the interpretation because you could go way wrong if you are not careful, and we do not want to do that.

We are going to go to II Samuel chapter 7. A very interesting episode took place here.

II Samuel 7:1 And it came to pass, when the king [David] was dwelling in his house . . .

You see there that it has to be the structure. He *dwelt* in his house. He was contained within it.

II Samuel 7:1-2 . . . and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house [the literal structure] of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains."

He is saying, "Here I live in a permanent structure, and God has to live in a temporary structure, something made of curtains."

II Samuel 7:4-6 But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Would you build a house [a literal structure] for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle."

II Samuel 7:11 "since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house."

Now wait a minute! We just read in verses 1 and 2 that David was already sitting in his house. He was sitting in the structure. Now God is telling David "I'm going to build you a house."

II Samuel 7:16 "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established for ever."

We see here that the context begins by talking about a structure to live in—David's, and then God's, and then God said that He will make a house for David, but David already had one. Verse 16 makes it clear by showing that the house that God will make for David is a family. It is a dynasty of kings coming from David. Get the picture? The meaning and use of the word *house* is beginning to expand as we move through the Bible.

If you will turn to I Chronicles 17, this is the same context, except there is something added here that is helpful to understand.

I Chronicles 17:11-14 "And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you [Solomon], who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house [a literal structure], and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever."

We have another expansion. House can mean structure. It can mean family. It can mean dynasty. It can mean kingdom. God's house is a *kingdom*, and His throne shall be established forever.

Now go back to I Chronicles chapter 10. This is the death of Saul.

I Chronicles 10:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

I Chronicles 10:6 So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died together.

If you took that for what it literally says, you would think that all of Saul's family died there, but all of Saul's family did *not* die there, and if you get other verses, you will find here that "house" means his family and his attendants that were *with* him at that particular battle. You have to be careful and do not get real loose in making this application, because as we go through Chronicles we find other remnants of Saul's family that are still alive, especially one of his sons, Ishbosheth.

The word "house" can be used in the sense of structure, household, family, posterity, and dynasty, and as we saw, kingdom, and so we have the "House of Israel," the "House of Judah," and this can include, again if the context will permit it, ancestors, descendants, and kindred, retainers, and officers.

Let us go back into the New Testament as we continue to expand this "house" type. We are going to go to I Peter 4 and verse 17, a very familiar scripture.

I Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will the end be of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

We saw indications of this in I Chronicles 17, and I believe that was probably the earliest indication that God Himself has a house, and that house is His Kingdom, His dynasty, His family. So God has a house, a household, or a family, and His judgment *begins* there. It means the point of departure. The word *begin*, the point of departure, is at that house, and that house Peter identifies with Christians by using the pronoun "us." "If it begins with us first . . ." So we have another use of this word *house*.

Very frequently, then, house means household, family, or church of God. Now it is beginning to become very clear why God said, "Don't go out of the house." The instruction to you and me is do not leave the church! Once that blood is on the door, do not dare leave until morning! *Then* you can go out. No matter how frightened you become inside when you hear the woes and the cries of the pressures that are on outside of it, and may be beating on that house and bringing fear and pain against you who are inside of it, do not leave!

Believe me, brethren, the way things are headed now, as they intensify, when we become frightened, we are going to want to *leave*. The fear of what is going on outside is going to creep inside its doors and we are going to feel the motivation to bolt on the outside of it. Our God says, "Don't you even think of it!"

I Peter 2:4-5 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God, and precious, you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Here the metaphor shifts slightly, but "house" is still in the picture. "You" clearly identifies Christians. "You also, as living stones." We are identified as "living stones" being built up into a spiritual house. As "living stones" we are joined with other "living stones." The Christian is part and parcel of a building.

Adam Clarke had a very interesting comment here. Now this was not written in Hebrew. It was written in Greek, but he said, "In Hebrew, with which Peter and those that he was writing to were undoubtedly familiar, son, daughter, house, and stone all come from exactly the same root." Is that not interesting? Just like all those English words come from that same root—holster, hell, hole, and all of those things. Son, daughter, house, and stone in Hebrew all come from the same root that means "he built." Peter clarifies by adding "living" so that we will understand that we are dealing with a dynamic organism, not merely a man-made structure.

Peter, remember, means *stone*. Christ is the Rock, and in this building Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of this house, church, community, family, dynasty. Notice that the living stones in this building have functions. They are designated as a priesthood that offers up spiritual sacrifices, and they are to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of *darkness*. (Do not go out till morning! Go out when it is light.)

A stone is of very little use while it is just lying out there in the field. In fact we might even say here that it might be of no use at all. It might be absolutely useless, but in this metaphor here in I Peter 2: 5, because it was used by a builder and integrated into what he was building, it then becomes useful.

As long as it is part of the building, it is useful. If it is no longer a part of the building, it is not only useless as it was before, but in this metaphor, because it was wrenched from its source of life, i.e., its connection with Christ, it dies a lingering death.

Do you know what this means? It means that there is no such thing as a free-lance independent Christianity anymore than a single person can call himself a family or a community or a dynasty. The church is a living organism that is being integrated together by God. You leave it, you become useless, and you die a lingering death.

Now let us continue this metaphor in I Corinthians 3, verses 9 through 17.

I Corinthians 3:9-17 For we are God's fellow workers: you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone build on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If any one's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If any one's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved; yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Now go back to verse 9. There are three things there.

1. We are co-laborers with God.

When this is combined with what we just saw in I Peter 2:5, we find that we are not only *part* of a building, a house, but we are also working *in* it, and *on* it *with* God. Do you see how this picture becomes more and more complex? We are part of the building, we are working in it, because that is one of the places where a priest operates, and we are working on it, i.e., building and embellishing the outside of it. If nothing else, that shows you the dignity of Christian responsibility. How many people in this world have *God* as a co-worker? Not very many.

2. We are being worked upon.

Paul changes the metaphor a bit. He changes it to help us to understand more clearly that we are being worked *upon*, and he says, "You are God's field," or God's tillage, or you are God's farm. The Williams and the Knox translations translate that, "You belong to God as His field to be tilled." So this amplifies it. We are working *in*, we are working *on*, and we are being *worked on* as part of a living organism, with God as our co-worker.

3. We are God's building.

This becomes the metaphor that Paul concentrates on for most of the rest of the chapter, at least those verses that I read up to verse 17. So there is only one foundation upon which this spiritual house may be built, and this is basic, and there had better be no misconception about this. We cannot base Christianity on good works. We cannot base it on humanism. We cannot base it on science. The

foundation is Jesus Christ. The foundation is that blood that went around the door, and once you get in, you do not leave.

Christianity begins by passing through the door surrounded by the blood, and it always continues without ever losing sight of that singular, very important fact. Once that foundation is laid, we must then be careful how we build, because though there is only one foundation, the superstructure which we help to build is capable of endless variety. All we have to do is look at one another to see that. What a motley group we are in the way that we have built on this one foundation! In fact we are so motley and so different it is hard to be unified. The stones do not fit together right, and so the Master Builder has to get the chisel and hammer out and chip away at them to make them fit into the building the way He wants them to fit. But all this while, never forget that we are working in, we are working on, we are being worked upon.

Paul then gives a warning, and that is to be careful how we build, and he of course does not want us to fall short through sin, because we are God's sanctuary. I do not know whether you understand this, but the wood, hay, and stubble we sometimes have a tendency to look down upon as though they are elements of failure. That is not true. What Paul is doing, which is something that is not real clear to us in English, is that he is leading up to a comparison between the Temple and the common houses that people lived in. The common houses were made out of wood, hay, and stubble, but the Temple was made out of the most precious materials that could be made as a dwelling place for God. Right? Was not the Temple that Solomon built embellished all over with gold and silver and jewels and works of art, cunning craftsmanship, the finest of wood, and on and on?

What Paul is doing is saying do not allow yourself to settle for the least. Strive for the best, but if a person at least *builds* wood, hay, stubble, that is better than nothing at all. That is better than not building your structure at all. He led up to the fact that the Temple is the dwelling place of God. The word temple comes from the Greek root which means "to dwell," and so you know that the Temple in the Old Testament was seen as God's dwelling place.

I am not sure that you are aware of this, but the Temple was not a place of assembly. Do you know how big it was? This room right here is larger than the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the temple. It was not big at all. It was not a place of assembly. It was a place for God to *live*, and it was a place where there was typical symbolic furniture, the holy vessels that were of the Temple. It was not a place for public prayer and the reading of God's Word. That is what the synagogue was for.

The temple was the place of *sacrifice*. Is that not what Peter said in I Peter 2:5, that we are to give forth spiritual sacrifices and to praise our God? Is it becoming clear why He said, "Don't leave the house"? I hope it is.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you [Christians, and most specifically Gentiles] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We all know what the word *foreigner* means. That is an alien who is in a land that is not his own. I want to draw your attention to the word *stranger*, because sometimes we can have a tendency to link these two words together as though they mean the same thing. No, they do not mean the same thing.

A stranger was a guest in a private family, and so he says to you and me we are not either aliens or strangers. We are members of a private family, and that private family is God's. We are not guests.

Then the metaphor shifts again to the building, a temple though, rather than a house. Here we again clearly see that Christ is not only the foundation, but also the cornerstone, and that the apostles have been added to that foundation. Now the verse referring to the nouns *building* and *foundation* shows that once we become a Christian, we are placed on a firm foundation, and then are being *built*, growing into a temple housing God. You recall in John 14:23, in that last discourse of Jesus before He was crucified, He said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him." That is a process that is ongoing. We are not only the house, we are working in and on the house, and we are being worked upon to make us better.

The word *temple* here more specifically means *the inner sanctuary*, and the purpose of all this work is that this house might be a place for God to live in by His Spirit.

Paul adds another thought to this. He said "fellow citizens." That indicates a political entity. This house or building or temple or family is also a community, a kingdom requiring citizenship. All this began in Exodus 12 with only a house and a door.

Let us go to John 10. We are not done yet with this thing, but I marvel at the way God wrote these things, so that regardless of the background of His children, that some of these things somewhere along the line are going to make an impression so that we understand what's going on.

John 10:1-3 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

John 10:7 Then said Jesus to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

John 10:9-10 "I am the door. If any man enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Do you realize, if you are following along with me, if you understand the comparisons that are being made here, and the associations and relationships between these words, that if you are in the house, you have passed through the door, you have passed under, over, and between the blood, and we are to stay *in the house* in order to have an abundant life?

In this instruction here the metaphor shifts again to a different kind of structure, the sheepfold, but we are still dealing with an enclosed structure with or containing things, and it has a *door*. A sheepfold is a shelter, a receptacle, a holding place, a place of refuge and security, but this time for sheep. Back in the Psalms we are called "God's sheep." So you can see the metaphors keep changing, but the instruction is always very similar.

Customarily in Israel a sheepfold had only one entrance, and again, as their custom was, they lived in villages, and then in the morning the shepherd would come and get his sheep, take them out into the fields, and then in the evening he would come back into town with the other shepherds and their sheep, and the sheep were led into the pen for protection at night from thieves and beasts. Now a robber would have no right of access through the one door, so if he got in any other way, he was up to no good. He was not following lawful or prescribed methods.

Notice He uses two things here. He uses *thief* and *robber*. He does this so that He covers all the bases. "Thief" implies subtly, silence, secrecy, trickery, and a robber implies violence and plundering. What is He talking about here? Now since the sheep represent you and me, who must be the thief and robber who come in some other way? They are false ministers. They are pastors who promote their own ambitions, their own interests. In verse 2 He identifies those pastors who become ministers in accordance with Him. "He that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." He is not talking about Himself, and the reason I know He is not talking about Himself is because in verse 7 He said, "I am the door."

In this metaphor He is the door. He is not the shepherd who goes in. He is the door, and so the shepherd who goes to the sheep by way of the door *is a true minister of God*, and he has the sheep's interest at heart. He is not promoting himself. He has gotten in because the door, Christ, let him in! In fact we can understand that He appointed him. God's true sheep (and this is very interesting), will be predisposed by God to listen to the voice of a true shepherd. That is a way that He protects them.

I do not know about you, and maybe it did not happen this way with everybody, but the very first time that Evelyn and I heard Herbert W. Armstrong, the bells went off! It was not Herbert Armstrong, it was God, the *voice*. He worked a miracle on our minds so that that voice meant something different from all the other ministers we heard on the radio. That is the thing He is talking about here. God predisposes His sheep to hear His minister. It does not mean they cannot be deceived, but when they hear the truth, they will turn away from the false one. That is a protection that God has for us. We will recognize the voice of Christ through the minister.

There is one thing that I have to add here because it is kind of important to the metaphor, and that is when the sheep returned to the sheepfold at night the shepherd stood by the door, and each sheep then had to pass by him, and as they went by him he would then usually observe them very carefully with his eyes. Maybe he would brush their wool back, look at their eyes, look up their nose, give them a nice pat on the rump, and let them go by. If he found any nicks or scratches, or whatever, he would anoint them with oil, and if they were thirsty and needed water, he would give that to them. Once all his sheep were in the pen, do you know what he did? This is kind of interesting. He lay down across the door, and *he became the door*. That symbolizes protection and care. That is why Christ said, "I am the door." He is of course describing things that we are not real familiar with because we do not do sheep quite the same way anymore. Things are not the same as they were back there in ancient Palestine, but that is the way they did it.

Spiritually, the shepherd's main function in the house is the health and salvation of the sheep, and that is what He is describing in verses 9 and 10. He describes this as free access to pasture and fullness of life under His protection, and the gifts that He gives they then experience the best that life can offer.

In I Corinthians 12, the church is seen in another enclosure. This time the enclosure is the human body, and the parts are on the inside of it. A human body is made up of many parts: sheep, stones,

liver, kidneys, and all of those things, and all of them are important. There is diversity of personality, diversity of gifts from the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Spirit, and that is what that chapter is about.

But if there is nothing that you ever get out of I Corinthians 12 besides this, it is that Paul was showing that the entire body functions as a unit. That is the ideal, and he shows that the parts defer to each other in order to keep this unity going. The Spirit of God unites us into one body, and by use of that spirit in the right way the body is coordinated into a common function. Right now the function of that body we see as "preparing the bride."

Let us go back to Ephesians once again. Christ is being described and Paul writes:

Ephesians 1:21-23 Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Following up on I Corinthians 12 and the body analogy there, this adds to it that the body has a head, and so the church then is not merely an institution, it is a living organism that functions only by reason of its vital relationship with its Head. Paul pictures the risen Christ as being the Ruler of the universe, and that powerful Being is shown as a gift from the Father *to the church*, which is His fullness. Do you know what that means? Fullness indicates that the body, the church, is the complement of the Head, that they go together, and body and Head are incorporated. The body is the *completion* of Christ's power and glory. I will tell you brethren, what an awesome responsibility that is to us to live up to that, but what a glorious position it is as well!

We do not have to feel as though we climbed out from under a rock. Certainly what God has called us to is difficult, and there are a lot a pressures associated with this, but boy! our position in His purpose is so awesome it is beyond my ability to describe, and he describes it here that we are the completion of Christ's body. We fill His body to the full. It is almost as if he is saying that without us, Christ does not function well. You can see the analogy there.

What if you were just a talking head, and you had no feet to carry you about? What if you had no heart to pump blood into that head? What if you had no arms or fingers to carry out the commands of that head? Do you see what he means? The church carries out the work the Head directs, and so we complete Him so that work is able to be done, because it is going to be done in and through men. As I wrote in my notes, this is perhaps the church's highest honor—that Christ considers Himself in a certain sense *imperfect* without us, and together Head and body become a whole, and it is as though each is dependent on the other.

The church is not only filled by Christ with His own life, but also with the gifts and blessings that He bestows in order to carry out its function. There is given to the church for the church's benefit a Head who is also Head over all things, so that the church has authority and power to overcome all opposition to its function, because our Head is Lord of all. Fantastic!

This is the house that we began with in Exodus 12. Are you beginning to see why God said "Don't even **think** of leaving it!" There is no more *exalted* place on earth than to be in the church! What do we have to grumble about? If we honestly look at ourselves and compare ourselves with those other

people out there, I think we honestly have to say that God has picked the weakest people He could possibly find. If we are not the weakest, we are awfully close to what Richard Plechet used to say, "We're the cream of the crud."

We could go on to show you like in Ephesians 4 that every part of the body has a requirement. It is the responsibility of everybody in the body to strive to add to its unity. Otherwise, do you know what happens? I want you to think about this. In human life what if there is something added to the body which is not natural to the body? What does the body do to it? It throws it off. It rejects it. That lesson is there for you and me. I feel sure that one of the things that is occurring now since God has scattered the church, that Matthew 13 has shown us very clearly in the parable that Jesus gave, that the tares that are in the church are being separated away from the church. The body seemingly, as it were, will throw them off.

I Timothy 3:15 But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

A pillar is a support. Ground is a foundation. The two of them together indicate certainty and firmness. The church is the buttress of the truth of God, the truth that leads to salvation. It is the church's responsibility to keep truth standing intact in this world. Truth in this world is supported by the church, and though God is the source of truth He has entrusted it to the church for the purpose of transmitting it to men that they might be guided by the Rock.

Right now the church has to concentrate on itself. The gospel has to be preached afresh and renewed in the minds of those that were converted so we might all get back to the faith once delivered, that we might use this truth to get prepared for the Kingdom of God. When that time comes that God is ready to move us, He will move us to be unified once again. He will do it, but right now *individually* we have to do our part in maintaining the unity within the church by repenting of what we are and what we are doing, and overcoming the differences that we have with each other. That is not always easy. It is humbling, it is embarrassing, it is downright humiliating at times to make the efforts to do that.

But if you should choose to leave, where would you go? I do not think that anyone of God's children who has been exposed to the truth of God in this way, in good conscience can go back to what we had before. The conscience can adjust, but the way we are right now, not in good conscience toward God would we ever do such a thing.

Let us conclude here in Hebrews 3. We are told in verse 1:

Hebrews 3:1-3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has builds the house has more honor than the house.

Now we know "who" is working on us. It is our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:4-6 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would to be spoken afterward [i.e., types and symbols and things of that

nature], but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Brethren, the church is indestructible because God said so. The gates of the grave will never prevail against it. We are each a living stone in it and we have the responsibility to stand strong in the confident hope that we have in Christ that we too will be firm.

There is one question that I have not asked. Why "until morning" are we to stay in the house? We are to hold fast till then, when the Day Star arises with healing in His wings, till the Light of the world arises, or our death occurs, whichever comes first.

Add this to the list that I gave you the last two sermons.

1. Work to reinforce your faith.
2. Do not forget what you are now.
3. Do not forget what you were.
4. Appreciate the awesome cost of salvation.
5. Do not go out of the house.