

## Why Are We Called To Overcome?

**Our Awesome Calling and Future as God's Offspring**

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All of us who have been in the church for any length of time understand what these days and the events in which we participate represent. Leaven represents a way of life that is against God and against us, as well. Being unleavened represents harmony with God and positive things for us now. It represents a wonderful positive life in the future, as a beloved member of the Family of God. We all understand that the physical act of deleavening our homes shows that we are obedient to God in His commands and also shows our desire to become unleavened. Being diligent in our search for leaven, looking in every conceivable place where it might hide, shows that we have an understanding that leaven—and the sin that it represents—is reflected in our Jeremiah 17:9 heart that is deceitful above all things. We are determined to ferret it out.

As preparing for the Passover is good for us, preparing for the Days of Unleavened Bread is good for us, too. It places our mind where it needs to be after the taking of the bread and the wine, and that is remaining clean before God.

**I Corinthians 5:1-8** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump,

since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

In the United States, the fact that someone commits adultery or has his father's wife or anything else immoral is not considered unusual at all in this society. We in this nation put up with anything and everything today; but in Paul's time, this was a tremendous, unheard of sin. Verse one should read something like this: "It is *actually* reported *everywhere*, that there is an example of fornication (incest) among you that is not even named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife." (It is abhorred and not tolerated even in the Gentiles' society at all.)

Verse 2: "But rather than being heartsick about it, you are puffed up, or filled with pride at your tolerance, and allow this wickedness and example to remain in the church. Do you not know that it will spread? You should have mourned that this sin occurred and taken steps to remove this sin from the church by not allowing the one who continues to live this way remain in your group."

Verses 3-5: "Give this one to Satan that he might be removed from the teaching and safety of the church. He may again realize what it is like to be on his own, apart from his spiritual family, and that he may repent and not lose his salvation. In short, this man should be receiving correction, not 'understanding.'"

Verse 6: "Do you not know that a little leaven will eventually leaven everything?"

The leavening action, by whatever the agent, can produce explosive results. There have been ocean-going vessels that have carried cargo such as rice or some other grain that became wet, expanded, and split the ships' seams. I have seen a truck full of frozen dough with cases bulging from leavening, starting to work from the temperature not being quite low enough. It is interesting to note that leavening in frozen items continues to work, though much more slowly. In short, leavening is always at work. Because of this, it is evident that God chose the right ingredient to picture pride and sin, since it

seems to always be working. Thus, Paul is telling the church, "If this is not taken care of, it will permeate the church."

Verse 7: "Get rid of what produces sin, that you may become a new lump, or person. Why? Because you are a new person, called by God. Therefore you are to be pure, removing every impurity, that you might become holy."

Verse 8: "Let us keep these holy days (or this calling that we have been given) not with the pulls and attitudes of the life that we were called from, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness—because, as leaven, it can cause all the church to become infected—but we are to keep the Feast with the 'unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' In other words, let us be sincere, true, and faithful. As unleavened bread pictures purity, so let us be pure, clean, and righteous."

It is easy, during this season, to concentrate on a specific sin on which one is working to put out, but today I would like us all to look at the larger picture—the picture of why we are called to overcome—that it might be an incentive to really work at becoming unleavened. Paul points out that it all boils down to two different ways of living: the living of Satan's way, which is leavened, or the living of God's way, which is unleavened.

What is God doing with His wonderful creation?

**Genesis 1:26-28** So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Mankind as a whole does not believe that God created them, and they do not have a clue as to their future potential. Their religious leaders are no better. However, we know that God the Father and Jesus Christ have a huge and awesome plan. They want to call and convert, if possible, all of mankind that they might eventually become the very members of the God Family. We, who at this time who are the foolish, weak, and insignificant have been called by God, and we had better not forget it.

The reason is that we see our many shortcomings and flaws. As Jesus states in Matthew 5, blessed are the poor, those humble of mind; and blessed are they who mourn, at the lack they feel. Blessed are the meek, who do not hold resentments because of remembering all their past mistakes and the flaws in their character. Because of this, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who long to change from what they are to what God is offering.

**I Corinthians 1:26-31** For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after 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 confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

It is this group that God is first calling. Through us, He will put to shame the things which are mighty; and we who are insignificant will bring to nothing the system and the way this world lives. God will use us to accomplish His goal, and that is what it is all about. What an awesome calling we have been given! We have tremendous potential, and God has a wonderful future for us. It is going to be just astounding.

**Matthew 21:28-32** "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' "He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For

John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him."

This is the parable that Jesus Christ gave to the Pharisees, who were the religious leaders of the day. Adam Clarke comments thus on verse 31:

In their former conduct they had said "No." Now they yield to the voice of truth when they hear it, and enter into the kingdom, embracing salvation brought to them in the Gospel. The others, who had always been professing to be most ready and willing to obey, and who pretended to be waiting for the kingdom of God, saying: "We love God, we will obey the truth of God," did not receive it when it came, but rather chose, while making the best professions, to continue as members of the synagogue of Satan. This is what we are up against with this world.

Let us pause and consider just how special we are to God. I want you to really understand that you have been called by God.

**John 6:44-45** "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

You may read over this and say, "Well, that is fine." Is this true? Does God the Father specifically select us?

**Hebrews 9:15** And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

**Acts 2:38-39** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**I Thessalonians 2:4** But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

**Acts 13:47-48** "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

**John 17:2** "As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

All the way through the Bible, you will find where this group is told, "You are called brethren, and you are special." To me, one of the most amazing things about being in the church is the way that God drew us. I do not know how many of you go deep-sea fishing. On a fishing reel is what is called a 'star drag.' It is like a brake on a car or a hand brake on a bike. You do not set the drag so hard that the fish can just get off the hook; you set it loosely to allow the fish to run with the line. He runs out and starts to get tired, and then you crank him in. He runs back out again, and each time he cannot get away. The drag keeps pulling him toward the fisherman, and he is finally caught. God draws us, or pulls us, over a long period of time.

I do not know of anyone who just stopped in church one day and stayed, although it may have happened. Even here, somewhere in the individual's background, God the Father provided events preparing for him to come; they could have been years and years ago. I know that before we ever came into the church, I remember being in Korea and reading the "Stars and Stripes." There was an article in there on the history of Christmas and how it was totally pagan. This was brand new to me as I was sitting there, behind the gun, reading all of this. Then, we had communion, and they put the wafer on our tongues and say, basically, "Go back there and kill the enemy." I thought

about it, and I said, "It says somewhere in the Bible that you are not to kill." I was not the brightest bulb on the lamp.

When I was a kid, we all knew which day the Sabbath was. It did not mean a thing. We knew the Ten Commandments. People talked about those things in those days, but not anymore. Slowly, I began to wonder. I even read a book once that was supposed to be the second biggest selling book in the world. It was called "What Would Jesus Do?" It was a little tiny pamphlet of about ninety-eight pages. The question on the cover got me wondering, "What *would* Jesus do?" So I read it.

There was a church of about four hundred. It is really quite humorous now, because the pastor got up and said, "Who would like to do what Jesus did for a year?" We got six volunteers, out of a church of four hundred. You would think the whole church would have volunteered. One man sold liquor, and he put the liquor in the back and the coke in the front of his stand. The newspaper man only put good news on the front page. The sheriff was kinder to his prisoners, and they did all of these simpler things. The question got me, "What would Jesus do if He were wearing my shoes?" I guess a better way of putting it is, "What should I be doing?" We heard the broadcast as some of you did, and we eventually got here. I went to Ambassador College to inquire about a visit from the minister, to be baptized. They had a big Cedar of Lebanon tree that was dying, and I, in my innocence, said, "Well, if this is God's church, why don't you heal that tree?"

I am sure God does not draw everyone the same way. Unbeknownst to us at the time, we were being positioned by the Great God of the universe to come to Him, receive His Spirit, and eventually inherit, as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God. That is why you are here, and that is why you were called.

**John 6:45** "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

This is showing that God the Father is intensely interested in each one of us. For many years in the church, I did not even know that God the Father did anything. It seemed to me that Jesus Christ did everything, while God the Father seemed removed from His creation. That is not the case.

**Matthew 20:20-23** Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."

**John 5:17** But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

God the Father is in charge of everything. Considering that God the Father and Jesus select those who will be called and the great purpose for Their calling, it would be inconceivable to think that the Father would not be deeply involved with their individual training and growth. There is tremendous potential in front of you.

While the world around us goes on blindly, why is it that we have been given the understanding of the truth, and what enables us to do so? It is the giving of God's Spirit. God called us, and He has given us His Spirit. Thus, we have the understanding that this world does not.

**I Corinthians 2:1-6** And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in



weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, 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.

I do not mean that they cannot see and possibly understand the facts that we see about Easter. In the Orange County *Register*, we had a tremendous article on Ishtar, the pagan sex goddess and her rabbit. Yet people read that and say, "How was your Easter?" It does not matter; it does not mean a thing; it is just an interesting fact. It is the same thing with Christmas. As Mr. Armstrong used to say (correctly, I might add), "Trying to tell someone who is unconverted—and not being called—about God, is like trying to teach a cow mathematics." That is the truth. They cannot comprehend it.

Concerning the ministry, I think that we read of the great people in the Bible and what they accomplished, but we do not stop to consider their fears and pressures. Here, the apostle Paul was coming into a nation of people that loved oratory and speaking in long flowery sentences. It was probably a people that loved to argue and discuss different philosophies on each and every subject. It was going to be a difficult presentation. Paul's job was to teach God's truth despite the ridicule and meaningless arguments, not to mention various religious traditions.

Paul was with the Corinthians about a year and a half, and no doubt felt a great lack of ability compared to other great speakers in the area. He still had to get his message to God's people, even though there were those against him and his message. He did not approach this job with the tricks or persuasion of men but spoke the plain honest truth, and what he said was made clear to the people by God's Spirit.

Indeed, this is what happened to each one of us. We heard the broadcast, read the Plain Truth and the church literature, and with God's Spirit guiding us, it made perfect sense. As God's people, we began to see the contrast between the ideas of men and God's truth. Our faith shifted from what we had always believed to the truth, again because of God's Holy Spirit drawing and teaching us.

Paul said we are speaking this wisdom, or truth, to those who are mature. Again, he states that this wisdom is not that of the world, its intellectuals, or philosophers. That kind of worldly wisdom will come to nothing; it is just garbage.

**I Corinthians 2:7-8** But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

When you think of it logically, this is amazing. The wisdom that we have been given because of our calling is a wisdom hidden from the world around us. It is a mystery to men, but it was preordained to be revealed for our glory, for those called by God.

The truth of what I am telling you is in the fact that they crucified the Lord of glory. His identity was hidden from them, even though they saw Him resurrect the dead, heal the sick, cast out demons, and feed the five thousand. You would think that anybody that saw this would say, "This Man is something special"; but, as we will see, when the truth is given to this world, they want to get rid of it—and that usually involves getting rid of the one that brings the truth.

**I Corinthians 2:9-11** But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the 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 God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

We who are God's have been given the truth of which mankind does not have a clue. It was given to us freely by God's grace, which is the power that we might have the means to become unleavened and to become His.

**I Corinthians 2:13-16** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

That is true, brethren.

Who are we? Let us turn to Ephesians, which was Mr. Armstrong's favorite book. I want us to realize as much as possible what is being said here. This is being said to us—not to somebody who just happens to read it on the street—but to us who have been called.

**Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. . .

A better way to translate that last phrase would be, "Who has blessed us with spiritual understanding of heavenly subjects or things." These are things that the world cannot understand.

**Ephesians 1:4** . . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

For this reason, the blessings were conferred, fully in God's mind, with His eternal purpose and plan for us. The word *chosen* has the meaning of "laying out" and "selecting" with kindness and love, with the idea of imparting future benefits and greatness on those chosen. Remember that phrase, *greatness for those who are chosen*.

We were not an afterthought. We were chosen by Him to be saved and to share in the future with Him. This was done before the foundation of the world. Most commentators have a problem with this; but as Albert Barnes

stated, there could be no more plain statement in the Bible than this. Why? That we should be unleavened, brethren, holy and without blame before Him. Most view this as predestination, meaning one can do as he wishes because he is predestined to be saved; but Paul writes that we should be holy, which means that to achieve that status, we must work at it.

**Ephesians 1:5** Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. . .

The word *predestined* means "to have boundaries that have been previously set" or that an event was predetermined. Jesus was excited about putting His Father's plan into operation. You are what it is all about.

**Ephesians 1:6** . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

Thus, we have the forgiveness of our sin through His sacrifice, and we are accepted as sons, as part of the body of Christ.

**Ephesians 1:7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. . .

We have deliverance from sin through the tremendous price paid for us in the death of Jesus Christ and have had grace bestowed upon us. Grace is unmerited pardon, but it is also God's power given to us that we might succeed in our calling. God the Father did not call us to fail.

**Ephesians 1:8** . . . which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. . .

In this calling, Jesus has made all wisdom, prudence, and understanding available to us by His Spirit—*prudence*, in this case, is defined as "wisdom put into practice"—that we might live a sound, solid, and good life, doing the right and correct things.

**Ephesians 1:9** . . . having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself...

That is, having made known to us the "mystery," or that which had been concealed throughout all the ages, the wonderful plan of God. Jesus had planned to do this that we might have a vision that the world does not have. This would cause us to have great incentive to overcome, that we might please God and become a part of His Family.

**Ephesians 1:10** . . . that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

That is, at the completing or the filling up of times, when all things should be gathered to Jesus, to wind up human affairs. He gathers *all things* to Himself, meaning a new age, or world, will begin to take place, with Jesus ruling. Peace will be established at last, and we will be there.

**Ephesians 1:11** In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. .

We have been specifically called now to share in a joint inheritance, as it says in Romans 8:17.

**Ephesians 1:12-14** . . . that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

We who are called at this time have been sealed with God's Holy Spirit of promise. This is the earnest, or down payment, on what is to come, until the

redemption of the purchased possession. Remember, brethren, we are that purchased possession!

**Ephesians 1:18-23** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 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 put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

You and I are called and are part of His body, the body of the church.

In chapter 2, Paul reminds us that we were made alive while we were dead in our trespasses. We are all sinners, and God called us out of Satan's world; that agrees with Romans 5:8. God died for us individually while we were without strength and did this while we still were sinners.

All of this was done for a reason, and we have to understand that reason.

**Ephesians 2:4** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, . . .

He is overflowing in mercy with His great love wherewith He loved us. How great is that love?

**John 17:23** "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 has loved them as you have loved Me."

What an astounding statement to make! Here is a quote from Pat Higgins in [the Berean](#):

Understanding the full impact of this verse hinges on the little two-letter word "as." One definition is "to the same extent or degree; equally." *Equally* implies no more or no less. This definition makes Jesus' request staggering in its implications! It means we can truthfully say that there is not a being in the universe—including Jesus Christ—whom God loves more than us. Each individual whom God has called can say the same thing. God loves us all at the same incredible, beyond-our-comprehension level.

We see our own sins, flaws, and weaknesses; and we do not feel that we are lovable—yet God loves us the same as He loves Jesus Christ. That is awesome! Even with all of our mistakes and flaws. That is how much He wants us, and you had better understand that and be thankful for it.

**Ephesians 2:5** Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). . .

Even when we were dead to God and His law, He brought us to Him for a specific purpose. By grace we are saved. Grace is indeed unmerited pardon; but, again, it also means that He has given us the power to grow and overcome, that we might be a part of His Family. In short, He has given us the power to make it, but we must take advantage of it.

**Ephesians 2:6** . . . and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . .

He has saved us, but it is more than that: He has raised us up. This is the only place in the Bible where this term is used. The word means literally, "to raise together," to be with Jesus Christ, or to be alongside of Jesus Christ. It means that we will be raised from a spiritual death because of sin and placed right next to Jesus Christ. Practically, the meaning coincides with being justified. What made this possible was His great sacrifice on our behalf.

**Ephesians 2:7** . . . that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

There is great potential in this verse: that Christ may show us the awesome future of the grace extended to us through His great kindness. When soldiers are overseas, the Japanese or Korean girls are so pretty. They are young; and since they have not been Americanized yet, they tend to serve their man and take care of him. Our wives do the same thing, and I know that. Over there, there is a desire to bring the bride home and take her out of poverty and so forth, and bring her back to a beautiful country. This is somewhat of the picture here: Jesus Christ cannot wait to show us the Kingdom of God. He cannot wait to show us the heavens, the future, God's throne. He just cannot wait to see our faces light up and just be so excited. At the same time, He will use us as an example to others. We will read about that later in I Peter.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Grace does not have faith for us nor believe for us nor repent for us. What Jesus Christ has done for us is to give us the ability to see the truth and believe it, but then the rest is up to us. Paul states that we could never have obtained salvation by our own works earning it for us. We had to be called and accept the sacrifice of Christ. We have things to do.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

This is how we become unleavened. Everything we have gone through today, in this message, culminates with this verse. This is why Jesus gave His life, and the purpose listed in this verse is what our calling is all about. It is the method by which we become sanctified before God. It is how we become and remain unleavened. We must do the good works that God has set forth for us to accomplish.

We are created and formed by God the Father and Jesus Christ to become a new creation in the God Family's own image. The world thinks that this is so we can all go to heaven, but it is not. It is that we become holy! These good works that we are to do are to produce holiness in us and to please God the Father and Jesus Christ.



Who are we, brethren? James tells us that God tempts no man to sin. James makes the point that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights. He is saying that God is that reliable; the heavenly lights—the sun, moon, and stars—do not vary from their appointed orbits. More importantly, though, as it states in Matthew 6, God's eyes are full of light, with no darkness in them. Nothing will ever cause Him to do an incorrect thing. He tells us of the wonderful gift He has given to us, the awesome favor He has extended to us.

**James 1:17-18** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Of His own will we were begotten to become His children. It was His good gift to us and to all mankind to bring this to pass. As has been brought up, our mind was opened to His truth. Why? That we might be a kind of firstfruits; the first of a great future harvest; the part of the harvest that was first collected, consecrated, and offered to God in thanksgiving for all of His goodness. In our case, we are the first, along with those who have gone before, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; and the future that comes with that.

Being the firstfruits, what are we to reflect? Quoting from Mr. Armstrong's booklet, "Why Were You Born?"

Actually, there exists, overall, only two basic ways of life—two divergent philosophies. They travel in opposite directions. I state them very simply; one is the way of GIVE, the other the way of GET. [This sounds so simple and trite when you read it, but there is a depth to it that is absolutely astounding. You have all heard this, and you have heard it so much that perhaps it is not important any more.]

More specifically, the one is the way of humility and of outgoing concern for others equal to self-concern. It is the way of

cooperation, serving, helping, sharing, of consideration, patience, and kindness. More important, it is also the way of obedience to, reliance on, and worship solely toward God. It is the God-centered way of love toward God and love toward neighbor.

The opposite is the self-centered way of vanity, lust and greed; of competition and strife; of envy, jealousy, and unconcern for the welfare of others. Few realize this vital fact: the "give" way is actually an invisible, yet inexorable, spiritual law in active motion. It is summarized, in principle, by the Ten Commandments.

We are going to look at I Peter now and see to what we are being built. We are being built up to something very precious and very special in God's sight.

**I Peter 2:1** Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, . . .

Cast off all anger of the heart, evil of all kinds, all deceitful dealings, and hypocrisies—pretending to carry God's name correctly, but not being honest. Put away jealousies and evil speaking of others.

**I Peter 2:2** . . . as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. . .

We are to desire God's Scriptures, His commandments, His truth, and all that God has to teach. We are to grow and learn and become more like God. We are to go on to perfection. We are to desire the truth, the pure Word of God, that we might have, as much as possible, the sound rational mind of God. At the same time, that we might be humble and teachable as a child.

**I Peter 2:3-4** . . . if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. . .

You have been called by God the Father and have had your mind opened to understand the truth. Once we have been selected by God the Father, we come to His Son, the foundation or cornerstone that has been rejected—how

true that is!—by mankind. They do not understand, and they do not want to come under His authority for any reason.

**I Peter 2:5** . . . you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The Jews prized themselves on the Temple, with its physical sacrifices, but did not focus on changing or becoming like God. They looked more to the Temple than they did God. You can read about that in Jeremiah 7:1-4. They would cry, "The temple, the temple; we have the temple." They did not look at the inner man or the changes that they needed to make. God is building a spiritual temple, founded on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone that is rejected by this world. Our spiritual sacrifices of overcoming and obedience are to be offered up to Him.

**I Peter 2:6-8** Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

We who believe and work to change will never be put to shame. To us who are called, Jesus Christ is indeed of great value and precious; but to the world, as evidenced by their disobedience to His law, He is a stone of stumbling.

**I Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

You, whom the world views as the weak, base, and foolish, have been called to be a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. We are God's own special

treasure. We are a people that God has taken for His own special possession. That is who you are, old and young. Why? To show the wonderful things of God in the way that we live and conduct ourselves. We are the elect, or chosen, for whom time is cut short that the world might be spared from destruction.

**Deuteronomy 4:5-6** "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

What do we see today? Sex shows, greed, thievery, and violence in the world. Many times, we think that we are so rich and so good as Americans, and we go overseas and make real jerks of ourselves.

**Deuteronomy 4:7-8** "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"

**I Peter 2:10** Who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Physical Israel was meant to be an example to all other nations but failed. As the Israel of God, we are to represent Him in every aspect of our lives. With His help and our working to obey, we will not fail. Again, God did not call us to fail. During these Days of Unleavened Bread, we should all consider not just our calling but also the great mercy that has been extended to us in the forgiveness of our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Why, then, is God developing us?

**Revelation 20:4-6** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Revelation 5:10 states that we will be made kings and priests and shall reign on the earth. Have we ever really wondered what it will be like to reign under God the Father and Jesus Christ and the opportunities that await us? Everything emanates from God the Father. It is God's pattern to accomplish His desires through others, that they might learn and grow.

**John 14:8-12** Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."

It is God that does the works, through Jesus Christ.

**John 5:30** "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous; because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me."

**John 8:28** Then said Jesus to them, "When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things."

**Genesis 1:26** And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Who did the physical creating?

**Colossians 1:14-17** In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

**John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

**Ezekiel 37:1-7** The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"" So I prophesied as I was

commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.

The point I am getting at here is that it indicates that God the Father had Ezekiel prophesy, that Ezekiel might grow and learn.

Indeed, there will be governing and leading, to be sure; but there will be tremendous changes required on the earth to prepare it for the huge numbers that will be resurrected. Who will handle those projects? I think that Richard said that he estimated something like forty-eight billion people would come on the earth. Coastlines will be changed; deserts will be made to bloom, and mountain ranges will be lowered; oceans will need to be healed, and man's pollution must be erased. Do you think that God is not going to use you, and you are going to just sit there like a bump on a log while He does everything? No! He is going to do it through you, and He has even bigger purposes than that in mind for you.

Those God uses will be the ones whom the world considers the poor, base, and unimportant; those who have followed their God who called them; those who have obeyed to the best of their ability and grown in God's character and nature. It is those who strive with all their heart to become and remain unleavened that will be used by God to accomplish all the great changes upon this earth.

Does it stop here?

**Hebrews 2:1** Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

The Hebrews were letting down; they were not hanging on in their calling. I used to skin dive a lot, and I have seen boats turn loose. You push your floats somewhere and think it will stay there; pretty soon, you look, and it is gone way out to the breaker line. He said, "Do not let these things slip." I read in a commentary once that talked about a row boat that had lost its mooring. It just sat there for a while before it gradually went out. Then, all of a sudden, it was on the horizon. We must not let slip the things to which we have been called.

**Hebrews 2:2-8** For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

The phrase *all things* refers to the universe and its movements. All the commentators agree that this is the meaning. In verse 8 of Hebrews 2, we again see the phrase *all things*, but that *all things* have not been put under man's control. The commentators do not express that it is the universe but seem to expand upon it, stating that it is "the whole of everything" that will be put under man's control. Think of the future, brethren, where we are going. Mr. Armstrong was convinced that when God oversaw the writing of Hebrews, this was to show that the Family of God would either rebuild the heavens or inhabit them. The point is, brethren, that for those called by God, a future of absolute wonder is in store for them.

What about for now? We all have a definite and important job to perform in this calling we have been given. We are to be examples of how to live honestly and properly to the rest of the world around us. By our example, we will say more than reading all of the scriptures in town.

**Matthew 5:13-16** "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine



before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

I know that we read over this every once in a while, acknowledging what we are supposed to be; but do we really understand the great responsibility that God has invested in us?

**John 18:37** Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Jesus Christ was to bear witness to the truth, in opposition to Satan, the father of lies.

**Revelation 12:9** So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

I used to read over that and never give it a thought. "Satan deceives the whole world." However, lately it has been on my mind: this entire world is deceived: This is how special you are; you have been called to receive the truth. Indeed, the world has been deceived by Satan and his demons. We, of all those on the earth, have been given the truth of God. The church world and the world itself cannot comprehend what this truth is. Commentators explore the meanings of every word; and though in many cases they may express God's thoughts correctly, they still cannot see what God is doing. They cannot grasp the truth.

In the book of Acts, the response of the "church world" to the truth of God was to kill or plan to kill the messenger. We are even told that they (the world's religions) will think that they do God a service by killing us. All through the Bible, we see that prophets have carried God's truth in warnings to Israel, only to be beaten or killed. The world rejects anyone telling them the truth of how to live or how God wants them to live. That is because they have not been given understanding by God.

We, in a real sense, because of being called and being given the truth, are the new prophets in the sense of letting our righteous way of living shine. I Peter 3:15 reminds us that we are to be able, when asked, to give an answer to those who ask the reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. It has been given to you to respond to why you believe what you do. Therefore, we must know and understand what we believe, and this requires study.

**I Peter 2:11** Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. . .

Peter is saying here that we are strangers and pilgrims who belong to another country. Philippians 3:20 states that our citizenship is in heaven, and thus we should follow the laws of our country while here on this earth now, as an example. By doing so, even against opposition, we will, by our steadfastness to what is right, help those in the day of their visitation to glorify God.

**I Peter 2:12** . . . having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Am I saying that we are better than those in the world around us? I hope that you know better than that. What I am saying is that we have been called by the living God, and with that calling comes the great responsibility of living as much as possible an unleavened life. In doing so, we set the example that God wants set to this world. Again, in doing so, we not only demonstrate living correctly, but we also encourage and strengthen one another in the church. When we see others living that way and fighting problems and so forth, it uplifts and encourages us. Becoming unleavened, for us, is not just a seven-day experience but a lifetime experience.

Brethren, let us not forget the future that God has in store for us and all that has been done for us in this wonderful calling. We must show our thankfulness and our appreciation by truly working to fulfill the purpose to which God has called us.

**Exodus 13:3-10** And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year."