

Sow For Yourself

Our Reward for Doing Good Works

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Back when I was employed and I was working, I worked with a very talented man named Bill Jameson. He was a pilot and he was a good salesman, but I think that his heart rested on his roots, which were back on the farm. My job was [ordinarily] to travel, but we men were occasionally called on to call on certain accounts [of our work]. [During these times] Bill would sit and he would reminisce about the farm and tell us what a wonderful life he had there. And he would tell us that during the harvest season, he would get up and he would be in the field at four in the morning out harvesting. They would come back to the farm house about ten o'clock and the ladies would have everything ready: steak, eggs, bacon and eggs, ham and eggs, sausage, pancakes, biscuits, snails (*laughter). They would just fill these men up like you would not believe. Then they would go out and work until two o'clock in the afternoon, take a short break, and then they would work until dark.

When they would work, they would work. But then came the Fall of the year and the harvest was in and they would all relax to a very great degree. And he used to reminisce about that. At the time of year that the harvest was in, they could rest and enjoy the *reward* of their labor.

Bill did not know what I believed. He knew that I was religious and that I went to a convention every year, but nevertheless the pattern of life that he described (I could not help to think) had to be somewhat like the pattern of ancient Israel on the land. Israelites who were on the land had to clear their land and break up the clods, prepare the soil for spring. They had to plant the seed, to see to it that water reached the crop either by irrigation or by rain. And they had to watch for insects and for the cows grazing in the crops to destroy their brand new planting. They had to keep the crop until it was ready for harvest—exceedingly important. And then came the Fall harvest with all of its intensity, because that is what indeed it was. The crop had to

be in before the rains came. Everyone had to pull their weight to see that the crop got in. They worked that it might all be put safely into the barn to protect it.

It was a lot of work, but if they remained close to God and if they conducted themselves wisely and put forth proper labor, they could reap the *reward* (I am using that word again because that is what the sermon is about.) of their efforts. If they were diligent, then their reward would be great. If they were slack, there would be a very poor reward or it might be non-existent. If a farmer had been wisely, properly allotting his time and his effort, he could truly relish what he had accomplished. But if his time and efforts had been wasted, there was no turning back and doing it over because, you see, the growing season was past. So he had to do it right. As the old adage goes, "He had to make hay while the sun shined." When the storm came and the rain came, he could not do any more and the crop would be ruined. Out of the good crop the farmer and his family would journey to the Feast of Tabernacles, which is what we are doing today, where he would picture the wonderful Kingdom of God, the World Tomorrow and all that entails.

Please turn over to Deuteronomy 14. I will take a little license here with this. We will start in verse 22 and go through verse 27.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 "You shall truly tithe of all the increase [reward] of your grain [I will put that in there.] that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place which He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain [or the tithe of the reward you receive from your efforts] and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. And if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord you God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it [the reward that you receive] for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your

household. You shall not forsake the Levite that is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you."

So we see here that the effort put forth produces a reward that can be turned into a blessing and that they could go to the Feast. Brethren, this is what most of us have done. Most of us are not farmers, but we have struggled to overcome this year. We too have been breaking up the clods, as I will describe in Hosea, that we might have the ground prepared to receive the truth that Bill Cherry discussed earlier, the sprinkling that we desperately need to change. We have to have that truth so that we can make the changes that are acceptable to God.

Please turn over to Hosea 10. You will see what we are talking about here. We will read verse 12. This has been sort of the theme this year at the Feast. I was a little surprised. I should not be surprised.

Hosea 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

The sense of this is that when we plant a seed, we get much more volume in the plant than the seed that we specifically planted. More volume springs up. And so it is with our planting of righteousness, brethren. When we sow living God's way, in loving kindness and faithfulness, we receive mercy and reward in greater proportion to what we planted. And then God tells us to break up the fallow ground. Most of us are not aware of what fallow ground is, but fallow ground is that which has not been seeded. Thus God, through Hosea, is telling us to humble ourselves in the areas we resist God in. And break up the soil of our stubborn hearts and seed it properly, that righteousness may grow. As I said, it has been somewhat of a theme here at the Feast.

We are to do this until He comes. And if we follow these instructions, He will rain righteousness and wonderful teaching upon us that we might be increased greatly in understanding and be prepared for the wonderful things He has in store for us. This is the job that we are to do.

Now, the vast majority of you have been plowing and sowing in the heat of the day for all of these years. By that, I mean that you have stayed the course in the church through all of the break-ups that have taken place over time. You have been faithful and loyal to God in these confusing times. And just as the farmer is thrilled to be able to bring his harvest into the barns and reap the rewards of his labor, the day is coming soon when we will reap the rewards of our labor. That is something that we have to focus on.

Let us take a quick trip over to Revelation 22. This is Jesus Christ speaking, and He does not want us to forget this.

Revelation 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

I do not think we focus on reward very much. Just so we understand the meaning of the term "reward," I would like to quote from the *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* under the term "reward." It says, "something given or done in return, especially a gift, a prize or recompense for merit, service and achievement." And, of course, you know the other meanings of reward "monies offered for the return of lost goods" (like a briefcase), "profit or return." But in the Greek the word is *misthos*, and it means "wages, hire or reward." God is going to reward us for the effort we put forth, the changes we make.

I think most of us tend to be myopic as we go through life (I know I do.), only seeing what is in front of us, how our families are doing, our job, the everyday problems that continually face us. We do not stop to consider that in a very short time we will be receiving the rewards for our labors. And it is really important for us to consider that we will be given a reward, and though in this physical life, at this time, that reward may seem somewhere off in the distance, but the day will come, and probably much sooner than most of us think, when this reward will be of the utmost importance to us and to God the Father and to Jesus Christ. See, They want to give us the biggest reward possible that They can possibly give us—because that indicates our growth and our ability to serve, and to accomplish all that God and Jesus Christ want done.

What are the rewards based on? Please turn over to I Corinthians 3. We will read verses 7 through 18. Now there had been a division in the Corinthian church as all of you are aware. One group was of Apollo, one of Paul, one of Peter, and one of Christ. This sounds a lot like the churches today. "I am with this person, that person" and so forth. And the leaders of the church seemed to have lost vision of what God was doing. They were polarizing. They were having their own groups. And "this group is better than that group." It was causing a lot of division and pain. Paul was called to plant and Apollos to water. And in all of this it was God who gave the increase, but they missed this and they became polarized, as I said, each to their own individual.

I Corinthians 3:7-10 So then neither is he that plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. [This is the thing they should have been focusing on.] Now he who plants and he who waters [Apollos and Paul] are one, and each one shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. [And those who labor certainly are going to receive a reward, and you are too.] According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. [And then he gives a warning to the men there and to all of us individually.] But let each one take heed how he [or she] builds on it [the foundation].

What he is saying here is that the reason he was able to build was because the gift of God gave him the ability to be a wise master builder. He laid the foundation that was given to him, and Apollos built on it. But then again He gives a warning that every man take heed, or care, how he builds. Verse 11 tells us what the foundation is.

I Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now what does it mean by "the foundation of Jesus Christ"? As John brought out and thence is teaching, the foundation is the instruction that He gives to us individually through the Bible. It also means His life, how He lived. It means His faithfulness to God the Father. It means His faithfulness

to us by serving us and by giving His life for us. And it is His faith in all His Father stands for and His love for His Father and for us. This is the foundation that we each individually have to be careful how we build upon it.

We will read verses 12-16 straight through.

I Corinthians 3:12-16 Now if any one builds 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 every 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?

Now, as encouragement to us, he states that we are to faithfully build correctly and to define correctly. He uses three types of building material: gold, silver, and marble, precious stone meaning a construction marble. As a level of building, gold being best, then silver, then marble. And he continues to list the possible materials to include wood, hay, and straw (or stubble). And then he says, "Every one's work will be made evident and tested. It will be revealed by fire. And if a man's work endures, he will receive a reward." It is obvious that the materials that will survive will be the gold, the silver, and the marble. And if his works are burned up, then he still may be saved, but only by fire, by severe testing and trial.

The sense of this is for us to properly build. We should strive to build with the best materials we can. And, why? Because we are the Temple of God, and that is what we should be doing.

The commentators feel that this passage applies to the ministry and leaders of the church primarily. But we who have been called individually and told to grow in the grace and knowledge, as in the Church of the Great God, you are to govern yourself. This in principle and application applies to each and every one of us. We are to be careful how and with what we build. We cannot take it lightly.

To sum the whole thing up, if one builds properly he or she has a reward *and* salvation. If we do not build properly, and God chooses to save us, we have salvation. A reward is important. I think you are going to see why.

How are we to build on this foundation? Let us turn over to Hebrews 11. You will find this to be a very basic message today. But that seems to be the only kind I understand, so you are stuck with it.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

To diligently seek Him, does that just mean to simply know who God is? No. It actually means to see God, His way of living, everything about Him, and to make changes in our life that we need to have made. Faith is the substance of what we stand on, or the foundation of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Faith in what? Faith in what God tells us to do through His Son, how to live. These are the words that we are to base our life on. That is what has been told to us over and over again at this Feast.

Somebody gave us this very nice book. It is concerning primitive religion, of which you are. They refer to the Old Testament. They refer to the Worldwide Church of God as a primitive religion because they trust God and believe in what God said. They have not evolved into the modern religions. So you are all primitive.

What must our attitude be to have this faith?

Matthew 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

He picked a child who could walk, and the child came to Him. I was thinking last night that if I called our grandchild Spencer up here and said, "Spencer,

would you please come up here?" he would walk down the aisle and he would sort of look to the left and to the right and he would come up on the stage and look out at all of you. And I would say, "Spencer," and he would turn and look at me and say, "Yes, Papa." I would say, "Would you do this?" And he would say, "Okay, Papa." And he would go do it. I have never wanted to be called "Papa" by my grandchildren. I always felt that being called "grandfather" was much more important. But somehow when Spencer says, "Papa."

The point here is that we have to humble ourselves. The disciples had been arguing over who would be the greatest. You can just see even in our early church of the Worldwide Church of God, "I am going to have my office and I going to have my people around me." "And I am going to be able to exert authority." "I am going to carry a big stick." But the disciples had been arguing over who was going to be the greatest and here Jesus Christ took something that would seem so simple to present a great lesson. He called a child. And He told the disciples, "Unless you be converted, or turned, as this little child. You won't enter the Kingdom." What an astonishing statement. There is a characteristic in little children that we need to have as adults in this very carnal, vicious world we live in.

The word translated "converted" literally means "to turn or to change from one set of habits and opinions to another," which of course is what we are called to do. The disciples did not understand that the Kingdom was not immediate but in the future, and they wanted to know what jobs they were going to have. They expected that they would rule as the kings of the world around them ruled, with their courts, their authority, and with their servants. Now Jesus states that they and we must rule with a different approach. He presents a small child as an example of the attitude they must have.

Truly, little children may be awkward. They may be loud sometimes. And, certainly, after I have told Spencer to do something, he would want to wrestle me to the ground within five minutes. They are underfoot. But they are not filled with pride and with arrogance. They are not puffed up. They are humble. Little children are characterized by humbleness, by being teachable. They trust their parents completely. When my son tells Spencer

something, "Yes, dad." He listens. He understands. They have absolute confidence in what their parents tell them. There is an innocence about them, and they are also extremely moral. They are wonderful to behold.

In fact, as parents, we look back and we see our children imitating us. We say, "I wish I hadn't said that in front of them. I wish I hadn't acted that way. He is doing just what I am doing." We wish we had done a better job.

In the book of Mark, Jesus stated that the one who wanted to be the greatest should be the last and serve all others. Jesus makes a statement that goes against the grain, and that is, to be the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven one will have to humble himself in obedience and service as this little child does. It begins to give you and me an idea of what we have to do before God. Who does God look to? We will take the scripture Isaiah 66:2. I think sometimes we hear these things and read these things and we say, "Yes, that's sure good for them." But it is good for *us*. Breaking into the middle of the verse:

Isaiah 66:2 ". . . on this one will I look [This is who your Father will look to, who your Father will accept]: on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

It does not mean he walks around like a coward all the time. It does not mean he cannot act in business, be a good father, a good wife. But what He is saying is that he trembles at My word. How can I become more like my Father? Who is an example of this? Who is the father of the faithful? Let us turn over to Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:6 Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Here is the father of the faithful, the one that we look back to as the prime example physically, not just Jesus Christ, but as a human being.

Galatians 3:7-9 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all [every one] the nations

shall be blessed." So then they who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Is all we have to do to properly build upon the foundation with gold, silver, and precious marble is to simply believe on Jesus Christ? Or is there something else that has to be done, something else that is required of us? Brethren, certainly, believing is the first part of the building that we have to partake in. But there is more to it than that. Turn over to James 2. We will start to get to more of the heart of this.

James 2:14-17 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

It may have been that some were foregoing proper acts or doing the right works. But the thought that they believed in God and nothing else was required. "Yes, I believe in God. He is a wonderful God. He created everything. I believe in Him. I say His name. I certainly give the blessing on the meal with His name." But they thought that perhaps they were not required to live the way they should—that faith was enough. This was actually the point that James was getting to. James asks the question, "Can faith alone save a man?" I can tell you right now the answer is no, not that way.

His point is that faith that does not produce right works is not true faith. The faith that God wants is proactive. It is accompanied by works that define the righteousness within an individual. James wants us to understand that faith is not an abstract concept. Faith must be accompanied by deeds such as with the example of the brother and sister that were naked. We will not turn to Matthew 25, but look at who the sheep are. Look at who Jesus Christ brings into the Kingdom. "I was hungry and you fed Me. I was naked and you put clothes on Me. I was in prison, maybe I committed some crime, but you came and you talked to Me and you encouraged Me and helped Me to repent." And He said, "Enter into the Kingdom of God."

Maybe you would rather climb a mountain or do some physical thing, but you see, it is the right works that God is after. We will see what they do for us later on. He is saying that just to be warm and filled is useless, demonstrating that nobody has any brotherly love because there is no love shown in a situation like this. It is not building on the foundation of Jesus Christ who gave His life for everyone.

James 2:18-19 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

That phrase means that their hair stands on end and they are shaking in their boots. He said, "You believe in God and that is good, but the demons believe the same way and they are trembling in utter fear." What did that belief do for them? Nada, zero, zip. James is saying here that the belief did not produce good works or a righteous life. Therefore a mere belief in God does not guarantee that one will be saved. It does not guarantee that you will please God. It does not even guarantee that you will change your nature, just by believing that there is a God.

James 2:20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

He is simply stating here, to that the vain individual who holds that faiths without works is all that is needed, that faith without works is dead. And from that he proceeds to list the examples to show this individual who thinks their works are not needed, that works *are* needed.

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

He says, "Think back about the father of the faithful." What was the main attribute that Abraham possessed that caused him to be known as the father of the faithful? It was not just that he had faith in God or that He believed God. He *acted* on the faith and *obeyed* what God commanded him to do. Abraham's example to us is that faith led him to explicit obedience to God.

This is what we have been hearing about. And he built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, with what element? With gold.

James 2:22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

This is something we have to understand as well. He said, see how faith and works cooperated together to the production of the result that God wanted in Abraham, a full acceptance by God. And that is the combination and end result that we should all take care of, and take care to notice and to emulate—because that is how we are going to be proved as well. He tells us that by Abraham's work his faith was made perfect. He means that by his faithful obedience to what God asked of him, his faith was made whole or complete, and his nature was no longer carnal-sided at all, but it was God-sided because he put into practice what God had taught him.

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

So the Scripture was fulfilled in that he showed that Abraham's faith, because of his obedience, was absolutely genuine. You see, works, godly works prove that your faith is genuine in the sight of God. Because of this, he was established and he was called the friend of God. Again, I might add, that this is exactly how our faith will be established as being genuine—exactly the same way. Simply stated in verse 24,

James 2:24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

James points out in verse 24 that the message is that no man will be justified who does not have a faith that is evidenced by practical, righteous works. James points out in the next verse,

James 2:25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when she had received the messengers and had sent them out another way?

She proved her faith. She took a stand to protect the spies. That could have cost her life. She did it because she had faith in the God of Israel who was working with Israel. In verse 26, James summarizes. He states:

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Now to avoid any misunderstanding that might be brought about from reading Romans 3:20, where it states that "by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight," Paul is addressing those who had not been called yet. They were assuming that they could somehow do works and those works would justify them. Paul was saying, "No, you cannot gain or earn salvation by works." In the book of James, James is not addressing those. He is addressing those after conversion—you and me.

Albert Barnes put this together pretty well. He said that:

We may learn then from the whole doctrine of the New Testament on the subject that unless we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we cannot be justified before God and that unless our faith is of the kind which will produce holy living, it has no more of the characteristics of true religion than a dead body has of a living man.

That is right to the point. James was asserting that the right works are essential to our salvation. Faith will profit us nothing without right works or right living in serving others. Works will not earn us salvation. We have been given that, but the right works will define our sanctification and set us apart as having the mind and the heart of God. And, indeed, make us valuable to God in His future plans for us. Proper, righteous, loving works, brethren, are how we build.

What kind of works does God want performed? In the years in the church, I have seen members taking stands on twigs, as being important works, that lead them out of the church. I have seen other works performed that cause wonderful changes in people, changes and growth, and others cause division and separation.

Now, of the category of those that cause separation I have seen those that focus almost entirely on prophecy. That is all they think about. I had one man write to me from the Pacific Northwest. He sent me about fifteen different papers that he had on prophecy. I happen to know that this man beat his wife. He is not in the church, lest anybody would want to look around and see. I knew that he beat his wife, that he was abusive to his mother. He almost strangled her one time. But he was into prophecy. I wrote back and said, "Well, these are very interesting, and I understand that some of them might be true, but how about overcoming your anger? How about overcoming your viciousness and your self-centeredness?" Of course, I never heard from the guy again.

I have seen people leave the church because their particular prophet did not come to pass. Or people have said, "I know who the Two Witnesses are." They have pinned them down. "Mr. Armstrong is going to be resurrected." They have this all figured out. This is what they focus on—not overcoming. It is the most important thing in their mind. So they go with others who feel the same way, and they leave. It is a true statement that *birds of a feather flock together*. That is why you are all here, because we all feel the same.

There are those that have the Sacred Name superstition. That, simply stated, is that you cannot address God without using the proper Hebrew name—without that He will not hear you. This has been, I call it, a superstition because that is what it is. For the most part, they have said that God would not hear a person if he addressed Him by any other name. Mr. Armstrong spoke on this (we had a man leave recently over this), saying that they overlooked the fact that all original copies of the New Testament were inspired by the same God through Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Greek language. He goes on to say that in numerous instances the New Testament, inspired in the Greek language, quoted the Old Testament names of God. And in every case, God through the Holy Spirit used the Greek names for God and the One who became Jesus Christ, and not the Hebrew language. This is something Mr. Armstrong put out. It did not phase him a bit. He was going to get into the Kingdom of God by using the right name of God and not by overcoming. I am not saying that he did not overcome some. I do not mean that. But that was his focus.

Recently, we have had the calendar situation. This keeps repeating over and over again. Though the Hebrew calendar united Judah for however many thousands of years—and they are part of Israel, though some people do not seem to think so sometimes—and God's people for all that time, there are those who say we do 'o have the right calendar today. Of course, when they do that, they state that God let His people keep the wrong calendar all of these years, and that God was sinning in doing that. (They may not say it just that way.)

Those who focus on one of the eight or nine different calendars available, even though they see that this type of thing separates God's people, they still have to pursue this particular thing—this particular work—that they feel will get them into the Kingdom of God. Are these the kinds of works that make changes that God wants from us? As far as I am concerned, the answer is no.

Brethren, the works that God wants us to pursue are those that train and change us to become like Him. That is exactly what God wants from us.

For those who have been in the military, you understand the purpose of basic training. They take you out of civilian life and put you in this closed environment. And you cannot get any outside information. They proceed to train you in the regulations, rules, doctrines, teachings of the particular branch of service that you are in. When they finish, you become a productive member of whatever branch of the military you were in.

It is the same thing in God's church. It should not be hard to understand this. We are called from the world with worldly ideas, worldly ways of thinking, with our way of doing things. And God places us in the church where the instruction we will receive changes us. That is, with our cooperation it produces the changes that God wants.

I think most of us can remember our basic training in the church. "What foods can I eat?" That is one of them. "What can I do or not do on the Sabbath?" This is beginning Christianity. "What are the holy days all about? How should I dress on the Sabbath?" Especially among the ladies, they all come and look around and see what everyone else is dressed in. "Do the ladies in the church wear makeup?" This is a big one. "How long should my

skirts be?" "How do I train my children?" We would go to some older member, "Explain tithing to me. How many tithes are there? I've heard there are four." I had one man say that to me once. "Is there any fourth tithe?" I said, "No, there is no fourth tithe." "Whew!" "What do I do at the Feast of Tabernacles? How do I figure my year of release? How should I handle Christmas and Easter and things like that?" This is our basic training.

But as the apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 6:1, we are to leave the elementary discussions of the basics and be carried forward to maturity. All of us have been around a long time. This is where we should be heading. Rather than operating from just a basic list of do's and don'ts, we must be learning to operate from the principles given to us by Jesus Christ. Learning to live and operate by these produce what Christ is after and what He considers building with gold, with silver, and with precious marble. This is from the foundation He has given us.

What principles are we talking about? We are going to go through the Beatitudes very quickly from Matthew 5, 6, and 7. This was teaching that the people had not heard before.

Matthew 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

He taught them things that they had not considered before. Up to this time, there had been rules—this rule, that rule—that the scribes had taught. So He opened His mouth and said:

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Those who are humble and yielded, those who realize they lack—reflected by the next one:

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Blessed are those that compare themselves to the standard of Jesus Christ and God the Father and realize the shortcomings we have, realize they have been called by God the Father and have been placed in the care of Jesus Christ. They see imperfections. They mourn, certainly, for their lack, and they mourn the condition of the world in a way they have never seen before. All of a sudden they see themselves and they see the condition of the world, what we should be like, so they mourn.

Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Those that are subject to God, gentle, not easily provoked.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after God's way of life, to make the changes in their lives. These are the works that produce wonderful change in us. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. That is one of the rewards they will get.

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

It is so easy to pass judgment today on somebody that may dress differently, somebody that comes from a different part of the country. It is easy to be critical when somebody makes a mistake and jump all over them. We puff ourselves up to our complete two foot, one inch height and think we are so good. But [we should] extend a little mercy. Was any mercy extended to you? In James, he says that if we judge without mercy, we will be judged without mercy. So, cut some slack for people. He said, these are the works that will prepare you the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Boy, do I wish I was pure in heart. Just try to be pure in heart, to be clean, to be righteous, to turn off the television, to turn off the things that are wrong,

to associate with the people that are correct for you. To be pure in heart, what a wonderful thing that would be. Just try and do that, and you are doing the works that are going to change you and make you a remarkable person.

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

We could spend hours on this one. It includes gossip, passing on rumors, telling little tales. Blessed are the peacemakers, the ones that want to produce peace. Rather than take the things that are said in the wrong way, just ignore it and still continue to be peaceful. This is the kind of work that God wants us to have.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake [and still hang in there and do not give up], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:11-13 "Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

He goes on to tell us we are the salt of the earth and that we are to be a light on a hill. We are to be an example by our life, an example not just of counting our mint and anise seeds but of loving our wives and working to provide food for our family, the wives working to provide a home for the husband. [We are to be] an example of being a correct Christian in the workplace: getting in early, working a good job, going home, being honest, being faithful. All of these things, this is what God wants from us. It is a concept, an idea, God wants us to put into practice. He says,

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

I was telling somebody that with Spencer living with us now, until the kid's house is ready, that we have not had a nine year old boy in the house for a long time. There are nine-year-old boys and girls all over our block. They

will knock on the door, and Spencer will answer the door. And, of course, the doorbell rings all the time now. It is not for me any more. It kind of breaks my heart... But, Spencer said, "Papa." And I said, "What Spencer?" "Can you come here a minute?" So I came to the door. This little boy, Kevin, said, "Why don't you keep Halloween?" Now, I have to tell you, it has been a couple of years since I have had to answer that one. So I told him, "Well, it comes from a source of beliefs in pagan holidays." And, of course, this was over Kevin's head. But, I said, "We just don't feel it is correct so we just don't keep it." I didn't go into Samhain, Lord of the Dead, Satan, and all that. But my daughter-in-law was impressed. She said, "That was pretty good, Dad."

We are an example in our block. Every Sabbath we put our suits on. We drive out. Now there are three of us. Dan Salcedo, he is an elder with United. He has the corner house. Brian and Donelle have the second house. We have the third house. So, every week they see us drive out to church all dressed up in our ties. In fact, the people next door to us on our left have just moved in and they asked the people who lived there before, "Who lives next door?" He said, "He is a minister." And the man said, "Not a minister!?" I mean that would be the end of the world. So he said, "No, no, he's really a pretty good guy." And I have never mentioned church or anything else. I just do my job and so, it is an example. At least, I certainly hope that is what it is. We try to keep the house neat and everything else. We are to be a light.

Then He goes on in Matthew 5. He says, I told you not to kill, but I am telling you now not to be angry toward another. This is really tough stuff for us. Why? Because anger precedes killing. Anger precedes lying about somebody else. Anger proceeds doing damage to others, to property, that type of thing. He says, do not have anger. Do not get angry with your brother. He says, do not lust for other people. I mean, man should not lust for the opposite sex if it does not belong to them. Nor should women. It is the same thing. He says you should turn the other cheek, all of these things.

Matthew 5:43-45 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you [Whoa, that's a tough one.] that you may be the sons of your Father [that is what it takes—to be the children of your Father] in heaven;

for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

For if God can have that kind of love for people that hate Him, He said He expects it of us.

Matthew 5:46-48 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect [complete], just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

You see, brethren, we have a lot cut out for us to do. It is not something small. These types of works change us into what God wants us to become. Chapter 6.

Matthew 6:1 "Take heed that you do not your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven."

It does not mean that you cannot give your charitable gifts to others or to men, but do not do it to be seen by them. That is what He is saying. It is expected that we who are Christians, that are called by God the Father, and given to Jesus Christ will have a heart to give to others as we see need. Just as it mentions in James, that we will not say that "I've got mine, so I'll let them starve." Be generous. God expects that of us.

Matthew 6:2-3 "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ["Aren't they wonderful people."] But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does is doing [sometimes not even your wife or your husband when you want to give something to somebody to help them]

I gave a sermonette just prior to the Feast on the art of giving and receiving, and there is an art to receiving too. When you are given a gift, smile and say thank you. Because the person who has given you the gift gets the reward. You get the gift, but he gets the reward. So, by all means, do things in secret, and your Father is going to reward you openly. He said, when you pray do not be as the hypocrites, like the Pharisee that said, "I am glad that I am not as that Publican over there." He said do not do it that way.

He said, you come to Me in a close intimate relationship and I will reward you openly for that. The same thing when you fast. When you fast, do not clutch your chest, muss up your hair, put on your old clothes and sackcloth, and run out in the street, "I'm fasting!" Do not do that! Dress up. Look neat and clean. Do not let anyone know that you are fasting [in order] to draw close to Me and to change your nature. He said, when you do that, then I am going to reward you, and I will reward you openly.

I do not know if anyone ever counted this one. In Matthew 5 and 6, "reward" is mentioned nine times. Maybe some of them are not so good, but it is mentioned nine times. He said, when you forgive others, I will reward you with forgiveness. And if you do not, I will not. God does not want us hanging on to grudges and things like this—because you are not going to have grudges in the Kingdom of God. So you take on the nature of God, and He is a God who forgives.

You may see somebody who has done something pretty stupid. Maybe you do not feel that person should be forgiven, but you better forgive him or her. That individual may have learned some difficult lessons in the mistakes he made. And for you to be hostile against that individual is not right with God. He has forgiven him. Who are you? Anyway, those are the works God wants from us.

Toward the end of chapter 6 in verse 33, He describes just what our building is. He puts it into a synopsis form. This is Jesus Christ speaking here.

Matthew 6:33 "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. . ."

You see that is what our calling is all about. That is exactly what it is. We will get into that in a moment here. Then in chapter 7, He tells us to be careful not to be judgmental and to work to enter in at the strait gate. He also points out that a good tree will produce good fruit, but a bad tree, no matter how much he wants to produce good fruit, cannot produce it. And in verse 21, there is a warning that we should all take heed of.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone that says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

Bottom line, there it is. As they say in the program, that is the final answer. Down in verses 24 through the end of the chapter here.

Matthew 7:24-29 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built [I could add here: "with gold, and silver, and precious stone"] his house upon a rock [the foundation of Jesus Christ]: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock [the foundation of Jesus Christ]. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Why was it so great? It is because he had a chance to be God.

Matthew 7:28-29 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching [because they had been taught by lists of do's and don'ts, but Jesus taught them principles and concepts], for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

How are we to work the works that God wants us to complete? Brethren, it is at this point right here that we start to actually build with gold, and silver, and stone *or* with wood, hay, or straw. It is at this point that God begins to

find out what you and I are made of. To be sure, we have to pray and study seriously, to meditate and to fast. Those are the essential basics. We cannot let down on those. But whether we are actually building or not depends on something else.

Please turn over to Romans 12, verse 1.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

We have all heard this verse many times, and we say, "Oh, yes, yes. I have to be a reasonable sacrifice." Now, brethren, we all know that when the animal sacrifice was given it always required the death of the animal. We are to be a living sacrifice, but still that is exactly what God wants from us. He wants the death of our old self. Turn over to Ephesians 4, verse 21. Again, [these are] scriptures that we go over often.

Ephesians 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

There is probably sort of a chiding here. [Have] you really been listening to what has been said and have you been paying attention? [Have] you been listening attentively to Christ's teachings and have [you] learned the true nature of what our calling is all about? If you are intent on building on the foundation that is Jesus Christ, then this is what you must do.

Ephesians 4:22 That you [must] put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. . .

It says here we are to renounce, or to put aside, former conduct: the former way of thinking, the former way of living that was in opposition to the way God lives. It is not a hard concept if, as He said, you have been paying attention. This might affect the way we dress, the language we use, the things we watch, the people we associate with, by all means the way we deal with each other as individuals, and the way we treat our mates and our

families. It is going to affect all of this. What is stated is that we have been controlled by our desires, our whims, our habits, our background, our anger, our laziness. And now we have been given the job of overriding all this: all of those wrong habits, attitudes, and emotions that drove us before. Brethren, this is where we begin to build—with either gold, silver, precious stone *or* stubble, straw, and wood.

Paul is telling us that in the past we have not been under the direction of reason, but under passions and desires of our own carnal mind. To build with the elements we talked about, with the gold, and the silver, and the precious stone, we have to change that. We are to be renewed (verse 23). It is the only place in the New Testament that it is used, and it literally means "to make new"; your heart and your mind—the area where you make every decision.

I am going to turn over to Proverbs 4 (keep your finger here because we are going to turn right back). Proverbs 4 seems to make a ton of sense to me, and it is something we all have to put into application. God gives us through Solomon some sound instruction here.

Proverbs 4:23-27 Keep your heart [Guard your heart. Guard your mind. That is what he is talking about here.] with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. [This is where you and I make all of our decisions.] Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you [on the right way of living]. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right hand or to the left; remove your foot from evil.

Solid, sound instruction. Back to Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:24 And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.

That is what it is all about. That is what we are called if we are building correctly.

II Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ compels us; because we judge thus, that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

What Paul is stating here is that his energy and his motivation came from the understanding of the great love shown for him and today for all of us, and for the great sacrifice that was made for him and that was made for us as well. That this love should constrain or compel us, when we consider what has been done for us, to deny ourselves and to pursue the righteous goals that God has set forth for us to pursue.

II Corinthians 5:16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no man according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

What he is saying here is that he knows Him as God, the very Son of God that is in heaven, Spirit being.

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

Here Paul asks us again to stop and consider what has been done for us. Our sins have been imputed to Christ in our stead. We have been slated for death—everyone of us in this room. But because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have been made the righteousness of God. Therefore, what should

our response to that be? This is the point He is trying to get to. [It is] to humble ourselves before God and to work to change our nature to become like His. It is a repetitious story but it is true. Matthew 16, please.

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

The term "carrying one's cross" pictures, of course, a condemned man carrying his cross to be crucified on. And as it applies to us today, we must endure whatever is difficult or trying in this life, that includes overcoming—which is exceedingly difficult—and to continue to do what we know is right.

Matthew 16:25 For whoever will save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.

Simply stated, He is saying that if you are going to continue on in your way of life, you are going to lose it. If you get rid of your way of life and take on My way of life, you are going to save it.

Matthew 16:26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

I was telling someone that as I have gotten older over the years, old age came as somewhat of a surprise. One day I had to buy glasses. I said, this cannot be me. Then came gray hair. I said, this cannot be me. I am always young. Then came a few aches and pains. That is why I said that old age came somewhat as a surprise.

One thing that came with it was the fact that I realized that whatever I have, in a material sense, it means nothing. I cannot take it with me. Solomon said the same thing. I have to leave it all to a dolt. I have no idea what he is going to do with it. You see, this is why He is saying, if you gain the whole world—everything, it just does not mean a thing. What will you exchange

for the Kingdom of God? God says, "I don't know you." [There is] nothing that you can give except the obedience and the changing, the doing of the works God tells us to do.

Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

It gives you an idea of what God bases His reward on. Now, what are the rewards that God has in store for us, brethren? We know from II Timothy 4 that we are going to receive a crown. That means authority. We know from Luke 19 that rulership over cities will be given to some. We know from Matthew 25 that He goes on to expand that by saying that those who qualify will rule over many things. Revelation 2 and 3 tells us that we will eat of the Tree of Life and have eternal life. We will have a new name, a true name, that describes who we are—maybe as God sees us, as we will become or who we will be then.

We will miss the second death. To some power will be given over nations—those who qualify and have those abilities. Some will be pillars in the Temple of God. Others will sit with Jesus Christ on His throne. We know too that there will be a great need for teachers. (This was brought out by Richard.) That will be the largest land renovation ever planned on the face of the earth. We are going to have so much to do that your head will be spinning. The opportunities to serve and to be fulfilled—and when I say fulfilled, I mean *fulfilled*; God will put you in a job that you will thrive at—and you will be fulfilled to your nth degree.

The opportunities will be unlimited. It is probably said best in I Corinthians 2:9.

I Corinthians 2:9 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."

Those who love Him, obey Him, and do the works that produce the changes in their lives. I have a hunch that we have a future that is just absolutely going to be a knock-down-drag-out wonderful period. I have often wondered

why sometimes you see people get to an extremely ripe old age where they are crippled and they have died of some terrible disease. And I think, boy, that is really terrible, but the contrast has to be awesome when he is raised into a spirit body. It just has to be awesome, with the future in front of him and the wonderful World Tomorrow staring him right in the face. It has to be beautiful.

When will these rewards come? Revelation 11, please. The seven trumpets have blown.

Revelation 11:18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.

The rewards will come with Jesus Christ. As I said in the beginning, with all the trials we face in the world today, we tend to be myopic. We tend to deal with only the daily things we face. The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to consider the Kingdom of God and the Millennium, and to consider as well our reward that we are going to receive, and to consider the process that will produce that reward.

As we consider building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, the most important thing to remember is that this is something we cannot do alone. And He knows that. Indeed, we can set our will to obey, but we must do so in conjunction with Jesus Christ and God the Father. Jesus reminds us in John 15 that except we live in Him, we can do nothing, nothing at all. That requires the closeness of fasting, drawing near in humbleness. And if we will live in Him, as was brought out by Mark, we can ask for the help in time of need. Then healings, and things like this, He will give to us. In working to bear much fruit, then, God the Father and Jesus Christ will be glorified.

Brethren, God the Father and Jesus Christ are fully aware of our struggles and trials. They know the difficulties we must work with and work through. He knows what we were like when He called us and what we have to overcome. And They know the rewards that will be produced from the struggles that we go through.

Let us turn over to Hebrews 6 for the final scripture.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name [by overcoming, by doing the works that make the changes that we all need to have], in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. [the service that you have given to each other here at the Feast and throughout the year]

God has not forgotten you. He has not forgotten the struggles that we go through. So let us not let down when times get tough. Let us, indeed, draw close to God always asking for help to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with gold, silver, and precious stone that we might glorify God by attaining the greatest reward possible. Then, with God the Father and Jesus Christ, we might rejoice and be exceeding glad because great will our reward be in heaven.