

**Abundant Life—Today and Tomorrow #3;
State of Mind and Abundance**

**2006 Feast of Tabernacles, Second Day
October 8, 2006; Newport, OR**

Jon W. Brisby
Edited Sermon Transcript

Well, brethren, this morning we want to continue in this series—this theme—for the eight messages I've prepared for you for this Feast of Tabernacles on the subject of "Abundant Life—Today and Tomorrow." Remember, I am using John chapter 10 and verse 10 as my base text, where Jesus Christ said, "I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." And so, it is the purpose of Jesus Christ that we should be blessed—not only ultimately with eternal life, in sharing the riches and the glory of His Family forever—but also that we might have a quality of life, not just a mere existence, but a real feeling, a depth, fulfillment, satisfaction, joy and peace and every good thing. That's the real abundance that we are talking about. We've already seen a number of texts to show that that is what God wants us to enjoy—not only in the future at some unspecified date after the return of Jesus Christ (during that time pictured by this Feast, the Millennial rule, the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth)—but even today, now, in our lives, He wants us to have that satisfaction, that fulfillment.

As I said before, it doesn't mean a trial-free, persecution-free existence, because those who live godly will endure persecution, trial, and tribulation, even as Jesus Christ did in His life. He was absolutely perfect—He never sinned, He never made a mistake—and yet, look at the grief that Jesus Christ endured in His lifetime on this earth. So the point of living abundantly, and having those things that are most important and rewarding, is not that you have a rocking-chair existence on your front porch—in which everything goes smoothly, with no problems. Because, in fact, as we have understood, God uses trial and difficulty as a way to actually purge us, to strengthen us and to develop elements of character that would not be generated without opposition and without challenges. So if our standard for the definition of abundance is problem-free living, then we are going to be sorely disappointed. If,

however, we come to recognize and value what God is doing in our lives—what it is all about—then we can have absolute abundance.

So we began to look yesterday at the first, most important—I would say, critical—element of that abundant living, which of course is the Law of God. You can summarize it in the Ten Commandments, the statutes and the judgements of God—but it is the rule book that God created. Remember, He is the Creator; He's the one that brought it all into being in heaven and earth. And so, He said, "I made all of this stuff, and I am the one who wrote the owner's manual." And so, He revealed to us in the Holy Scripture the owner's manual of how human beings can actually have a good life. And so, the Commandments, as we read yesterday, are not grievous, as most human beings view them—hard, demanding, difficult things where God is just making us jump through all of these hoops just to see if we will. We have come to understand that His Law is a blessing. Because when you follow the rules, God says things work out well, and when you ignore the rules and you defy those Laws, He built it into the system that things will break and result in misery, anguish, dissatisfaction and ultimately death for human beings. And He does not want us to experience that. So He revealed the rule book and He said, "Do it this way and you will be happy, you will be rewarded, you will have abundant lives."

And so we focused yesterday on the fact that the rule book, the Law, the statutes and judgements—His Commandments—are *the* foundational piece in having abundant life. Now, today and in my remaining sermons throughout the rest of this Feast, I am going to be giving you other, major, important pieces in this equation, now, for having abundant life. But I guarantee you that even if you do all of the others, if you miss the first one, which is respect for and pursuit of the Law of God, none of the rest of them are going to work. You must have that piece first, which is why I covered it initially.

But even for those who know that Way of Life, who understand the significance of the Law of God, who believe that those Laws have not been done away—as most religionists in this world today believe, who claim to be Christian and yet they don't keep the Sabbath and they are certainly not keeping the Holy Days as we are assembled here to do. They believe Christ did it all. Because He did it perfectly, they say, we don't have to. And, of course we don't believe those things. So we have a respect for the Law and we know that Jesus Christ said, "If

you love me, keep my Commandments." He didn't say, "I lived it perfectly so that you don't have to." No, He said, "If you love me, keep my Commandments." So it is a sign of respect for Him, and it is a Law which will bring us blessing and good things when we do it. But even among all of those who accept these principles, who believe them, who know that they are true, why do we still, in many cases, not have real satisfaction and fulfillment within the body of the church of God? Why do we still have—to a great degree—a sense of displacement, a sense of hunger for something that is missing? Why is abundant life eluding us in many cases? Why do some who even accept the faith once delivered still suffer a lack of truly abundant life?

Specifically, this morning, I want to address the issue of "State of Mind." Why is it that God's people—even like people in the world—can still be, and sometimes, in many cases, are, still plagued by difficulties of mind in the form of fear, internal turmoil, anger, depression and guilt? All of those things that I just listed—and a number of others which I could list—are all factors of the mind. And, yet, based upon that state of mind, brethren, we either will or will not have abundant life.

Now, I think it is a pretty common principle, and most people accept that the mind has a great effect upon the body. You've heard that, haven't you? You have probably found in your own life that that is true. You can have a perfectly healthy physical body—just from the physical mechanics of your health—and, yet, you can still be plagued with ill health if your state of mind is deficient in some way. Is that not true? And usually it is manifested more over a long period of time. But the state of our minds has a significant effect upon our physical health.

Let me give you one clinical, worldly definition. This is taken from the Michigan University health system—the definition of "psychosomatic illness":

A disorder that involves both mind and body is called a psychosomatic illness. In other words, the illness may be emotional or mental in origin but have physical symptoms. Psychosomatic illnesses are not imaginary . . .

I think that is a common concept we have: "Well, it's all in your head. You are not really sick, it's just all in your mind." But this is really true:

Psychosomatic illnesses are not imaginary. They are physical disorders in which both emotions and thought patterns are believed to play a central role, and usually develop when a person's disease-fighting ability is weakened due to stress. After a particularly stressful event, like the loss of a loved one, for example, an individual might develop high blood pressure shortly thereafter or even have a heart attack. In another person, the same situation might lead to a peptic ulcer or even a series of asthma attacks. A third individual, equally as grief-stricken, might not get sick at all. For a psychosomatic illness to occur, a person must first be vulnerable in a particular body system.

So there is a worldly, medical definition of "psychosomatic illness," and I picked it because in this particular case they got it right. The mind does have a significant effect upon the body. And so you can do all of these other things that are good for healthful living, but if you don't have a solid, healthy state of mind, you will suffer. You will suffer not only with a lack of peace, disorientation—a fretful, unsatisfied, anguished existence—but you will ultimately, sooner or later, be affected according to whatever those particular vulnerabilities are within your physical constitution. Now, am I just making that up, or can I support that from the Bible? Well, let me just read very quickly through a number of statements that God recorded in His Word that support this very principle—and you may not have thought of them in this way at all.

Let's start in Proverbs 11 and verse 17. Many of these come from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is the book in which a lot of these jewels of reality in the human existence on this earth are expounded. Proverbs 11:17: "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul." So, here is a statement that says individuals with an orientation of mercy—not hardness, not condemnation of other people, but one who is already, let us say, programmed that way—is going to be blessed. And I'm not even saying they are necessarily naturally programmed that way, because, remember, mercy is a fruit of God's Holy Spirit. So who are the individuals that truly have the opportunity to manifest godly mercy? The ones who are motivated and guided by the Holy Spirit.

"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul"—it's like a tonic; it's like an herbal remedy to one who has the right orientation, including this principle of

executing mercy in how one deals with other human beings. "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul." But, by contrast, "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

Now, cruelty, or, by contrast, mercy, are concepts of the mind. I'm not talking about the action of doing something cruel or doing something merciful, but it all starts in the mind, doesn't it? A cruel act doesn't manifest itself unless it is conceived in the mind, and a merciful act likewise. So we are talking about a state of mind which produces the fruit of mercy or, by contrast, cruelty. And God says, "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh"—if that is your orientation of mind, if that is the default habit that you latch on to (which is a selfish orientation, as Mr. Armstrong said, "the way of give vs. get"). It's all a part of that concept. And if yours is a habit of selfishness at the expense of others—mistreatment, uncaring about how what you say and do affects others—God calls that cruelty, and He says, "He that is cruel troubles his own flesh." And, yes, a part of that, I understand, is the fact that what goes around comes around. So if you mistreat others, guess what? Sooner or later, you are going to get that kind of treatment in return. But, more importantly, in the context of our discussion today, brethren, that orientation of hardness of the mind is actually like a poison in your body. And if that is your mental makeup, and what you manifest day after day, month after month and year after year, it is like leaching poisonous material into your body which is going to take its toll—and I don't care how well you eat, I don't care how much you exercise, you can take all of the herbal supplements you want, but if you are poisoning yourself with the effect of your negative mind on that body, you are still undoing yourself.

Proverbs 15 and verse 15. Proverbs 15:15: "All the days of the afflicted are evil." And is this really talking about one who is afflicted—meaning the world is against him and he has just had a bad run of luck and that is why all of these bad things keep happening to him? No, it is really talking about the individual who is always the victim. Have you known individuals like that? No matter what, there is always some complaint. There is some problem, day by day: "Woe is me. People are mistreating me. Everyone is against me. I can't get a break because if it's not one thing, it's another." There is always a complaint. There is always an excuse for why they can't be happy, why they can't be successful, why they can't be fulfilled. There is always a complaint. It's like someone who has this rain cloud that just follows them over their head. And you say, "Have a nice day"—the

example that I love to use—and you say, "Isn't it a glorious day today?" And they will say, "Well, it is today, but it's supposed to rain tomorrow." They are going to be negative. They will find a negative complaint no matter what you say or do.

"All the days of the afflicted are evil." It's a state of mind. "But he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." He that is of a merry heart. Now, who can have a merry heart? Someone for whom everything goes right? "This is a good day because so many nice things have happened to me. Oh, I'm so happy. The world has allowed me to be happy today." Is that what we are talking about? No. Someone who is of a merry heart "carries their sunshine with them." That's a saying I learned from my mother as a child, and I always love to remember it. She said, "You have to learn to carry your sunshine with you." It doesn't matter what the weather is, and it doesn't matter how you are treated by other individuals, you are not going to allow negative outside influences to rob you of your contentment and your satisfaction. You will carry your sunshine with you. And that is just based on a spiritual principle. That is why it has value. And here it is documented by God:

"He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast." Now, that is a lot different than the individual who is sometimes happy and sometimes not, depending on outside forces, isn't it? Wouldn't you like to have a continual feast—a continual, blessed experience, day by day? Well, what is your orientation of mind? Are you positive, or are you negative? That is what God is talking about here.

Verse 16, "Better is little with the fear of the [Eternal] than great treasure and trouble therewith." You know, somebody who is negative in orientation, you can pile all kinds of physical things upon them—money, riches, or whatever—and they are still going to find a reason to complain. But an individual who has a merry heart—an orientation and habit of looking for the silver lining—it doesn't matter if they have a lot of wealth in this world or whether they have very little, they are going to be joyous and they are going to find a reason to be thankful. That is the difference. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Proverbs 14 and verse 30. Proverbs 14:30: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh." Now, is this talking about having a strong physical heart that is in good condition—that pumps x volume of blood per minute through strong arteries? No.

We are not talking about a physical attribute—the physiology of your body. The heart here is a manifestation—and God uses it very often in His Scripture—of your orientation of mind. Mr. Raymond Cole made a number of comments on this principle over the years. The mind is the center of all that happens to direct the functions of the body, and so, when you are talking about the heart, you are talking about the orientation of mind. Usually, direct comments in the Bible about the mind refer to the intellect—the decision-making process—but the heart embodies the concept of the value of your thinking, the orientation that you have, the filters that you use which reflect your thinking and your appraisal of circumstances in the world around you. And so your orientation—reflected in the heart—is what God is speaking of when He says, "a sound heart"—meaning a healthy orientation toward life, toward yourself and others, and especially your relationship with God. "A sound heart *IS* the life of the flesh."

Do you want to be healthy in your body? Well, in addition to obeying the physical laws—which are absolutely incumbent—take care of your orientation of mind. But, by contrast, "envy [is] the rottenness of the bones." That is the physical manifestation of people who allow themselves to be eaten up, day after day, by dissatisfaction with their own circumstances, by envy of that which others possess. They walk around continually dissatisfied—wishing they were someone else, that they had the things others have. It's a manifestation of lust, which is a poison to any human being. And so God says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones." It will affect your body in time if you don't root out that negative orientation.

Proverbs 16 and verse 24. Proverbs 16:24: "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Now, is that speaking only about receiving pleasant words from someone else? "If someone else is nice to me and says something complimentary, ahhh, that makes me feel good, and now I can be happy and be at peace." Is that what we are talking about? Far less than the reverse—being an individual who serves others by complimenting them, by looking for opportunities to inspire and to uplift others. This is talking about your pleasant words offered to others who are in need of that support. And when you do it—when you spend your time in being thoughtful and considerate, and serving in a positive way, you are not only helping the individual who is the object of your comments, you are helping yourself. It really is a win-win. You cannot go wrong by just taking the extra time to be thoughtful and caring about the state of mind—the condition—of someone else who is in need, and just to be uplifting, to

be inspiring. You will help yourself. That's what it is saying here, "Pleasant words [even to you, brethren, not just to their recipient] are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

Skip down to verse 32. Another concept: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." We have great respect for those who manifest control of their minds. Ones who do not fly off the handle at any provocation—great or small—but, as God says, they rule their spirits; they maintain a proper, healthy orientation of mind and do not allow themselves to get emotionally overwhelmed and to explode like a volcano all over people around them. Yes, when we allow that to happen, we certainly hurt others, but we hurt ourselves even more. Anger is a natural, carnal manifestation and we all have it; we all have that down deep inside as part of the rebellious nature that God gave us and told us to learn to overcome it, to learn to throttle it, to use the power of God's Holy Spirit to keep it under control. Why? Because if you give vent to your anger on a regular basis, again, you are releasing poisons of the mind which are going to affect your body. Not only are you robbing yourself of peace of mind, contentment, and the abundant life that God wants you to have, but you are actually destroying yourself physically. And so, if you live a lifestyle of habitual anger and resentment, you are just pumping all kinds of poison into your system, and you will pay the price for it. God made this physical universe and our bodies to manifest those blessings or those curses, depending upon whether we abide by these principles or whether we ignore them.

Control of emotions, therefore, is critical to good health—to having that abundant life. Acts 24 and verse 16. Acts 24:16: "And herein do I exercise myself [Paul says], to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Now, we understand the state of offense, do we not? Have you ever been offended? It's very easy for us as human beings to become offended oftentimes, because, guess what? With people and circumstances around us, things don't always go right. In fact, sometimes they don't ever seem to go right. And so we are confronted with challenges—negative circumstances—but how do we respond to them? Do we respond so that we create a state of offense in our own minds? Do we get upset and allow them to rob us of our peace of mind and that sunshine, or do we handle them and take it in stride? Do we look for the silver lining? "Herein do I exercise myself, to have *always* . . ." So we are talking about a consistent practice—an orientation, a daily habit—"to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, AND toward men."

Now this concept of offense toward God, that, believe it or not, I'm covering in this long series I'm doing back home on the "Survey of the Book of Job." Because, as human beings, we don't like to believe that we are ever offended at God, but the reality is, if you look down deep into yourself (and I do so in myself), you will find that there are manifestations of offense toward God. Because when things do not go right for us, and when we think that something is not fair, when we ask God to answer a prayer and solve a problem for us, and we don't get an immediate answer, what is our natural carnal reaction? It is to question the love and the compassion of God. Now, we may not verbalize that because we know that is wrong. God is perfect; He is never wrong; He is always full of love, compassion, mercy, longsuffering, and patience. We know that with the mind—the intellect—but down deep inside, when we don't get what we think we need and what we think we deserve, we really do grumble at God. We cease to believe—down deep in the subconsciousness—that He is being fair to us. Don't we? If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit: "Yes." You see, because that is what Job did: Under the weight and pressure of his severe trial, he still believed God exists; he still knew that God is all-powerful—that God can do whatever He wants, He controls everything. So Job always maintained a healthy respect for God, but under the weight of his great trial, he began to doubt that God was being fair. So really, you see, Job created and manifested in his mind an offense toward God—he became offended; he began to question whether God was doing the right thing by not intervening and solving these serious problems in his life. That's an offense toward God.

But Paul here says, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence," not only toward God, but also toward men. Brethren, do we wear our hearts on our sleeves—are we easily offended? Another label we put on that is being "thin-skinned." Do you have thin skin? Do you wear your heart on your sleeve? If you walk around and any little provocation—somebody says something just the wrong way or even looks at you wrong—you think, "Well, what did he mean by that? That was rude." Do you have those feelings? Don't they rise up naturally? Those feelings will be right there in the front of your mind before you even know it. Why? Because it is generated by what you and I are by nature down deep. So you are going to have them. It is going to happen because you are human. But do you give vent to those things when they come into your thinking? Do you nurture those feelings of offense, not only toward God but toward those around you? Do you harp on it? Do you grind away in your mind and you think, "Boy, I wish I had said this," and you play it over and over in your

head, and the more you do it, the bigger it gets. Now, that is an example, brethren, of offense. And guess what? Again, allowing that kind of turmoil in your mind is like a poison. It's immediately robbing you of your peace of mind and sense of well-being. And, not only that, you are going to destroy your health in time. If you are going to ride that emotional roller coaster day in and day out—*up and down and up and down*—and you are just going to be slung around by every whim of weather, based upon the people you run into and the things that happen to you, and you cannot control those emotions, you are not going to have abundant life. You are not going to feel blessed. You are not going to feel at peace.

If you are led by the Holy Spirit and you are really using the Holy Spirit as a powerful force in your life, you have the means to control those natural responses, and you are not going to let them get hold of you and drive you. You are not going to allow negative circumstances to control you and rob you of your peace of mind. When you initially feel it, you are going to recognize it for what it is and you are going to say, "Stop right there; you are not going to get into that; I am not going to allow it." And you are going to draw on that source of God's Spirit and say, "Cut that out." Mr. Raymond Cole used to say, "You have to grab yourself by the nape of the neck and say, 'Bud, I'm not going to let you do that.'" And if you do use that Spirit, you see, you are going to preserve a healthy state of mind, and you are going to avoid falling into these traps and these curses.

So that is just a very quick overview of a few scriptures that support this concept that your state of mind has everything to do with your overall health and vitality—not only mentally and spiritually, but physically as well. The mind does affect the body, and if you ignore those principles you will pay the price and so will I.

So, next, is your happiness dependent upon others doing what is right? Is it? I remember a minister I used to know years ago who actually used to say this, and I don't think he understood when he said it publicly that he was actually manifesting a wrong orientation, because he repeated this a number of times over the years from the pulpit: When people would say to him, "Have a nice day," his response was, "Well, I will if people will let me." And he seemed to think that was okay. It was okay with him, I guess. But I always felt a little uncomfortable about that and it came back to me in the context of putting together this series of messages.

Do you really allow others to control your state of mind? If other people are nice to you, you have a good day, but if other people are not nice to you, you have a bad day? Are you *REALLY* totally at the whim of what other people do? It's an easy thing for us all to fall into. And very often we can decide that "my life would be so much better, I would be more content, and fulfilled, and satisfied, if someone else would just either do what they are supposed to do or stop doing what harms me." We basically make ourselves victims. We put our happiness in the hands of other individuals whom we cannot control, and we say, "Oh, I want to be happy; oh, how I wish I could be happy and fulfilled. If only so-and-so would do what they are supposed to and stop being mean to me—or be more considerate of me—*THEN* I could be happy and fulfilled." If you ever have those feelings, brethren, I can guarantee you have it backwards.

And I am not diminishing the weight of the difficulty and trial that I know some of you are under. If you have particular, personal, family relationships that are very difficult and there are things you can't solve, and so you are subjected to a negative circumstance on a regular basis, I understand, that is not easy. And I am not saying that you should be able to wave a magic wand, or whatever, and make it all go away. But the spiritual principle—no matter what those negative influences may be that you are dealing with—is that you have the capacity (not of yourself, but with the power of God's Holy Spirit) to respond in a way, in your mind, so that you do not allow that circumstance to become a poison and allow it to bring you down. You are going to say, "I don't care how much I am subjected to this continual difficulty from outside, I am not going to allow it to rob me of my peace of mind or my positive orientation. I am going to make lemonade out of lemons." Now, the individual who does that, you see, is going to preserve health of mind and body, and can still have abundant life even in the midst of trial, persecution and difficulty.

We began to see, when I read to you during the opening service about the principle that even during persecution and trial, you can feel fulfilled a hundredfold; even through whatever loss or difficulty you have experienced, the weight that you are under in the world right now, you can still have joy and satisfaction a hundredfold more today. Not just looking forward to the future when we know everything is going to be perfect—at the return of Jesus Christ—but even today, in this world, you can have that fulfillment of mind. Now, I know to some of you—maybe even all of you—that seems impossible. But it's not impossible when you are dealing with God and His Holy Spirit—that is the

key. Is it impossible for you and me by ourselves? You bet it is. There's no way. And I am very dubious about some of these principles that come out and all of these books that are written on "positive mental attitude"—PMA. And it is all about this "happy talk" stuff. And I really don't want this to be interpreted that way, because this isn't just a fluff-fluff thing. I am talking about those principles which are rooted in the very Word of God—that which God gave us—in which He said, "Yes, you can control it with the power of God's Spirit. You can orient and control your mind so that you don't give yourself over to the whim of these outside forces and let them manipulate you and drag you around by the nose." It doesn't have to be that way. And so, when we feel dragged around by the nose—and we have emotions of resentment, and offense that we do not seem to be able to stop—at least recognize it for what it is. It is not an unavoidable thing. It is something that, with a change in orientation of mind, you can correct. And you can neutralize those things. It's going to be a tough battle to break the habits, because offense of mind, a negative orientation, easily becomes a habit to us and we do it automatically—that's the way we respond. Bad habits are hard to break, but they can be broken when you have enough of the right tools.

Is your happiness dependent upon others doing what is right? Do you allow animosity toward others to bring you down? Proverbs 18 and verse 8. Proverbs 18:8 says, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Again, I want you to look at that both ways. Typically, we look at that only—and we quote it—in the context of "don't talk about others. Don't say things that are unkind to an individual, or about an individual, to a third party because it has a devastating effect on the individual." And so we always interpret it from the standpoint of "don't be the talebearer. Don't be the one who says unkind things about someone else because you do incredible damage to someone." But the principle works in reverse. What about when it is you who is the victim of somebody who says something unkind, who does something unkind? How does it make you feel, naturally? It hurts, doesn't it? Can you identify with this? Can you think of a case where you experienced this? "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Have you ever heard something that was said about you and it just got you right down in your guts? Do you know what that feeling is like? It just makes you feel miserable; and you feel ashamed; and then you feel angry; and you feel offended. It hurts. But again, can you control what other people do and say? No way. Are you going to allow your happiness and your state of mind to be affected by whether or not other people do what is right? You don't have to allow something negative that is said or done toward you to affect you this way in your belly.

The natural response of the human being—because we are selfish creatures—is to internalize all of this hate and animosity and offense. That's the way it affects us by nature. But, do you know what? Given that you have access to God's help and power, you can control that response. And when you learn to practice it, and exercise it like a muscle, and you use it more and more all the time, you don't have to let these things rob you of your mental happiness and peace, and you certainly don't have to allow it to affect your physical health. By nature that is what will happen to you, but you can control that through the power of God's Holy Spirit and say, "No, I am not going to allow something negative that somebody did to me, rob me of my happiness and my peace." That's what they call allowing something to go right over you, like water off a duck's back. Don't let it sink in; don't let it take root and become a poison in you; recognize the capacity to avoid allowing those negative darts—those fiery darts—to actually burn you inside. You are going to deflect them; you are going to say, "No big deal."

Now, from the spiritual standpoint, this should be something we all strive to achieve. Why? As Christians we are supposed to think, and act, and behave as Christ did, right? Well, how did Jesus Christ behave and act? Did He allow negative things that were said and done to Him to rob Him of His peace of mind? If He did, then He couldn't have been our savior, because He would not have been perfect. He was not wholly at peace in mind because everything went right for Him. I think you understand the story of the things Jesus Christ endured in His flesh body, don't you? He never did anything wrong. Everything He said, everything He did, everything He thought, was absolutely perfect—in the way that He dealt with people in His environment—but that didn't stop other people from doing all kinds of abominable things to Him, and ultimately they tortured Him and they killed Him. And, yet, do you remember what He said on the stake—while He was hanging there in excruciating pain with nails in His hands and His feet? He was hanging there with the weight of His body struggling against the gravity that was sucking the air out of His lungs for an agonizing six-hour period of time—as He was being reviled and accused and maligned by those on the ground who were wagging their heads at Him. And what did He do? He prayed to His Father and He said, "Father, don't hold this against them. They don't know what they are doing." You see, His response was not the automatic, natural human response which is absolutely caught up in self-pity, in which we allow circumstances to create a state of internal turmoil. He was able to deflect all of those natural, human, carnal responses, and instead to behave as the Servant who was more concerned about the accuser and his ultimate end than how it was affecting Him

personally. Is that not the ultimate manifestation of a servant—one who is focused on outgoing concern for others rather than the self? So when people say negative things about us, as Christians—true Christians—we should be able to deflect those things. Why? Because we are not here to justify or to build up the self. Isn't that what we were supposed to have crucified at baptism? Remember, we went under the water, which is a symbol of killing the old self, and when we come up, and with the laying on of hands receive the Holy Spirit, we allow God and that Spirit to begin to motivate us and give us the orientation of mind that we are going to use going forward. So the old self—the carnal self—which is selfish and rebellious is supposed to be dead. Now, physically, it is not dead because we didn't really die; we didn't really drown under the water. We only went under for a moment and we came back up, and we are still the carnal human beings that we were before; but now we are supposed to be thinking and orienting our minds differently so that we are no longer interested in getting for the self—taking care of the self, making our image among others positive. And our sense of well-being is not going to be mandated by whether or not other people think we are wonderful. Now, it is nice to have a good reputation, and positive fruits in our lives should generate a positive reputation—for the most part—in the minds of other human beings. But that is not always going to happen, or else Christ would have been accepted by everyone, and He wasn't.

So if your standard for self-fulfillment, happiness, and contentment is having everybody like you and no one ever saying anything bad about you, you are going to fail. It is not going to happen. Can you have abundant life in spite of even the idiocy of other human beings? You bet. If you are not trying to justify the self—if you really see yourself as a servant—it should be easy. And when it's not—and you and I rarely find it to be so—when we do feel those feelings of: "Oh, I can't believe he or she said that or did that. That was so rude and uncalled for," what we are really doing is saying, "Me, me, me, me, me was hurt. That was wrong. They need to apologize. I want my pound of flesh and that will make me feel better." That will make ME feel better. You see, that won't make Christ feel better. Who is it going to make feel better to get vengeance? It's going to make the SELF feel better. But isn't that the self that we were supposed to be killing? We're not supposed to be living after that carnal, natural orientation. We are supposed to bury that and be a totally selfless, supportive individual for the benefit of others. Now, we are a long way away from that, because Christ gave us the perfect example and as long as we live in these flesh bodies with these carnal minds, we are going to be fighting against those pulls. But when we recognize

what is at play in our heads, at least we understand the rules of the game and then we are in a position to recognize it and diagnose it when it happens and to start to make a change in that orientation. And that's what I hope you will get today.

Psalm 119 and verse 165. Psalm 119:165: "Great peace have they which love thy law." Great peace have they which love thy law—a confirmation of the message I gave you yesterday. The Law of God, His commandments, statutes and judgements, that is piece number one—that is the foundational principle for abundant life. If you miss that one, none of this other stuff is going to matter. "Great peace have they"—not those who just know the Law and can intellectually quote the commandments or the statutes, what is right and what is wrong. No, it is those who LOVE His Law—meaning they don't just understand it intellectually, they value and cherish it as a pearl of great price and are putting it into practice more and more in their lives. One of the byproducts in those who love His Law is peace of mind.

And what does it say next? "And nothing shall offend them." Nothing shall offend those who love God's Law—who *really* love it, who don't just say the words to convince other people that they love God's Law. The ones who really down deep inside have come to love, cherish and value God's Laws and principles for living, have great peace. This is a mathematical equation. It always works, however you want to rearrange it. Great peace have those who love God's Law. Loving God's Law equals peace of mind. Having peace of mind equals loving God's Law. You cannot separate them. They exist as equivalents. Now, when you and I feel offended, what does that mean? Plug it into the equation: A state of offense—a lack of peace of mind—equals what? A deficit of the love of God's Law. It has to be. Two plus two equals four. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." *NOTHING*. So when we feel offended, when we feel angry or upset, because of what someone else did, what does that mean? There is a lack—a deficit to some degree—of proper love for God's Law, or we would not feel offended. We wouldn't be robbed of our peace of mind if there was not something lacking in the degree to which we are focused upon the Law of God. Now, our natural response is, "Now, wait a minute. What about righteous indignation? Because there is a principle where God says, "Be angry and sin not." So it's not always wrong to be angry. There is such a thing as righteous indignation and there are examples where God is angry." But, you see, God never sins. God hates sin, but He never allows it to rob Him of His peace of mind. He doesn't give Himself over to emotions which are negative and

destructive. You can hate things that are wrong, but you don't have to allow that to become something that robs you of your settled orientation of mind and heart. That's the thing that we have to learn to do. If you do not have great peace, it is because there is a lack of the true love of God's Law. But I know, because I have talked to people, and there are certain individuals who are absolutely chewed-up with negative emotions and feelings. They claim to have a love, a great love, of God's Law, and yet, they are in absolute mental turmoil. And, God help me, when I've pointed it out and said, "You have a lack of peace of mind," I've gotten, "I DO NOT. I have PERFECT PEACE OF MIND." Okay [laughs]. There is the manifestation in the response I'm getting, and you call that positive? You are happy and fulfilled and the example for what I should be? Whew, if that's peace of mind, then I don't want it.

But I've seen the positive transition in individuals who used to be agitated regularly. I mean they were on that treadmill—always something, a roller coaster and drama every day, whatever it might be. And I have seen the transition happen when, because someone grows closer to God and practices those Laws better and better over time, they begin to focus less on self and turn around and begin to serve and focus on caring for others and being a positive influence with their responses. I've seen that transition take place in a number of individuals. And, you know what? There is a direct correlation, because their peace of mind starts to go up and up and up as they cease to focus on self. When focus on self, selfishness, goes down and someone starts to focus instead on God's Law—which is always an outgoing Law of service (love toward God, love toward man; that's what the Ten Commandments are all about)—you see an increase in the love of God's Law which is outgoing service to others. Selfishness goes down, outpouring consideration for others goes up, and peace of mind goes up exponentially. I've seen the manifestation of those individuals who used to allow anything to get to them: "I can't believe he or she said or did that. I am so angry." I've seen the transition when ultimately they say, "You know what? This negative situation happened, but I don't hold it against them because I know they are going through things. They are still growing and overcoming too, so I'm just trying to respond in a positive way and make sure I do what's right in the eyes of God."

You know what? I love to hear those kinds of responses and see that change in orientation when the individual really becomes concerned: "I'm involved in this negative situation and I need your advice." When people come to me as a minister and want counseling and it involves some negative thing that

happened with someone else, there are usually two orientations: It's either, "So-and-so did this and I think I was right in this"—as if they are looking for the minister to intercede and chastise someone else. And that is not going to happen. Or there is an orientation sometimes in which someone will come and say, "I was involved in this negative situation and I'm not sure what God wants me to do. I want to make sure my response is correct so that I don't make the problem worse and so that I can maybe even be part of the solution." And I think, "Yes. They get it. They get it." And the individual who can do that, you see, is not avoiding problems, because problems are going to occur whether you are looking for them or not. But how you respond and reply is going to have everything to do with whether you have peace of mind and a positive orientation at all times, or whether you allow some circumstance or individual to rob you of your sunshine.

Matthew 5, verse 44. Jesus Christ said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." And I'm all too afraid—and I've said this before, brethren—that we read that and say, "Yes, that was easy for Christ to do because He was perfect. But I know He doesn't really expect us to do that."

Love your enemies. If someone is taking a pot shot at me, smacking me in the face—either directly or verbally or psychologically—I'm supposed to feel good about that? I'm supposed to like this person while they are afflicting me? And our natural response is to think, "Well, God surely doesn't expect that from us." He doesn't expect it from the world because they don't have the power of God's Holy Spirit to help them do it. We are talking about a miracle—we are talking about a natural impossibility. But if you are a true Christian, if you are one who has been given access to His Holy Spirit, then yes, He does expect us to do it. He expects us to be successful in the principle of learning to love our enemies. How are you going to do it? It doesn't come naturally. You are going to have to follow Christ's example.

Like I have already given you, those who made themselves Christ's enemies were out to get Him—and did get Him physically (tortured and killed Him)—and, yet, all along, He was able to manifest love because He recognized that they too are part of God's plan. They too are going to have their opportunity—at some given date in the future—to receive the knowledge of the Truth and to become born Sons in the God Family. They are especially valuable in the plan of God.

Just because they are not called at this particular time doesn't make them less in any way. And just because we believe we are called doesn't make us better. We didn't earn that calling at all. God said He chose the weak and the base to confound the mighty. If you are a member of God's true Church, it's probably because you are nothing much to speak of by nature. It was a great blessing that you received that calling. But all of these others in the world—over six billion people—are going to have their chance. So they are doing bad things these days. They don't have the direction of God's Law. They are causing others around them to suffer and they are suffering themselves because they are breaking those principles. Jesus Christ was able to say, "Father don't condemn them. Don't hold it against them. They don't know." He took it on the chin and He still focused on the value of those enemies and the ultimate opportunity they were going to have in the plan of God. That's how you are going to do it. You are going to stop thinking physically about self, and you are going to start thinking about all of these individuals in the greater plan of God. And with that vision, and the power of the Spirit in your life, you are going to be able to respond and show love to your enemy even in the midst of attacks and persecution.

I'm not saying it is going to be easy, brethren. In fact, it is probably going to be the hardest thing you and I ever accomplish. But do not allow yourself to get into the orientation of mind that it's absolutely impossible and therefore God doesn't care about it. Yes, He does. He wants us to be fighting to achieve that level of positive orientation.

Do you go out of your way to look for sins and mistakes in others? Do you, by habit, have this "gotcha" orientation? "Aha, I caught you." Even if you don't say it, but in your mind you are chalking it up: "Aha, I saw him do this, or she said that. That was wrong." Are you looking for mistakes? Are you looking for chinks in the armor of other individuals? Do you assume the worst rather than giving the benefit of a doubt? That's another manifestation of selfishness vs. outgoing service.

Titus 1 and verse 15. Titus 1:15: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure." That's another cardinal spiritual principle about the way the human mind works. Those individuals who are positive, we call them Pollyannas. No matter how bad something is, they come along and say, "Yes, but it could be worse. We have to look on the bright side." And sometimes those people get really annoying, don't

they? You just want to smack them [laughs]. But stop and think about it. Somebody who has that kind of optimism—who is trained by habit to look for the silver lining in the cloud—how much happier and contented are they than those who are looking for an excuse to be sad and offended? "Unto the pure all things are pure." They are always going to find a way to see the best, and when something happens that is hard to interpret—I can't read your mind and you can't read mine—so sometimes when things are said, how often are there misunderstandings? Somebody says something and they really meant it to be positive, but it came out and had a totally different flavor to the person who received it. Are you the kind of person who is always going to interpret a nebulous thing as being negative? "What did you mean by that?" Or, if there is any doubt about the meaning, are you going to be the one who always assumes it is positive? "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure." If you have a negative orientation and you are looking to nitpick others and their mistakes, nothing anybody might do is going to make you happy, and you are going to find a way to criticize—we all can; we all do. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." If you have that habit, brethren, it means you already have some habitual poison in your mind which is actually clouding and polluting everything that enters in. When you wash something in dirty water, it comes out dirty, doesn't it? You have to clean up the bath water or else it doesn't do any good to wash. If you have a clean, healthy orientation, a good state of mind, you can process input—negative, positive, or neutral—and you can become the Pollyanna who is looking for the good and not the bad, and make that your new habit.

Next, do you allow fear to rule you and to rob you of abundant living? I think we need to focus on this concept of fear a lot more than we ever have in the past in God's church. Fear is a compelling trait we all deal with and it's important that we recognize it and have a plan to defeat it, because fear is deadly. Fear is absolutely deadly to God's people.

Let's notice some principles here. Luke 21 and verse 25. Luke 21:25: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." Here is a prophecy for the last days, just before the return of Jesus Christ, when everything is going to be in upheaval. Human beings are going to be in a state of anxiousness. They are going to be petrified because of events that God is going to bring about to get their attention.

". . . and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." That is not peace of mind; that is total mental agitation. And that is going to be the hallmark of human beings.

". . . the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." They are going to see the impending doom. They are going to see everything upside down. What do you think is going to happen when the sun and the moon and the stars begin to move out of their predictable patterns? Do you think that is not going to strike fear into the hearts of human beings who depend upon the orderly functioning of those astrobodies to make them comfortable about the preservation of life on this earth? And what is going to happen when all of that stuff starts moving around? You bet it is going to terrify humanity.

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Oh, He is going to have quite an entrance. Before He comes, human beings are going to be shaken to their very foundations.

Hebrews 13 and verse 5. Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conversation [more appropriately, "conduct"] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have." That means put aside jealousy, envy, lust, and all those things that are a violation of God's Law. ". . . for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I WILL NOT FEAR what man shall do unto me." What a concept that is: to have such faith and confidence in the plan of God and knowing who you are—one who has been called to understand His Truth. And because you are working, not perfectly, but you are demonstrating that you are growing; you are learning more, year by year, to do it Christ's way and to put on positive fruits. And because you are on that right path of overcoming and manifesting the mind of Jesus Christ, you have confidence that He is going to take care of you. God is going to be close at hand and He is going to protect you. I'm not saying He's going to keep you from every trial and difficulty and problem in life—and, in fact, you may be one He allows to be martyred. The Bible is full of examples of faithful servants that God allowed to be taken and to be killed—including His own Son. So again I say, abundant life is

not all about walking through a garden of roses, day in and day out, but it is being able to have a positive, settled, confident orientation of mind that you carry with you no matter what you may face in the world between now and the return of Christ.

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Do you have that kind of resolute, consistent confidence in God? Well, we have an opportunity every year to manifest it in small ways, even by coming to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And many of you had many challenges that threatened to keep you from being here—jobs, personal circumstances, whatever they may have been. Some of you had to overcome fear—loss of income, whatever. Some of you might have unknown circumstances waiting for you when you get home because you don't know how it is going to turn out. You are not there now, but by nature you wanted to stay and take care of those things—fight all of those battles, solve all of those problems. You walked away from them and you came here because you had an abiding belief that this was more important—putting God first, putting aside the cares and the problems and these other issues back home. You were going to step out in faith, you were going to do what God requires and you were not going to be afraid—well, you still might be worried because you are human. But you didn't allow fear—that natural feeling of anxiety—to keep you from doing what is right, and here you are. Well, guess what? Throughout your lives—day-in and day-out, year by year—you are going to have many of those kinds of threats and you are going to be faced with choices between obeying God, simply doing what He said to do, and doing what you think you need to do to take care of your stuff. And God says, "Don't live in fear." You step out and you say, "Yes, Lord," and put first things first, and He will help you take care of the rest. That's the way to have it all, and that's the way to have abundant life. "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." *There* is real confidence. *There* is security. *There* is faith.

Psalm 23. Psalm 23 and beginning in verse 1: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." An individual who has a respect for the Law of God and is walking in and practicing those ways has confidence and a settled, positive, healthy state of mind, and the pressures and difficulties and aggravations of life do not take it away. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." What is righteousness? It is not just knowing the Truth but

actually acting on the Truth. As Mr. Armstrong used to say, "Righteousness is not just knowing the difference between right and wrong, it is actually doing the right instead of the wrong." That's righteousness. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." So here is an individual who is actually practicing choosing right over wrong.

Verse 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." Now, wait a minute, here we have an individual who is practicing righteousness. He is obeying God. Well, then, according to the common idea, he should never have to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He should never be under attack. God should never allow him to be in a fearful situation, right? He should have perfect, abundant living—everything comes up roses, no problems, no difficulties—because he is doing everything God tells him to do. He's walking in the paths of righteousness, so it should just be a cakewalk, right? No. Where is the growth and development of character if there is nothing to hone those spiritual attributes in our minds through trial and difficulty? No, here is a righteous individual whom God allows to be confronted with life-threatening circumstances. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." This individual who is walking on that righteous path is confronted with scary stuff—really scary stuff. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, *I will fear no evil.*" Isn't that interesting? Things that absolutely frighten, confound, and leave other human beings shuddering in their boots, this individual can face without fear because he has the right set of priorities and orientation. He can deal with those kinds of circumstances without fear—without the natural human fear. Now, I don't even approach that, and I'll bet you don't either. But I am working on it because I know God wants me to have that confidence. He wants me to be able to do that. So the fact that I'm not there, the fact that I am a long way away from that, means that I have a lot of work to do. I have to hustle and I'll bet you do too. "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Do you really believe that God is there at hand? Is He a God near at hand and not a God afar off? Do we really have the confidence that if we are doing what we should be doing, He is going to intervene and give us what we need? Even if He allows us to face seriously threatening circumstances, we are going to hang in there; we are not going to doubt Him; we are not going to push the panic button. "Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Even with serious external forces that might cause you to be absolutely fearful, you have a strong, settled, comforting state of mind because of God's influence to help you. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." We maintain that calmness, that objective way of viewing those

circumstances at hand, and we are not going to allow them to paralyze us or cause us to panic and to run and flee.

Emotional control, brethren, is the result—a byproduct—of divine love. 1 John 4:8 says God is love—another mathematical equation. God equals love—real love, not human love, not the false concepts of love in the world that we see espoused in music, books, movies and all of these other things. We grow up being programmed with this concept of *love*—which is not love at all. God is love—God equals love; love equals God—real love.

1 John 4:18 says there is no fear in love. Isn't that interesting? Another mathematical equation—zero fear equals love; love equals zero fear. Therefore, if fear exists, what must be true? I know some of you hated algebra in school and are having bad memories already [laughs]. If fear is present—if fear does not equal zero—there is, therefore, a deficiency of love. The presence of fear equals the lack of true godly love. Think about that. And yet we say, "Oh, but we love God's Law." But do we experience fear—sometimes paralyzing fear—of circumstances we face, or things we are afraid we might face in the future? When we have that fear, recognize it for what it is, brethren. It's not a good thing and it manifests a lack—a deficiency—to some degree of the love of God and confidence in His promises to take care of us. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." They cannot exist in the same room, in other words. If you have enough of God's true love motivating and living within you through the power of Christ's mind in you, fear cannot be there at the same time. "Because fear hath torment." Are you tormented in mind? Are you caught up in worry and anxiety about the future? "I don't know how this circumstance is going to turn out and there are so many threats on the horizon. It looks like there is no way out. This is bad." We get caught up in torment. A tormented mind, brethren, is not living abundantly. It does not have peace of mind. "Fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Think about that.

Being consumed with fear will also keep you and me out of the Kingdom. Revelation 21 verse 8 says, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"—that's a whole laundry list of really bad behavior, isn't it? Manifestations of a gross violation of the Laws of God. ". . . the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars." But what was the number one item at the beginning of the list which is

so easy to overlook? "The fearful." Now, why is it so bad to be afraid? That certainly can't be as bad as being a whoremonger, can it? Well, I don't know; what does it say is going to happen to those who are on this laundry list? ". . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." What does that tell you, brethren? Being consumed with and controlled by fear has the same outcome in the plan of God as being a liar, a sorcerer, and idolater, or a whoremonger. So is fear any less of a problem for us? It doesn't look that way, because fear will keep you out of God's Kingdom. Think about that. It is serious. Fear is your enemy and fear is the antithesis of faith and love. If we have faith and confidence in God, a love for His Law and that Truth that was revealed to us, you see, we don't have room for fear because we trust God too much to give vent to it. A lack of faith will absolutely keep us out of the Kingdom, even as a lack of faith is what caused ancient Israel not to enter into the Promised Land—that first generation all died in the wilderness because they did not have faith. They were fearful. That was their mistake. They were afraid to just go in and do what God said to do. Those who do not trust in God will never have peace of mind, but they will be agitated and fearful, and it is a spiritual death sentence if you don't root it out.

Lastly, and I am running out of time, an individual with sound peace of mind will not be weighed down with feelings of guilt. Read on your own 1 John 1 verse 9 where it says, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." There are some who are eaten up by guilt because of their past mistakes, and even though they ask for God's forgiveness and put it under the shed blood of Jesus Christ, they continue to be saturated with feelings of guilt for stuff they did in the past—which is a lack of faith in the forgiveness of God through Christ's shed blood. You have to be willing to put that aside. God may continue to allow you to be under some physical curses for mistakes you have made—you may have to carry that with you all your life—but you should not carry feelings of guilt if you believe God really forgives sin. Be sincere in your repentance and then put it there—bury it. God has buried it. Don't let it continue to hound you like a weight. You have to put that guilt away, brethren; it will rob you of your peace.

There is no excuse, brethren, for us not to have abundant life, even today, in this evil world, under the difficulties we experience. Being free of hatred, offense, envy, fear and guilt is what God wants you to enjoy now. Your state of mind matters. It has everything to do with abundant living. May you all learn to achieve it.