

Intimacy with Christ (Part 1)

Coming to Know a Deep God

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 12-Oct-96; Tape #259

I feel certain that all of us with an adult mind carry with us a certain amount of apprehension concerning the fairly near future. Now given the conditions of today's times I wonder how much worse it can get. I know that you wonder the same things, and I think we fear that it is going to get much worse than it already is if it goes on for very much longer. Well I want you to know that John Ritenbaugh believes that it is going to get a great deal worse, even if it doesn't go on a great deal longer, if my understanding of some of the prophecies is correct. And it's my concern about these worsening conditions, because I am absolutely sure that as conditions worsen it's going to exert a greater and greater pressure on us to seek relief by abandoning the faith, because the pressures that are going to be exerted on us will be able to be relieved to some degree by abandoning the things that we believe. I know that from history. It hasn't reached the place yet where we are finding it impossible to work, because we have to accept the mark if we're going to keep on working. I think that will give you a pretty good illustration on why these things are going to exert pressure on our faith. That might be the ultimate, that either we accept the mark of the beast, or we don't work, and if we don't work, we don't eat, because that prophecy says that no man can buy or sell without the mark, and so up and till that time other things are going to apply pressure on us.

Now this sermon, I think I can safely say, as virtually all of my sermons, is aimed at preparing us for the Kingdom of God. But I think that this one can be especially considered as the conclusion to the series that I gave during the Feast of Tabernacles because it was prepared even before we went to the Feast, to be the conclusion of two of the sermons that I gave there. But those two sermons developed into four sermons while we were there. Nonetheless this sermon was prepared with those other sermons in mind. It doesn't contain a lot of details. Rather it's going to be dealing in generalities because it is each person's responsibility to work out his own salvation, and part of that is because every life has its own nuances. Thus the details of the things that I'm going to be speaking about in this sermon fall on each person to identify and to resolve.

Now I think that first of all that one of the major problems that we have in regard to overcoming is that we do not deeply consider ourselves as involved in a cause. Well the emphasis here is on "ourselves" and the word "cause." Overcoming, I am thinking of in terms that we generally link together. We might link together "growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" and "overcoming." They are linked together. In fact they might be considered separate parts of one process, or they might even be considered exactly the same thing, because to my thinking, if we are growing, it is because we are overcoming, and if we are overcoming, it is because we are growing. The two of them I think are inextricably linked. Now growing in height physically, growing in height and weight is natural, and it occurs as long as

we are doing even the bare essentials to sustain life. But growing spiritually and overcoming requires unnatural attention, discipline, and motivation, because a measure of spiritual faith is required, and that is not humanly natural. Thus spiritual growth is something that is caused to happen while the person is going against the grain of what it is natural for him to do. This is why overcoming is so difficult. Now for this very reason it is very helpful for producing the greatest amount of growth for us to see ourselves as part of a cause. For a group whose cause is preaching the gospel to the world, (now I'm using this for very obvious reasons) because the group that we separated from had this as its cause. Its reason for being was to preach the gospel to the world. I'm not against that. Please understand that. I'm not, shall I say, calling anybody into account for this, but I do want to point out something that I think that I have learned over the past several years, and that is that the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God going to the world, that there is a built-in measure of motivation, because these groups are almost constantly focusing on numbers, and numbers fascinate us. Numbers give strength to our reason for being see, as a part of that group, and so emphasis is put upon, "Well, we've increased in number of stations that we are now on, x number of people contacted, x number of people writing in, x number of people being baptized, letters received, or call-ins received." However, there is also a major stumbling block built right into that system, because it lures the unwary into believing that he himself is in right and good standing with God simply because he is a part of the group doing the preaching. Now what it does is that it subtly promotes a belief in "group salvation." Now I'm going to turn to three scriptures so that we will see that this concept of "group salvation" is wrong even though the whole church is going to be saved, changed at the same time. Now turn first with me to Romans the 14th chapter, verse 12.

Romans 14:12 - So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Do you see that? Hang onto that thought. Now 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 10.

II Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Brethren, that's taking place right now. Judgment is now upon the house of God.

V10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

Now you can see the conclusion has to be that even though all of the church is going to be saved, changed at one time, born into the Kingdom of God at one time, everybody's judgment is individual. Everybody isn't just lumped into a group and saved because they are a part of a group.

Okay, let's turn to one right at the end of the Book, in Revelation the 22nd chapter, and I think that three witnesses ought to be pretty strong.

Revelation 22:12 - And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man

according as his work shall be.

Not somebody else's, see. So we're part of the group that very successfully preached the Kingdom of God to the world, but each person's judgment is an individual matter. Now what this program tends to produce is a situation where the great bulk of the actual work of preaching the gospel is done by a relatively few, and the first thing you know, that program can be deeply mired, I think you'll recognize this term, -- the "pay and pray syndrome." That very likely is not producing any personal growth at all, or very little. What it is doing is helping somebody else to do the work. Now please don't think that I'm entirely against that, because a measure of that is necessary, and there is a measure of good in that. So, it's not entirely useless. But I also personally believe that this played a major role in why so many were so unprepared in what happened when the doctrines began changing, why so many of us may have lost our first love, turned Laodicean, and fell asleep. The work was being done, wasn't it? Yes, that part of the work was being done, but as I've been trying to get across here, there is more to the work of God than preaching the gospel. In one sense (I've made this statement before) -- that's the easy part. For each one of us personally, the hard part is overcoming. And so in that kind of a situation it is very easy to ignore our personal responsibility to God to grow and overcome, because we can always justify what we're doing by saying the work is being done; therefore I'm okay. See? So the gospel's being preached, so why worry. But, here's the real catcher. All of the evidence that it's being done is visible, and that's "living by sight." It's visible and contained in numbers, and we're to live by faith, not by numbers. If you're living by sight would you ever say that Gideon's three hundred would whip a great big army of many many tens of thousands? Of course not. It's only those who are living by faith who could see the reality of the possibility. If you're living by sight, the numbers were all stacked against David. If you're living by faith, David didn't have a shadow of doubt that God was going to back him up in whipping that big giant. Okay, this is what I'm getting at. To grow, to overcome forces a person to live by faith. We can't be living by numbers.

Now God's purpose is to reproduce Himself. It's to create His image in us, and that requires personal overcoming and personal faithfulness in the experiences of life. That's not something that someone can do for another. Mr. Armstrong couldn't do that. That's something that each one of us has to do for ourselves, and this is something that rests upon the quality of our own personal relationship with God. Now it's in this very area that it helps greatly to see ourselves as involved as part of a cause. Let me illustrate it this way. A marathoner is one who wants to run 26 miles in a race for fame and fortune. Well that's his cause, and the result of having that cause is that he prepares himself to achieve his cause through all of the practice that he goes through, enduring that in order to achieve it. But you see, he has a cause, and it provides the motivation to overcome the physical deficiencies in order to be prepared to finish the race. Now the word "cause," according to *Webster's New Dictionary* means "anything producing an effect or a result." Now let's begin to expand and build on that. It also means "any objective or movement that a person or group is interested in and supports, especially one involving social reform." That's a very interesting one, because that is exactly what we are involved in.

Now *Webster's Lexicon of The English Language* says this: "The side taken in a contest between

individuals or political or religious movements." Let me give you some synonyms. I mean [there are] scores of synonyms for this word, but I will use some that are, say, appropriate to this sermon. Synonyms for the word "cause": prime mover, instigator, producer, generator, trigger, justification, reason, initiator.

You see what a cause does, it motivates and gives a person resolve, just like the marathoner. It gives the person resolve to produce change, like social reform. So a person joins a movement. He joins a political party because that party's philosophy is going to produce the kind of social change that he feels is in agreement with his ideals. Now we have to have some of that same sense, and we also have to see that this cause is greater than ourselves. And if the cause is greater than ourselves, we will even go to the extent of sacrificing our lives for it. That's what patriots do in the midst of a war. They see the war as a cause for them to give their lives. They'll go to that extent, and so it motivates them to heroic deeds that will produce the victory that they feel is necessary in order for their country to succeed. Well, our country is the Kingdom of God, and God is involved, -- has involved us in a cause, and that cause is to reproduce Himself in us, and a great deal more besides. Now I also feel that it is in this area of whether we feel that we are involved in a cause that a person discovers whether his conversion is merely to words and feelings, or to the reality those words represent. That's one of the major factors that God is discovering in this trial that has hit the church, is where peoples' beliefs really stand. Unfortunately, from my own perspective, I think that He is finding that many people have only been converted to what I call "to words." It's nothing but intellectual agreement or conversion to technicalities; but they are not converted to conforming, not converted to a personality that is Jesus Christ whom we are going to marry; not converted to a way of life implying character, conduct, and preparation for the reality of Christ's return, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, participating in a government, fulfilling God's cause of bringing all of mankind into the image of God. That's God's cause. So He has enlisted us, called us into it to join in this cause with Him, so that when that time comes He has a group prepared to carry the cause on to the rest of humanity. I know that the first time that I saw *Les Miserables*, -- that song at the intermission brought tears to my eyes, -- "Won't You Join In Our Crusade?" I thought of it in terms of what I was involved in. Now we're involved in a cause that's going to bring about the greatest cultural change that has ever occurred on the face of this earth. We have to be trained in order to be prepared for the time that this thing is really put into gear, -- and we're part of an advanced party that is being prepared for that, so that when that time comes, we'll be ready. So our course, individually and personally, is to yield to God's creative power, personally and individually in growing and overcoming so that when that time comes we'll be ready.

As we begin another post-Feast of Tabernacle season, I want to add several simple suggestions to this to help us know that we're part of the most worthwhile cause that has ever hit the face of this earth, and suggestions that will also help us to gauge whether we have lost our first love, and also at the same time to hopefully reveal the depth of any latent Laodiceanism that's within us. Now the suggestions that I am going to give are simple, but carrying them out is probably going to be the hardest job any of us have ever faced in our life because they are extremely difficult. But if we don't make some effort, we may very well neglect. In fact I know, to some

degree, we are going to neglect this great salvation that has been offered to us. Now I don't know how familiar you are with the book of Hebrews, but this is one of the propositions that's behind the writing of this book, because those people to whom, at least it might appear, that the Apostle Paul wrote to, -- they were neglecting their salvation, and so it's one of the first things that is mentioned in this. He says in verse 1 of chapter 2:

Hebrews 2:1 - Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

Then from that point on he goes on to mention that we are the heirs of the world, -- heirs of the universe, with Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation. Do you know the word "sin" only appears three times in the book of Hebrews? Sin was not really the issue. The issue was neglect. There are only faint indications of persecution. That wasn't the issue. The issue was neglect. There are many references to faith, because it was in the use of their faith that led to the neglect. These people were walking by sight largely, and there was a reason for that. So my concern is that this world, simply because it's there, and simply because we have to live in it, simply because we have to earn our living in it, simply because we have to have our families in it, simply because we have to rear our children in it, -- it puts such pressure on us, that if we aren't careful, if we aren't resisting it, it's going to make us neglect our great salvation unless we're really living by faith, and that will empower us to resist it, by being aware of it.

Now turn with me to another very familiar scripture in Matthew the 6th chapter, in verse 33. We'll just touch briefly on this, and why this is so important.

Matthew 6:33 - But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

What things? The things for daily life -- food and clothing. He's talking about the necessities of life, and so He tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and let God add the things that we feel are so necessary for life, to us. Now this is a command. We ordinarily don't like to think of it in terms of a law, but this is a command, and therefore it's a law, -- that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God. To add emphasis to it, it appears in the Sermon on the Mount, which is where Jesus laid the groundwork for all the other teaching that would follow. And so here in the Sermon on the Mount we have in succinct form the most important principles of God's way of life for us here and now, things that we have to learn. It's not everything, but it certainly consists of those things of first rank, and of first rank is that we seek first the Kingdom of God. Now this is important. or I should say that its importance lies in giving guidance toward setting priorities and making choices in the use of time. I think foremost in the use of time, because life is time, and without this kind of guidance from our Savior and Lord and Master, it becomes very easy to neglect salvation, because it is a matter of faith. The world is a matter of sight. The world is a matter of sound. The world is a matter of touch and taste. Because of this the things

of faith are not often matters of immediate concern pressing us for action, because human nature which is with us all the time, is driven by sight.

Now one of my concerns, because I see it having impact on me, is that because we live in a world created by Satan, that it's very easy for us to be overwhelmed by busyness. He has made us feel a sense of urgency about accomplishing wrong things, so that we are virtually tyrannized into activity that has little or nothing to do with the Kingdom of God. Now this is not something theoretical. We are constantly hammered at it by your bank, by your employer, on radio, on television, in newspapers, magazines, the telephone, -- to keep ourselves busy entertaining ourselves; working in the garden, shopping for a car, shopping for clothing, shopping for furniture, running to the gym, -- and on and on it goes, -- and not one of these things is of and by itself sin. They may even be very good activities, but they have to be scrutinized by one living by faith as to their real value. Sometimes that might really be painful because it's going to involve some sacrificing of things that are awfully close to us personally.

Now how many of you have been sucked in by television into watching a soap opera day after day, because the producers and directors of those things are skilled at creating interest and always chopping off the story just about when it looked as though it was beginning to get awfully good. So they grab your interest for the next day, -- and then the next day, and the next, and the next day, and on and on. It doesn't have to be a soap opera. How about your favorite sitcom or adventure series, or a sporting event, and so forth? What we find, is that we find time for those things, see, and then complain [I'm great at this]...then complain or feel guilty because we let another higher priority slide by and passed over.

Now one man that I read of who happened to be a pastor in another organization said, "Nobody knows this, but I am running on fumes. I am lonely, hollow, shallow, and enslaved to a schedule." This part about being enslaved to a schedule, -- that's something that I can fall into very easily, so I can relate to that. But think about what he said in a wider sense, and that is, incessant activity produces things. It has fruit, and part of that is it leaves people strung out. It makes them impatient, especially if you are enslaved by a schedule. You're always impatient to get through this thing so that you can get onto the next thing. It's a situation that produces resentment at others who are hindering you from carrying out what you feel you need to do, -- and worse yet, empty. Now here is the trap, and that is, such a person involved in incessant activity may feel productive; indeed may even be productive, but what is the eternal value of what they are producing? "Vanity of vanities," Solomon said. "All is vanity." This is what the book of Ecclesiastes is about. It's about the use of time. It's about the importance of activities. And what conclusion does he reach at the end of the book? "Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the whole man." See, -- there is wisdom. Solomon didn't fill in all the details, but he gave us plenty to think about, -- about what should have priority in our life. He didn't fill in all the details for the same reason I can't fill in all the details, for God has given each person the responsibility of thinking this through, and each person has to make the decisions in working out his own salvation because everybody's life has its own nuances to it, and not enough could be written to cover every possible situation. So God leaves that to us, but He does give us the generalities. Well I'll tell you, I am finding that a person who is maybe

constantly producing because he's involved in incessant activities, -- that person may find that, depending on what he is involved in, he may not be producing much overcoming at all. I mean of things that are really important, that is those things that have to do with the Kingdom of God and his relationship with God. Because what it does, I am finding, is that that kind of a circumstance leaves the person with plenty of involvement with people, but I am also sure, with very little energy left for coming to know God, -- especially coming to know God deeply. Do you know why? Because there is very little time for intimacy with God. A lot of time with people, but then again maybe it's not the people who really matter. But there's plenty involvement with people.

Have you ever looked into something deeply? Let me change the word there. Have you ever looked into something deep? Let's begin there. I have two pictures in my office of deep things. One is on a calendar, a *National Geographic* calendar of a deep valley between two mountains in Scotland. The other is a picture taken by John Reid of the Grand Canyon. I can look at those two pictures and meditate on them, and honestly I can derive a great deal of pleasure from them for long periods of time. The one has endlessly interesting rock formations. Way off in the distance is a slice of the Colorado River snaking along about a mile below the rim. I can see trees that must be seventy, eighty, ninety feet tall, and yet against the canyon wall they look like they're miniatures. There's a deep sense of stillness there so that you feel, at least I feel, from looking at those pictures almost as if I am in a cathedral, and there's a sense of awe there of God's creative power and the beauty that there is. The other picture, the one of Scotland -- it's a montage of lush greens, all different shades of green. At the bottom of this valley there's a shepherd's home, or maybe a farmer's home, -- I'm not really sure. It is so small against those mountains that it appears like nothing but a speck as compared to the mountains that are towering over it. Now both of those pictures make me feel overwhelmingly small and insignificant, bound and enslaved by time, because I see timelessness there, and time is so important to me and I can be lost in a reverie thinking about what must have happened there eons ago, and who trod those places. What were they like? What kind of personalities did they have? What kind of character, what kind of minds, what did they think about as they experienced what I'm looking at. Those pictures make me think as though I am nothing more than a blink of an eye or a breath or a whisper into the teeth of a hurricane. Yet I know the God who created those things is aware of me personally and individually. I see in those pictures things that make me want to know Him and to be like Him, to be able to do things like He [does], to have the kind of mind that those pictures show me. When I look at them for a while, it always brings me back. Every time without fail, it brings me back to why I am here. Now the God who made what those pictures show, -- is He deep? What kind of a mind did it take to conceive of such beauty? What kind of a mind did it take to have the power to bring that kind of thing to pass? We can take a picture of it, -- but He made it! He thought it out, and when He made it I'm sure He was thinking about us coming along and having that as a witness of Him -- something to make us think, "Who made this? Why did He do it? Why am I here?"

Turn with me to 1st Corinthians 2, and verse 10. Paul says here:

I Corinthians 2:10 - But God has revealed them unto us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all

things, yes, the deep things of God.

Is God deep? God is deep, and that's what those pictures on my wall remind me of, -- of how deep He is. I can hardly go anywhere in my little office there without seeing those things.

Look again at Romans the 11th chapter and in verse 33.

Romans 11:33 - O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Now God is very deep, and we need go no farther than His awesome creation to illustrate the depth of His mind. David himself said that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God's mind in this area alone is so deep and expansive, that after 6,000 years of looking into the human body, men have barely begun to scratch the surface at how individually different we are, even though we appear to be the same. And everywhere man looks there are new avenues to open and to look into. Now I read St Corinthians 2:10 because God has given us the tool that we need and the invitation through His calling to plumb into His depth. But His primary concern in this Book is that we search into His mind in regard to moral, ethical and spiritual areas that pertain to the conduct of our lives in relationship to HIM first of all, and to man secondarily. The emphasis here is in regard to the word relationship.

Now just before Trumpets, Darryl gave a sermon that asked us, "Do we really believe what God says?" This was the sermon where he asked, "Is Christ Christian?" Then he proceeded to go to statements and acts that Jesus Christ made that seemed to rail against the common ideas of people, that He even would do such a thing, or think such a thing, -- like to make wine. Now when we extend that principle out, do we really agree with God? Do we believe what He says, or do we have reservations about what He says? Unfortunately the answer to this is [that] all of us have reservations. We draw lines, that we'll go this far and no further. This is where the overcoming begins to come in -- overcoming those barriers that keep us from using our faith in the way that we should. So it's obvious to me just from judging myself, that we don't believe a great deal of what God says with much depth because we seem unwilling to put our faith in action, and from what I've seen happening in the greater Church of God, I'm afraid that very many people have been converted only to words, and that they don't really believe the living truth behind those words. Now the words are important, but remember, words are just one step toward knowing God. They're part of the scaffolding that leads to Him. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the word of God. But really it's not until we come to the place where we really begin to know God that faith really becomes ~~active~~ active in a positive way in our life, because our faith then is not just what it says in a book. Our faith is in the personality. Our faith will then be in the living God! And those words are merely symbols of that God. I mean the things we see in print. This is why the relationship is so important, because salvation is in the personality. Salvation is not merely in words that are written in a book. Jesus Christ is our Savior, not the words that are written by ink in the book, and we have to be converted to the personality. He's the one we're going to marry. So it's essential that we get to know Him. We do that by living by faith. Living by faith. And that means walking as He walked, experiencing what He experienced.

In Psalm 36, and in verse 6.

Psalm 36:6 - Your righteousness is like the great mountains; your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, you preserve man and beast.

God's judgments are like a great deep. Let me begin asking a question here now. The Bible is part of the scaffolding that leads to God, and His judgments are written in this Book. Now all His judgments aren't here. Some of His judgments are on view in the creation. One of His judgments was to put the Grand Canyon in there. One of His judgments was to put those huge mountains there in Scotland that look so awesome. He decided to do that as part of His creative effort in beautifying the earth and giving man a pleasant place to live in, and something that might stir in man the desire to seek after Him to get to know the One who made all these things. But the judgments in regard to relationships are in the Book. They are part of the scaffolding. But here we have a testimony right from the Book that says that God's judgments are deep. In other words, we're not going to understand them by merely skimming across the surface of what He says. That's a start. Now please begin to tie this in with my concern about being so busy in this world, my concern about the use of time. Are we going to understand God's judgments to any depth if we don't have any time to spend time searching into His judgments? I know that you're beginning to see this intellectually, and like I said, these suggestions that I'm going to make are simple, but they are going to be among the most difficult challenges you and I have ever faced in our life. I mean actually making time to search out the deep things of God and really get to know Him, -- combining the study and the prayer with living by faith.

Let's go to Job the 12th chapter and in verse 22.

Job 12:22 - He discovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death.

Now here he's talking about God again and some of the things that He does, and if we're going to be like Him, we need to think about things the way He does. If we are coming to know Him, then we too will be able to discover deep things, -- things that are hidden, because we will begin to think like God.

Let's go to the book of Daniel the 2nd chapter and in verse 22. We've a witness from Daniel.

Daniel 2:22 - He reveals the deep and secret things: he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

Now here we have Daniel telling us that God is willing to reveal deep things. He wants us to know Him, and He's willing to reveal Himself to us. Even as God revealed to Daniel the deep things that were buried in Nebuchadnezzar's mind that Daniel had no possible way of even knowing, because Nebuchadnezzar couldn't even remember the dream, -- only that it terrified

him. Yet God pulled those deep things out of Nebuchadnezzar's mind, put them in Daniel's mind so that he could then tell Nebuchadnezzar not only what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed, but also what the interpretation was. So God's willing to reveal deep things. But is He going to reveal deep things to those who have no relationship with Him and aren't really looking for them? We'll continue to see as we go on.

Let's go back to the book of Job again. This time to Job the 11th chapter and verses 7 and 8. These verses reflect back upon the difficulty of finding out God.

Job 11:7-8 - Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?
8 It is as high as heaven; what can you do? Deeper than hell [or the pit, the grave]; what can you know?

Well that could be very discouraging if you didn't know other parts of the book, and that God has given us the tool that we need to establish a relationship with Him, -- the tool that we need to search out the deep things of God and His promise that He will reveal the deep things. You can see that God does not want to hide Himself from us at all. He wants His children to know Him. You see, there is our part that must be done.

Now in Psalm 111, and in verse 10 is one of these things that we must do. We won't dwell a great deal on this, but it's important.

Psalm 111:10 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding [that is knowing] have all they that do His commandments.

So this is an important key, and that is that He doesn't reveal them only because a person makes an effort to look into them, because brethren there have been people who have spent the major part of their life looking into the Bible, but didn't obey the things that were written in there, either because God never really gave them the tool that they needed, or called them and opened their mind to His purpose. So the combination of the lack of calling and the combination of them not being obedient to His word, -- they couldn't really find Him. So what we find here is that God doesn't reveal them only because a person makes the effort, but because the effort, combined with obedience to them will produce "knowing God," see. It comes in two parts. We'll call it the academic part; and there is the practical application part. We have to do both, and basically what we can understand from this is that God does not reward intellectual vanity. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, and then put to practice in their lives what they learn. We can add to this Acts 5:29 where it says He gives His spirit to them that obey Him, and it's by His spirit that these things are revealed. It is His spirit that guides us into all truth. Now we should be seeking to know Him so that our faith will be increased. We can make sort of a concluding statement there. Now it's not the end of the whole sermon, but it is a conclusion to that part. That's why we want to do this seeking after God so that we can know Him.

Now I once read a quote from a man by the name of Richard Foster. He was the author of a book called *The Celebration of Discipline*, and you might get out of the title what the main

purpose of this book was, -- and that is that people be able to make better use of their time. In his book he felt that making the best use of time had most to do with not scattering our searches all over the place. This man was not interested in searching out God. It was just a general principle that he was trying to teach, and that is we be much more specific in the spending of our time, to look deeply into things. It was his proposition that we were better off being an expert in one thing than we would to be a "jack of all trades and a master of none." He felt that it was best to become a master at one area than it was to just spread ourselves out with trivia all over the place; thus the title *The Celebration of Discipline*, because it takes discipline to do that kind of thing. Anyway, I think this quote is interesting because he says about our time right now, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is primarily a spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people or gifted people, but for deep people." Now I think it's interesting that he is saying you don't have to be intelligent in order to be deep. In other words, you don't have to have a super-duper IQ in order to be deep, but you do have to be dedicated to not allowing yourselves, your time, and your efforts to be scattered all over the place, learning a little bit about everything and not really being good at anything. So he felt in order to be deep there has to be focus toward one specific area. Now the hard part in this is that this takes time, and in this hurried and hassled age Satan has devised, we're moving through life more like a herd of elephants on a stampede than like a flock of sheep grazing contentedly on a pasture God has arranged for us.

Now one of the major problems here is television. To me television has been the great intellectual and maturing level instrument of our time. Shows on American television are almost uniformly scripted to an eighth grade or less level. I mean to get an eighth grade level show is aiming at where most peoples' minds have ceased developing. That's a shame! Eighth grade! They do that because they know that anything aimed higher than that is going to make their audience so narrow that it won't be profitable to put the show on. That's why virtually every program that is written at a higher level than that is on a public station that is supported by public donation, and if you're going to get anything that is aimed at a higher level it's probably going to be on those stations. Now eighth grade is neither mature or deep. That's elementary, but it shows the level of American education, the level of American intellect, or at least the level American intellect has been developed to. There is nothing on television, -- virtually nothing on television that does anymore than stimulate feelings. It doesn't challenge intellectual thinking. We have a book at home in our library called *Four Reasons for the Elimination of Television*, and it's one of the reasons, or at least in some of the illustrations that this man (who was in marketing by the way, and I think that's very interesting) was a man involved in marketing, [and was] writing why television ought to be eliminated. One of the reasons that he came up with, is that it is virtually impossible for television to depict love. Think about that for a while. What is on television? Virtually everything on television is action oriented, from the cartoons to sports. Even the shows are action oriented. They picture violence of some kind. The reason love cannot be displayed on television is because love is so full of nuances that it's impossible, because love involves a flowing of one mind to another that cannot be visually depicted. They can show sex; but that isn't love. They can show passion; but that isn't love. The man knew what he was talking about. He said on that basis it ought to be gotten rid of, because all it can

do is depict the lowest levels of human experience. Some of those things are exciting, -- but that's feelings. Now the kind of thinking that will move a person toward depth is hard work, and television discourages both thinking and hard work. It instead turns people into passive watchers. It virtually eliminates conversation even, because people who [I think Darryl used this in his message there at the Feast] watch television essentially watch it alone within a crowd. I'm not totally against television. I don't want you to think that, but I do want you to understand that this is an area that usually most of can find a great deal of time to be used doing something else.

Proverbs 2: 1-4 - My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; 2 So that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; 3 Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; 4 If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures.

Now a little bit later God identifies Himself by portraying wisdom, or personifying wisdom. It's really Himself. If you're going to incline your ear unto wisdom, if you're going to incline your ear unto God, [just another way of saying that], he says you have to seek after her like silver. Silver normally isn't just lying on top of the ground. You have to dig for it, and it's hard work. That's what he's telling us. You have to search for her like hid treasures. He means things that are hidden under the ground.

V5 - Then shall you understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God: 6 For the LORD gives wisdom, out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding. 7 He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is as buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8 He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints. 9 Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yes, every good path.

You see, it's hard work. So the things of God require digging similar to the finding of precious metals from the earth. And when we do digging like that, we're going to come up with something of great value. What it's going to be is a solid foundation for a relationship with God, because what we'll turn up with is the truth about the truth.

Now I'm going to stop here. I almost hate to stop because I don't know whether I have enough for a full sermon next week. If we do go on, we're going to pick up in 2nd Corinthians 11, and in 2nd Corinthians 6, and then on to Philippians 3 to an example of the Apostle Paul and what was the great cause in his life. I think that you will find this to be very very interesting, and really to me quite inspiring. So we'll stop there for today.