

What Is the Work of God Now? (Part 5)

First Things First

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When I left off, on the Day of Pentecost, I had just finished reading Herbert W. Armstrong's closing comments given in that sermon on June 24, 1978. In his sermon, he called upon us to get on our knees, to repent, to turn back to God — and with good reason. Here we are, twenty-one years later, and I see us as being *much* further down the road than then, and I do mean *down*. He said in 1978 that we needed a revival. We were like a train that had jumped the tracks. I think that we, as a body today, are in need of a revival—it is beyond question.

The main portion of that sermon (I gave on Pentecost) showed that all seven messages of Revelation 2 and 3 reveal a clear end-time connection. There are statements such as: "Behold! I come quickly," or "Hold fast till I come," showing that His return is imminent. The conclusion is inescapable — that all seven are going to be in existence at the end.

Equally important is that they also showed a similar consistency in that they all had exhortations like: "Hold fast till I come." "Hold fast what you have received," or "Remember therefore from whence you are fallen," or "Be faithful." Each one of these exhortations is pointed toward commanding those seven churches to be steadfast to, or to turn back to, something that they had received previously. Most specifically, we find in a couple places—in the Revelation 2 and 3 messages, and in other places in the writings of Paul, Jude, John and Peter—that they are to be steadfast and devoted to the doctrines "once delivered" to the saints *through* the apostles. With these two factors—the immanency and being told to hold fast—the conclusion is that all seven of those very different groups described there in Revelation 2 and 3 are part of the end-time church.

Considering [both] what is happening in the world and what is happening in terms of the state of the church, we are living those messages right now. The general solutions to our present dilemma are given in those messages. We have to devotedly go back to "the faith once delivered" *through* the apostle.

Revelation 2 and 3 both give us a sense of direction and urgency. Is there a connection between the preaching of the gospel and the feeding of the flock — even beyond the healing that is so badly needed within the church today? I believe very strongly that there is, and that it is very important in God's eyes. Neglecting the "feeding the flock" is [in turn] very badly damaging to preaching the gospel to the world.

I believe personally that Herbert Armstrong made very good use of the means of technology to carry out the preaching of the gospel to the world, but I also believe that there is a subtle downside connected to it. It was aided and abetted by a phenomenon that was taking place out in the world. It was occurring all around us (in the culture), and was also affecting us.

The gospel was spreading through the use of radio and television. But, even as the church was

growing in numbers and power to preach the gospel, we were becoming increasingly isolated as individuals —both within the larger and larger congregations, and society as well. Ever so subtly, in our own eyes, we became a cipher. Do you know what a cipher is? It's a zero. It's nothing. You know the cartoon character *Ziggy*? That's what Ziggy is. He's a *nothing*.

As far as we were concerned, we were nothing [in relation] to the overall success of what the church was doing as a body. I do not mean that we did not know what the church was doing. We knew it was preaching the gospel. We just didn't see ourselves as important to the preaching of the gospel. We thought that what we did had no impact—no affect on the effectiveness of what was being done. We came to see ourselves as increasingly meaningless, less needed, less essential to the reason that the work existed.

I remember reading an article, and I was thinking this morning as I was going over my notes that I'm almost positive that it was in "Newsweek" magazine, and I [believe] that I read it while we were here in Charlotte. It concerned this principle that I am talking about. This particular article had to do with teenagers in high school. The article pertained to their academic achievements as well as their social friendships. They reached some very interesting conclusions, after a very long and detailed study. I don't mean that "Newsweek" did the study. I mean that the people in the university did the study, and it was reported by "Newsweek" magazine.

One of the major conclusions, that they reached, was that students in small high schools knew more people, had deeper longer-lasting friendships, and did better academically than students in larger high schools. The larger a school became, the smaller the circle of friends became, and grades tended to generally decline. Now the natural question is: Why?

The conclusion, the researches felt was very clear, was that the students in the smaller schools perceived themselves as *more* responsible to a *wider* group of what they considered to be close friends. They also saw themselves as more obligated and answerable to the faculty and the entire school. The students in the larger schools simply saw their lives and saw themselves as less meaningful (less important to the whole); what he or she did, didn't matter.

The researchers (doing the study) also concluded that this phenomenon was not something that anybody planned to happen. Nobody went around saying, "*Well, the school's getting larger, so therefore I'm just going to turn in on myself*" Nobody planned it. It just happened. Nor did the kids in the smaller schools say, "*Boy, my school is smaller. I'm going to go out and get to know more people.*" No, they didn't think anything like that at all. They just did it.

What they found out was that the students in the larger schools compensated for this feeling of being overwhelmed by the sheer size of the numbers of children in the school. They compensated by concentrating on fewer people — the clique. The clique was the group that they felt accepted and comfortable in. [The clique made them] feel like they belonged and were meaningful.

A few months ago Evelyn and I saw the movie *Antz*. Maybe you saw the movie too. However, if you thought of it as just another children's movie, I'm here to tell you that you missed the point. It indeed was a simply story, but its theme was very serious. The theme demonstrated - in a simple "cartoonish" and somewhat humorous way ? the way people respond to the "lost in

the crowd" syndrome. *My life is meaningless*" syndrome.

Now the ant at the center of the story was going to break out of the crowd. He was going to explore the world. But in the movie, this hero ant *unwittingly* became swept up in, and [was] the focus of a rebellion, because a lot of other ants felt the same way.

Most people compensate in different ways in real life. "Unwitting" is the key word, because that's what these researchers found out. Nobody planned for this to happen. It just happened. It is a reality that we have to deal with. So "unwitting" for us is the key word, because unless a person is knowledgeably swimming upstream against the "spirit of the times," he is going to get swept away—just like the ant did in the story—by the forceful current of thinking and doing what the rest of the crowd is doing.

It's the spirit of this world that drives this, and Satan is the source. He is deceitfully working to blur our focus and our sense of direction, and he does not have to do it personally to each of us. He does it through creating a general direction of thinking and focus in the world. It's a focus that the Apostle John generalizes as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These three elements encompass the spirit of the times, and they are subtle, but nonetheless they are pervasive forces — spiritual forces—creating this direction for the Christian pilgrim in order to blur the distinction between choices. Let's understand what God shows our perspective should be. Turn to Ephesians 1: 15-23.

Ephesians 1:15-23 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

The subject of this paragraph begins with the Father. It shifts to the Son. But at the end, the church—its relationship to Christ and each other — becomes the focus. The major theme of the book of Ephesians is *unity*. It tells us why we are able to have it, and what we must do to maintain it.

We are described as "a body" by Paul. This is essential to unity. This is essential to preaching the gospel—not losing our focus. We have to have God's perspective of what we are. We are a body—meaning a living organism, meaning (by analogy) the human body.

Any organism, like the human body, is unified—each part cooperating for the good of the whole. I think it very interesting that Paul did not use a word like "team." The word "team" has some of the same associations as the word "body," but it isn't as accurate as "body." With "body," Paul not only gets across the concept of association, within an organism (in order to accomplish a common work), but also the sense of a much closer relationship and responsibility—in which each part responds to the will of the head.

Now, we are so close to Jesus Christ that Paul describes us as being "His fullness." That is, we fill Him out. We complete Him. Paul does this in order to touch on both the closeness of our association with Christ, and our responsibility to Him to do everything in our power to build the strength of both.

Let me put it another way: The church—WE—are Jesus Christ's compliment. I don't know whether you understand what that means. This is the highest honor a human being can be given! There is nothing greater than to say that we are a part—we fill out, we complete—the body of Jesus Christ. It's as though Jesus Christ our Creator considers Himself incomplete until we become part of Him. He is a Bridegroom, incomplete without His Bride. As a vine, He is incomplete without the branches. As a Shepherd, He is incomplete without His sheep. And so also is He incomplete as a body, without members, through whom He works and is glorified by (as they cooperate and yield to Him, the Head).

Now seen in this light, it is the body that carries out the will and the purpose of the Head. Jesus did not use this specific body analogy, but He came awfully close. He did teach the same principle using a different analogy.

John 15:1-4 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch *in me* that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me [live in me, continue in me] and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me.

Do you see the responsibility there? It's a two-way street. He's responsible to us. We are responsible to Him. Our responsibility is to cooperate with what the Head wants to do, with the will of the Head. If we cooperate, then we produce fruit. If we don't cooperate, we don't produce fruit.

John 15:5-6 I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

In these analogies, there is both the close association and responsibility to pull our weight,

cooperating with His will. These analogies are teaching us the direction that we are to choose to set our will in, or toward.

There was a time in our lives that we went along willingly, ignorantly with the spirit of the times. We didn't know any better. But, no more. Now, because of our calling, we are expected to cooperate with Him.

In I Corinthians 12:12-17, Paul expanded on the body analogy in a little bit different context, but the essential elements of it are the same.

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one [is unified], and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

This analogy (the illustration that he gives here) is almost childishly simple. But there is powerful teaching here that we need to understand, because sometimes these things slip our minds in the press of everyday life. We have a responsibility to the whole.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.

Do we believe that? If we are baptized by the spirit of God, we are a part of that body and we are responsible to Christ within that body.

I Corinthians 12:13-15 Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many, If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Why of course it is. Just because that part of the body says, "*I'm not part of the body and have no responsibility toward it,*" that doesn't alter the fact that it IS a part of the body. What I'm getting at here (in this sermon) is that it seems to have slipped the minds of many, in the greater church, that they have a responsibility to the body.

I Corinthians 12:16-17 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

He's getting to the point here where he shows that every part of the body is needed. *EVERY* part is needed. Even the most insignificant person is needed.

I Corinthians 12:18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him.

We can surely understand that with the human body—every part was placed exactly where *God* wanted it to be. I think that if you look at your own body, you're going to say (as David did), "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made! And I'm sure glad that my hand is where it is, and that it doesn't stick out of my ear, or that I even have it. Or that my eye is not in my heel, or that my big toe isn't in the place of my nose, and that my liver isn't hanging outside my body somewhere like some kind of an appendage.*"

Do you get the point? God put every single one of us in the body with wisdom, with at least as much wisdom as our own human body (this organism). We can think of how wonderfully we're made. The church is put together just as wonderfully! Probably more so, because the stakes are so much greater.

I Corinthians 12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

The eye can't do what the ear does, and the ear can't do what the little toe does, and the little toe can't do what the vertebrae do, and the vertebrae can't do what the nose does. Do you get the point? You are important to the well being of the body—the church! The question is, "*Are you pulling your weight for the good of the body? Are you lollygagging around?*"

I Corinthians 12:25-26 That there should be no schism [no division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. [Do you hear that?] Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Let's think about this chapter in its larger context. It actually begins in chapter 10 as Paul begins to call attention to problems (divisions) that existed there in this Corinthian congregation. It goes right into chapter 11, where the Passover is discussed; and then into chapter 12, where it contains this simple but very good instruction regarding the human body. It then goes into chapter 13, which is the wonderful love chapter; and then chapter 14 is the epilogue.

Now taken as a whole, especially with the information that is given in chapter 13, these chapters together are showing that we (the individual members of the body of Christ) must *choose* to care for each other after the manner of love. They are showing that we have a responsibility, to the whole, to conduct our lives according to what is given in chapter 13.

Paul is saying that the purity, spiritual health, strength and the ability to produce, *by the entire body*—rises and falls with the purity, spiritual health, strength and the ability to produce *by the body's individual parts [members]*. When one suffers, the whole body suffers. The whole body is affected. When one part is strengthened, the whole body is strengthened. That shouldn't be hard to understand. We have to overcome the spirit of the times—the idea that we don't matter. Oh yes we do [matter]. God says we do, and I want to

believe Him.

I want to link three Scriptures together that are right within the three contexts that we just read: Ephesians 1, John 15, and I Corinthians 12. The first one we're going to look at is I Corinthians 12:7. The reason I want to do this is because we tend to dismiss ourselves as not being important to the whole by saying, *"Well, I don't have the power to overcome,"* or *"I can't do it."* I'm going to show you that God says if we say this [false concept], we are actually calling Him into question. Remember, He set us in the body as it pleased *Him*, and He isn't going to put anybody in the body in a place that they cannot handle.

I Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man*.

Every part of the body is given a gift or gifts, "to profit withal." It means, "*for the common good*"—meaning that it is good for the person that He gives the gift to, and it is also good for the entire church. God expects us to use the gift not only for our own good, but also for everybody else's—the whole body.

Just remember verse 18. "God has set in the body as it has pleased Him." We're going to go back to Ephesians 1 again, and we're going to look a little bit more closely at verse 18.

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. [That is, God has revealed. He has given us guidance. He has given us teaching. He has enlightened us. He's illuminated us. Why?] That we may *know* what is the hope of His calling.

Now why does God enlighten us about this? Does He not enlighten us so that we will turn our lives in the direction of that hope of achieving it? Of course. What is the hope of His calling? To attain to the resurrection of the dead — to be born into the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 1:18 And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Awesome! We're going to be somewhat like Jesus Christ is described in Revelation 1. And, in addition to this...

Ephesians 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to *us* who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.

God has given us revelation, and He has enlightened us that we may know the hope of His calling, and the glory that lies ahead. And then Paul immediately draws our attention to Christ's power.

Ephesians 1:20-21 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him

from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

And we are His body.

John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

Now Paul—in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 1, combined with what Christ teaches us here in John 15—is telling us that now, because we have received the spirit of God, because we are now part of the body of Jesus Christ, we can draw on the same awesome power that God used to raise Jesus Christ from the dead. Christ is there as the Head of the church to administer this spirit to you and me so that we can overcome and produce fruit. All we have to do brethren *RAW* upon it!

We have to come to understand what He expects of us, and then *will* ourselves to do it. And as we do it, He adds the power for it to be accomplished so that we can glorify Him, and so that we can produce the fruit of God's spirit and make the church strong.

Anybody who feels that they are nothing (that they don't matter) is not going to do this. They will do nothing because they don't feel responsible enough, and they fear that they will not be able to overcome. Did Christ give every part of your body the power to do its job? You don't even have to tell your liver to work. It has the power to do its job. Are you getting the point of these analogies?

Just as surely as God gave your kidneys, your liver, all of your glands, your eyes, your ears, your nose, your mouth—every part of your body—God has empowered them to work for the good of the whole. He has also empowered you and me for the good of the whole body—the church. It's there for us to access, and we will access this power *if we believe*. There's the catcher — if we believe what God says. But let me caution you. Christ is more than willing to give us the power, but He will give it only for things that are within His will. Anything that is for the *good* of the body and the Head, He will give us.

In the human body, the head (the brain) gives a directive, and the whole body automatically swings into action to fulfill that command. But in the church brethren, we have free moral agency, and doubt exists—here we have the power to resist the will of the Head. That is why we have been calling *oneach* individual to repent.

If one part of your body is unable to function properly, you cannot work, or you cannot produce as your body would if that part was healthy. This analogy, this principle, can be drawn to some very obvious conclusions. That bungled mess of a telephone call last week was in all likelihood largely the fault of one person not carrying out instructions well. There may be more involved, but I think that you can see the principle there.

Along the same lines, a blind person cannot produce as much, or as effectively and efficiently, as a sighted person. Nor can a one-armed person [produce] as much as a person with both arms. What if a person has one or both hands missing? What about one who is both blind and deaf? What if a person has a splitting headache? What if they are nauseated? Or if they have Epstein-Barr syndrome? What if they have pneumonia, or AIDS? What if a person is sick from the top of his head to the soles of his feet—as God shows Judah was (in Isaiah 1) just before they went into captivity? Can a sleeping person produce as much as a person who is fully awake? What about a person who is only half awake?

Why should God bring people into a church that is not representing Him well? Why should He bring people into a church that is not functioning as He directed — bringing glory and honor to Him? Brethren, we each personally have a responsibility to work for the well being of the whole. This pervasive thought — that we don't matter, or that what we do or think is of no account—is nothing more than self-centered vanity. It's a sin. It denies the truth of God. It denies God Himself. It is sin, subtly arguing against the wisdom and the love of God. It's a false humility. It's a justification to soothe the conscience for not overcoming.

I John 15:2, 6-7 Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit...If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Do you want the power to overcome? There it is. Simple terminology—if we abide in Christ, He will give us the power, if we ask Him.

I John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.

Does God want us to produce: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness? Sure He does. That's His will. He will give the power to do those things, to produce those fruits, because that enhances the body. It glorifies Him, and it is good for us too. We can't lose. He's promising the power to overcome. "Ask, and you shall receive the power to produce fruit." He is saying, even as He did in Deuteronomy 30:19, "*Choose. Choose life.*" We can make it very plain though if you put these three chapters together. He is saying in effect, "*Contribute a holy life for the good of the whole, or else it's into the fire.*" That's pretty blunt. We make the choice, but He's promising all the help we could possibly want.

We understand that is not God's will that we go into the fire. We haven't received the spirit in order to ostentatiously display it (as the Corinthians were), but in order that we may spread and produce fruit in others through us. Receiving that spirit obligates us, and at the same time empowers us to work for the common good. Each and every one of us holds the key as to how much of that spirit flows through us. The flow of God's spirit is regulated by whether we are using what we already have.

I don't know whether you realize it or not, but what I've been expounding upon here is the main purpose for feeding the flock. Without the members of the body having the wherewithal to do—*knowing* what to do, *knowing* how to draw on that power—we will not work for the good of the body, and the body will not produce when it preaches the gospel. It will not be effective. He said, "Without Me you can do nothing." His power is given to those who are contributing to the well being of the body. So we're instructed by God to use His spirit so that all may profit.

This is almost kind of an aside. I don't know whether you realize this, but Herbert Armstrong's knowledge of an aspect of this principle that I've been expounding upon (since the beginning of this sermon), is [the reason] why we don't have local meeting halls, and why we didn't have them under Herbert Armstrong.

Some of you may have thought that we just didn't have the money to do that. That was not the issue. It was secondary. The real reason was because he was so concerned that the church members would lose a sharp focus so necessary for our growth into the image of God and the preaching of the gospel to the world. He feared that we would gradually start thinking of ourselves locally and individually and we wouldn't see ourselves as part of the church *as a whole*—a part of something much larger, awesomely greater and more grandiose. [We would then] become focused on our own personal, worldly, carnal, local interests.

Do you know what? It happened anyway. What was coming in from the world was too difficult to hold back, because the body was weakening all along. It was gradually succumbing to the spirit of the world, as the church moved toward Laodiceanism, just as the world did. Local congregations did too, as a result of this—even though we didn't have the building. We became fractionalized, compartmentalized—even as we also became exceedingly complex, especially for the pastor—until we were essentially operating in much the same manner as any worldly Protestant church.

Let me detail the path. First we started Spokesmen's Clubs. Then a number of years later we separated the Y.O.U. away from the rest of the congregation, because after all, we had to have something for the teenagers. Then came Y.E.S., because we didn't want to leave out the younger children.

I want you to ask yourself a question. Where did this leave mom and dad and family relationships and the fulfilling of THEIR God-given responsibility to teach their own children—a responsibility that I think many parents were willingly giving up to the church, to the government of the church? It was not a good idea.

I know where it left parents, and I think that many of you experienced it. You found yourself running all over creation *WATCHING* your children, providing diversions for your children, providing entertainment for them, but not interacting with them. It got so bad parents were not even allowed into youth Bible studies because the leadership claimed, "*Well, the kids won't open up if you're here.*" They were missing the point altogether.

Then there had to be Bible studies for the elderly, and then there had to be Bible studies for the singles. Then on top of Spokesmen's Club came Graduate Club and Leadership Training Class. Interspersed and connected to all these things was an almost endless round of planning

meetings and social activities, in almost all of which, the local pastor was to some extent involved.

Tell me, what is a pastor's main responsibility? It's to teach the *WORD*, and to spend his time in the *WORD*. Read Acts 6. That's what it says there. The apostles [ministry] was formed in order (Peter said) so they could spend their time in the *WORD* and in prayer for the good of the body.

I'm not saying that any of these things were evil in themselves, but the weight of all of them couldn't be handled. We were blindsided by the effect, and we couldn't handle the overall effect. What was the effect? I'll tell you what it was. We gradually and subtly began to think that all of this "busy activity" was what Christianity is all about. All of this "*busy-ness*," combined with "*the lost in the crowd*" syndrome, combined with the "*worldliness*" that was creeping into the church was too much. Devotion to our calling waned, and we were subtly being led to give up our true focus.

Are you aware that it got so bad at headquarters that Herbert Armstrong mentions (in that same sermon on June 24, 1978), that while he was away from headquarters (without his knowledge), the Friday night Bible study (which had been going on for thirty years without interruption) was canceled by the administration? Why? Because it was felt that it was no longer needed. "I'm rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." (Revelation 3:17)

Now, in defense of the person (I don't know who it was who made the decision to cancel), is the undeniable fact that the members were giving strong evidence that it should be done. They weren't showing up. They weren't attending the Bible studies. Well, I think they were showing that they felt that they had more important things to do.

Haggai 1:2-11 "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, 'This people say "The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.'" Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways. You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the LORD. You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands."

That same principle, demonstrated by what the people were doing (in staying away from the Bible study in Pasadena), is that same principle which underlies what God's saying here in Haggai 1. God is not saying that the people are *literally* saying this in verses 2, 3, and 4. He is saying this is what He concludes as a result of what they are doing. It's the same principle as appears there in Revelation 3: 17 where God says, "You say you are increased with goods and have need of nothing." No, they weren't saying that literally with their tongues, but by their *actions*.

We choose to do, with our time and energy, what we are *devoted* to. This is why God said we have to go back to "the faith once delivered" with our former devotion. Whatever is in the heart—we choose to do. It's just as if we were saying it with our tongue.

What God is saying, in the remainder of the verses that we read there, is that for those who have made the covenant with Him—everyday life and its prosperity is directly tied to the condition of the Temple and the quality of our relationship to it. By "prosperity," I do not necessarily mean economic prosperity, but that is part of the package. The Temple is the body of Christ. It's just a different analogy.

This is the message that we, the ministry in the Church of the Great God, are attempting to get out to the greater church. What we are saying is, "*Let's put first things first,*" and the Temple—the Body—comes first. The condition of the Temple (the Body) is dependent upon the spiritual condition of the individual members of the Body.

The church is in no condition to produce glory and honor for our God. So people running out, "*sowing in the field,*" doesn't cut it right now. This has to be directed from the top of the administration in each group on down. If the efforts to preach the gospel are going to be successful, then we have to do what God, through Haggai and Zechariah, instructed Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest to do.