

Belief with Obedience

What is Believing in Christ?

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Given 19-Jan-02; Tape #539

Today I would like to talk about believing, because a lack of believing the truth is what divides this world. Only by all the world believing *the truth* will it be united. We, who are small and considered as "the base and weak things in this world" have been blessed, and blessed greatly by being given the truth.

We're going to look at John 8: 31-32. In John 8 we see Jesus Christ teaching in the Temple. In the middle of His instruction they brought in the woman caught in adultery. When those who brought the woman felt their guilt after Jesus wrote (we presume) their names in the earth, and the woman had been forgiven; Jesus again resumed His teaching, describing that He was from the Father, and He would be lifted up. He then addressed the Jews who believed Him.

John 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Jesus was saying to His disciples that if they continued in His commandments and received His teaching, they would know the truth, and the truth would make them free. Free from what? Basically, they would be free from a lifestyle that would be difficult and eventually lead to their death. They would be free from the wrong teaching that the world is being promulgated to push (at the behest of Satan in his confusion), and would lead to disastrous results.

The truth, when lived, will cause us to see ourselves next to (or in comparison to) God and the way He lives. Because we are called and have God's spirit, it will give us the desire to repent and to change. We will change in ways that will continually improve our lives and our lot in life. As we live the truth, and truly come to understand it, a sheer understanding and logic of it is impressed on our minds as being the only way that man will ever be able to have peace. We come to understand that no other way will work in this world but God's way.

As we apply the laws of God to our lives, we find changes taking place in us for the good in our jobs, our families, and with our friends and neighbors. Harmony, peace, and confidence should be ours. They should belong to us because we know we're doing our best to live as God would live in our place, in our situation.

We're now free from the world's superstition, from the lies, dishonesty and deception. We can view this world from a whole new perspective — from God's perspective, and not with the perspective of the world. I truly don't know if I give God thanks enough for the truth and the things the truth will produce. It will produce a system of beliefs.

In I Corinthians 1 we're told that we're the weak and base things, and that we're going to

confound the wise. We accomplish this "confounding of the wise" as we follow Jesus Christ, because He's been made "our wisdom."

I Corinthians 1:30 But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom; and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Jesus Christ is the One we have to follow who is going to provide all of these things for us. We are made wise through His system of beliefs based on the laws of His Father, and by nothing else.

Turn to Acts 16 where we read of the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul. God releases all of the prisoners, and the prison keeper is about to kill himself.

Acts 16:30 And [the prison keeper] brought them [Paul and Silas] out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

This is a question that all of mankind has probably asked.

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.

Many of the world's religions take this to mean that if we believe Jesus Christ lived and saved us, that is basically all one has to do. But I assure you, there is much more to this than meets the eye. The verb, or action word "believe" is followed by the preposition "on," which in this case means "to go toward" — to go toward the way Jesus Christ lived; to show movement in the direction of how Jesus Christ lived. It is a new way of living. It is to go toward what Jesus Christ is, how He conducts Himself, and to commit ourselves to Him in all ways.

Believing and being convicted of the truth should cause us to move, to take action with our lives. I would like to look at some of these examples in the past that are really sort of interesting. We'll see what happens to somebody who understands that he's being called and being worked with by God. Turn to Judges 6:11. This is about Gideon.

Judges 6:11-12 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour.

I assure you that Gideon never thought of himself as a man of valor.

Judges 6:13-14 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles

which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent you?

Gideon's job basically was to tear down this idol, and when he did so it caused nothing but grief. The people complained.

Judges 6:33-34 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

Gideon, with three hundred men, freed the country. Gideon was like any other ordinary citizen of Israel, until God called him. Because of the understanding that God was dealing with him specifically, a change came about in him. Rather than being fearful, he began to become brave and to step out, because he believed what God said. He trusted and had faith in God. Thus he truly became the man of valor that God knew he would be, and ended up liberating his people.

I draw the analogy to us, brethren. It is the same with us. A great change should be taking place in us, that we might become all that God knows we can be. We'll look now at the example of Josiah

II Kings 22:1-2 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

II Kings 22:10-13 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest has delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. [Josiah the king realized that God was dealing with him, and he wanted to do something.] And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go you, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

When the king made the discovery of what God wanted, he fully believed it, and he stood up

against the status quo. He personally saw to it that the pagan altars erected by Solomon and Jereboam were thrown down, and that all their pagan idols were ground into dust. He even saw to it (personally) that the false priests were killed. He then instituted God's Holy Days once again. I can't help but liken that to us. When we discover what God wants (when being called), we should also be able to be different from the society around us (like King Josiah).

We have another example in the story of David and Goliath. Goliath, who was probably somewhere between nine and twelve feet tall, had been plaguing Israel in the valley for forty days. I don't know how many men were on the front line. They had huge armies. Maybe there were thirty thousand. Every day Goliath would come down and say, "*Send me down a man to fight. If I beat him, then you will be our subjects.*" Everybody in the line trembled.

Then came David, a boy who was perhaps sixteen or eighteen years old, (or however old he was) and said, "*I'll go down there and fight this big uncircumcised hunk of a Philistine.*" Of course he did this. David picked up five stones. When Goliath saw David, he said, "*I'll make you dog meat!*" But David said, "*No. I have the living God on my side.*" David threw his stones at Goliath, and Goliath went down (dead).

What made David so different was his belief in God. His belief motivated him to action. He was *one* of thirty-thousand men (or however many there were), and was one man God was working with. Therefore David charged ahead and did what God wanted. Because of his strong belief in God, David went out to fight Goliath. David's belief and love of God is what made him different from the rest of Israel. I hope we begin to feel that we're different from the rest of Israel. It is our love and our belief that should make us different from all the people in this world.

Daniel is another example. Do you understand what Daniel went through? An edict had been given that nobody should make any petitions except to the king for thirty days. They did this to catch Daniel, and they caught him because that didn't stop Daniel from praying to God. As you will recall, they came to the king and said, "When you made this petition, it was in the law of the Medes and the Persians, and it can't be rescinded, and Daniel prayed." The king was heartbroken and said, "How could I have been trapped like this?" The king fasted all night for Daniel, and then came the morning.

Daniel 6:20-23 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before you, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

God is deeply concerned for them that believe in Him. We'll go now to the example of Abraham.

In Genesis 12:1-4 Abraham was told to get up and leave his country, his relatives, and his father's home. It has been said that at Abraham's father's death, he would have been king of the world literally. But Abraham believed God, and it would seem without any backward thoughts — he did exactly what God directed. We can see this in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

He didn't even give it a thought. God said it, and Abraham did it. Abraham had his mind opened as to what God was doing, and even though he didn't know where his calling would lead him, he believed God and obeyed. Abraham, who is called "the father of the faithful" set us a wonderful example. God really is pleased when we believe Him and act on that belief. Sometimes I think we just sort of take these things in a relaxed fashion and don't really consider it, but God really looks for those who will believe Him.

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and lo, one born in my house is my heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall your seed be. [What an impressive promise!] And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

The action part of it is back in James. Turn to James 2:21-23.

James 2:21-23 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? See you how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. [David was also called "the friend of God."]

Brethren, we too are called to leave our old way of living. We are to change, starting in a new direction, to sojourn toward the future, not knowing the path that we'll have to go. Our job is

just as Abraham's. We're to believe God, obey, and produce righteous works that will glorify God. That's why we're called. As we do this, it will be accounted to us for righteousness, just as it was accounted to Abraham as well.

Go now to John 6: 25.

John 6:25-28 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea they said unto him, Rabbi, when came you hither? Jesus answered the and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him has God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God?

They sought Jesus for physical food and not for the true food from heaven. When He corrected them, they asked what they should do to do the works of God. What they meant by that was very probably, "*What can we do to do the works to create more bread out of nothing (in a sense), or out of just crumbs?*" They probably wanted to know how they could heal people, cast out demons and do those types of things. Jesus responded to this by defining what the correct work to do for them was. It was "*to believe on Him whom God sent.*" In this case it was Jesus Christ, and for us today it was His apostle — Herbert Armstrong.

The works to be done were to prove the genuineness of faith — right actions based on faith. These were the works that were to be done. In short, brethren, this then is what is acceptable to God. This is the "lion's share" of the sanctification process. Jesus told them they had things to do. They just couldn't sit down and wait. They were to believe on Jesus Christ, who is the end, or the goal of the law.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end [the goal] of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

In other words, it is our imitation of Jesus Christ that is our wisdom that produces the righteousness within us.

It's interesting that this particular chapter, John 6, is referred to as "the *bread* chapter," because "bread" is mentioned twenty-one times. It is also interesting, that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem which means "house of bread." He was "the bread that came down from heaven." How these things work is always interesting.

John 6:30-31 They said therefore unto him, What sign show you then, that we may see, and believe you? What do you work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Perhaps it could have been said like this: "*You fed five thousand people with loaves and a few small fishes, but what is that in comparison to what Moses did? He fed two million, or better, every day with bread. So if you do something like this, we might well believe you.*" Jesus responded by saying that was not the bread He was talking about. He was talking about "the *true true* bread from heaven."

John 6:32-33 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world.

Jesus Christ explains to them it was the Father who gave them the manna, but the manna was not the *true* bread, but a type that was to come. The Father had now given them bread that was of far more value. He is the everlasting nourishment pictured by that manna. The true bread gives support in living correctly, and also protects from the false teaching that leads to destruction. Jesus Christ now states that this bread will give life to the entire world. "For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world." (Verse 33)

John 6:34-35 then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst.

These people expected the Messiah to give them a wonderful physical life. I'm sure that is what they dreamed all about. They had their imaginations. They thought they would be rich and powerful as an example to the rest of the world. This thought perhaps came from Isaiah 65: 13.

Isaiah 65:13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed.

As God's physical people they had a mindset that couldn't be overcome. They had a certain mindset — and for them to accept a new way of thinking was impossible, unless God called them. This is not unusual today, because Israel today has many mindsets that are wrong. They say we have an immortal soul, that we go to heaven, that we go to hell for torture. In the rest of the world we have the people of India who believe that people are reincarnated in rats, and that white rats are special. I have no idea what that means. We have terrorists with the foolish notion that at the moment they die they will be in Paradise with seventy women. I'm not sure that would be paradise. Seventy women to one man would be something else.

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst.

Jesus is saying that the person who receives His doctrine and believes in the atonement of His sacrifice shall be satisfied in his mind, and his life will be forever changed. He will learn to love the Father correctly, and will have a physical life that is going to lead to eternal life.

John 6:36 But I said unto you, That you also have seen me, and believe not.

We have people today who see the miracle of God's creation, and they believe not. God's creation is all around us, and we, as a nation, don't believe. Verse 37 tells us why they don't believe and why they can't understand.

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

We begin to understand that something special must take place for one to be truly with Jesus Christ. Everybody just can't come to Christ. One must be called by the Father and given to Jesus Christ. It's special. When this takes place, the mind is gradually opened and the one given believes on Jesus Christ and all the aspects that He entails. For those given to Him, He will not cast out, and He will work with them to complete their calling. We now start to understand that we're *given* the plan of God the Father. This plan is His because of His great love, and He will eventually save all mankind.

John 6:38-39 For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Turn now to John 17:1-3. It is really important that we know Jesus Christ and believe Him.

John 17:1-3 These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you. As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Eternal life is to know, to believe God, through His Son Jesus Christ. It is the only way to eternal life. The word "know" here is *ginosko*. It means to know and believe in a complete sense, to really understand all facets of an individual's life. It means to know the Father and the Son. They have life, and it means to have the Father's and the Son's life — which is eternal. It means to have their way of living, which comes from believing Jesus Christ.

The following is a quote from "The Complete Word Study Dictionary: "

"To know God is to be directed by love, and is therefore followed by a life of love and the execution of Christ's commandments"

We'll go back now to John 6: 39, and this should encourage us.

John 6:39-40 And this is the Father's will which has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. [This is for us, as long as we remain faithful.] And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Verse 40 points out it was not enough to see Him, or to hear Him, but that believing on Him was all important. The power to believe, or to have faith in Him, comes from God the Father. Those He gave Christ will be raised at the last day.

John 6:41-45 The Jews then murmured at him because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he says, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me.

Everyone who has been drawn by God the Father will be taught the salvation process by God. Every individual who has been called and has believing faith, and has learned of the Father, will come to Jesus Christ.

Is believing enough? Is just believing what the Bible says enough, or is action or application of what is believed required of us? This is the key point of our being called, of our being here.

One might think that the mainstream churches of this world are confused regarding which day to keep. I have several quotes to read, and you will see that they know which day God commands to be kept. Because it is physically provable, they believe that is what the Bible says. But, as far as acting on that belief — they won't do it. God hasn't called them and given them a child-like mind to comply with His teaching. Some of these quotes go back to the 1800s, and some are current. I think you will find these interesting.

Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions about Sunday

Anglican/Episcopal

Isaac Williams, "Plain Sermons on the Catechism," Volume 1, page 334:

"Where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh, but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day. The reason we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason we observe many other things, not because of the Bible, but because the church has enjoined it. There is no word, no hint in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday. Into the rest of Sunday, no divine law entered. The observance of Ash Wednesday or Lent stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday. It is not in the Bible"

Baptist

Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, a paper read before a New York ministers' conference in 1893:

"There was and is a commandment to keep holy Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week.... Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament absolutely not"

"To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years' intercourse with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question ... never alluded to any transference of the day; also, that during forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated."

"Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use early in Christian history.... But what a pity it comes branded with the mark of paganism, christened with the name of the sun god, adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism"

The Baptists knew completely what day should be kept.

Congregationalists

Timothy Dwight, "Theology: Explained and Defended:"

"... the Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is not in the Scriptures, and was not by the primitive Church called the Sabbath."

Disciples of Christ

Alexander Campbell, "The Christian Baptist," Feb. 2, 1824, vol. 1. No. 7, p. 164:

"But some say, 'it was changed from the seventh day to the first day.' Where? when? And by whom? No; it never was changed, nor could it be, unless creation was to be gone through again; for the reason assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed! It's all old wives' fables to talk of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day. If it be changed, it was that august personage changed it who changes times and laws ex officio - I think his name is Doctor Antichrist"

Lutheran

John Theodore Mueller, "Sabbath or Sunday," pp. 15, 16:

"But they err in teaching that Sunday has taken the place of the Old Testament Sabbath and therefore must be kept as the seventh day had to be kept by the children of Israel.... These churches err in their teaching, for Scripture has in no way ordained the first day of the week in place of the Sabbath. There is simply no law in the New Testament to that effect"

Methodist

Dwight L. Moody, "Weighed and Wanting" (Fleming H. Revell Co.: New York), pp. 47, 48:

"The Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. This fourth commandment begins with the word 'remember,' showing that the Sabbath already existed when God wrote the law on the tables of stone at Sinai. How can men claim that this one commandment has been done away with they will admit that the other nine are still binding"

Why do all these churches keep Sunday? Because they all go to the Catholic Church. Even though they left the Catholic Church, they took Sunday along with them.

The Catholic Church

James Cardinal Gibbons, "The Faith of Our Fathers"

"A rule of faith, or a competent guide to heaven, must be able to

instruct in all of the truths necessary for salvation. The Scriptures alone do not contain all the truth which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obligated to practice. Not to mention other examples, is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and abstain on that day from unnecessary work?

Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.

The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His apostles inculcated a certain important duties of religion which are not recorded by the inspired Scriptures. For instance, most Christians pray to the Holy Ghost, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible.

We must therefore conclude that Scripture alone cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith because they cannot at any time be within the reach of every inquirer: because they are not themselves clear and intelligible, even in matters of the highest importance, and do not contain the truths necessary for salvation"

Doesn't that fly in the face of I Timothy 3:16, which says, "*we have the Scriptures that provide us the truth for salvation?*"

These men all knew, and they all believed, that the Bible said to worship on the (seventh-day) Sabbath, but they didn't do it because they weren't convicted by it. The belief system that God wants us to have goes much further than the correct observance of the Sabbath, or not keeping Christmas, Halloween, New Year's Eve, Easter, or any other wrong days that this world keeps. It goes much further than that, and we will see this.

I was struck this Halloween, and by the September 11 situation, and by Christmas — by how different our beliefs are from the world's (that we live in). They are markedly different. Our country lives by its own man-made beliefs, and its people refuse to listen to the truth. In fact I don't think they can listen to it. I don't think they have the understanding to comprehend it.

Because of the Twin Towers devastation, this nation is now importuning God as they see Him. They are saying American is blessed with posterity, and that this is an indication therefore that God is with us. In Hosea 8 the same thing happened to Ephraim. He said, "*Aren't we rich and increased with goods?*" They were so blessed, and this is something the country has never been able to handle. They feel this way without any correct belief of who God is, the purpose He has for us, His laws, what America's role should be toward Him, and the correction that He is going to bring, and the plan He has for the whole world. They have no concept of this.

As a result of the wrong set of beliefs, we, as a nation, tolerate crime, and the sale of drugs. We put up with lying, cheating, pornography in every video store and hotel across the United

States, prostitution, and so much more. Even with all of this, we as a nation, feel that God will accept us. It's easy to understand why, over these last six thousand years, the world has had nothing but war. Again, as I said at the beginning, it's because we all don't believe the same things. We don't believe the truth of God.

With Satan's influence on the world, it's easy to understand why the other nations can't get along, why people in the same country can't get along, and why people in the same community can't get along. They can't get along in their schools. People in the same family can't get along. I'm not talking here about differences in hobbies or professional interests, or any other of the personal preferences or skills that God has given us. I'm talking about *the way* of living that will produce peace. I'm talking about God's formula that will work for everyone within this world — within a country, within a community, within a school, within a neighborhood, and even within the same family. This, brethren, is what we have been given that the rest of the world doesn't have, or can't come to believe at this time.

I'd like to look at an example out of God's law that would help (greatly) to produce harmony in the church, and harmony in the world. In fact peace would probably spring forth from it. Turn to Matthew 6: 12.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus is stating here that we all have debts that we have accrued since our baptism. We have slipped and made mistakes. I don't know if I ever thought of it this way before, but He says here that the only currency that will be accepted by God (as payment in full) for those debts, is that we forgive others. Nothing else will do it. Of course, with that forgiveness of others (who trespassed against us), comes the attitude of mercy, kindness, patience, and true out-going concern for the other person.

The premise of this is found in Matthew 18 where the servant owes his master an amount that comes to about \$15 million. This was a sum that was above the servant's ability to pay, and the master was going to put the servant in prison. The servant begged for forgiveness, and was forgiven by the master. And yet, when someone (who owed the servant only fifteen dollars) asked [the same servant] for forgiveness, the servant put him in jail until he paid the money. The master heard of the unforgiving attitude of the one who had been forgiven, he reversed his decision, and threw the one who wasn't thankful into prison until he paid the fifteen million.

What is really being said here is that each one of us has sinned against God, and the bill we could never pay, except with our death, was paid by Christ who loves us. He did that with selfless love, and this is the One we are to believe in and follow. He set us an example of forgiving that we are to follow. Our forgiveness of others is the only form of payment He will accept, from us, in forgiveness of the sins we have committed since baptism.

If we believe, as the world believes (regarding the Sabbath), then we will never really forgive. It

says, at the end of Matthew 18, that unless we truly forgive from the heart, God will not forgive us. That's the bottom line.

What is required from us in order to truly forgive each other? John mentioned in a recent sermon that we must have humility. We must humble ourselves before God to obey. We must be obedient and tremble at His word, to do what He says. In all of this is the matter of conversion and attitude. In this case the decision to forgive revolves around our willingness and eagerness to do all that God commands. Our human nature says no, but we have to want to do what God commands, and do it. Why should we do this? What is the benefit from doing this? Turn now to John 3:

John 3:15 That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

If we believe on Jesus Christ and follow Him, we will have eternal life, which is living as God lives.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:18 He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

It's good to believe God.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

How important is it to believe on God? It's absolutely vital.

John 7:38 He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly [out of heart] shall flow rivers of living water.

Because of the way a person thinks, believes and obeys God, he shall exhibit in his life righteousness, wonderful examples of: love, diligence, balance, self-control, forgiveness, kindness, mercy, patience, and faithfulness. Believing the teaching of God does wonderful things for us.

Turn to Psalm 19:11-19. I don't think I ever saw Psalm 19 quite the way I did this time. I'm going to emphasize "*the Lord*" in this.

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of *the Lord* is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of *the Lord* is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of *the Lord* are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of *the Lord* is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of *the Lord* is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of *the Lord* are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

This is what we are to follow, brethren. We are to follow the Lord and His laws, and all those things we just read.

In Revelation 2, Jesus mentions the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam. In all of the religious movements today, it is the compromise with God's *truth* that has brought the problems upon the church, and upon the world. This is one of the reasons we feel so beleaguered by the world around us. Whether it be politics, education, entertainment, military service, crime and punishment, the world's religious beliefs, men and women's relationships, childrearing, same-sex relationships, abortions, the workplace, man's legal system, size and layout of cities, protecting the environment, the financial system we live with, we find ourselves in great disagreement (for the most part) because God's ways are not even considered today in how man lives his life.

God wants us to understand that even though we are small (and indeed we are small), we have a tremendous future in front of us if we stand fast. Please turn to Luke 12.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The phrase "little flock" is a double diminutive. It would probably correctly read, "Fear not, little *lit little* flock." Indeed that's what we are. Out of all the billions on the face of this earth (and when you consider the end-time when all are resurrected — out of the forty-eight billion that are expected to be resurrected), we are that little flock — a drop in the bucket - that God has called now to work with. I really hope we appreciate this.

The Apostle Peter was advanced in years, and he knew he was going to be dying soon. He was concerned over God's people and the trials they were facing. They faced a world different from their beliefs -- just as we do. On top of that, they faced persecution as well. Peter couldn't change the situation they were in, but he wanted to remind them of this special, wonderful calling, and the marvelous future that awaited them so that they wouldn't let down. Turn to I Peter 1.

I Peter 1:1 Peter, and apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, .

Peter starts out by addressing them as "strangers" — a word that means literally "bi-resident." This is one (in a real sense) who lives in two places at the same time. Another translation of the word "stranger" would be "pilgrim," which gives the sense of "being in transit." Mr. Armstrong used the word "ambassadors," showing that even though we live here because of our calling, we are really citizens of another country — the Kingdom of God.

I Peter 1:2 Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The term "elect" here means "chosen ones" — chosen by the foreknowledge of God out of all those on the face of the earth, chosen especially by Him for whatever He saw in you and for whatever He wanted. Peter wants us to know that out of all those in the world, we were, for God's own good reason, selected to learn His way of living. Humbling ourselves in obedience is the key in the sanctification process.

I Peter 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.

We have been given this calling in great mercy. Indeed, when you consider the rest of the world, we have been shown tremendous mercy. We have a real hope individually that the world does not even begin to comprehend at this time. It doesn't comprehend that we have been begotten by God's Spirit. A second time we have been begotten now — that we might make the transition from flesh to spirit — from mortal to immortal. We have an inheritance that is sure, certain, positive, and no doubt it is ours, and it won't fade. The utter radiance of it, and the brilliance of spender will be there for us, and this is what is in store for us.

I Peter 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We are kept, by the power of God, through believing faith which produces right action on our part unto the salvation that is going to be coming.

I Peter 1:6-7 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes,

though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

We should truly rejoice even if we find ourselves in trial and distress. It is by resisting our human nature and by doing things as God would have us do them, that proves to God we belong to Him. It is this that will win God's praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

I Peter 1:8-9 Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end [the goal] of your faith [your belief], even the salvation of your souls.

This is what this will bring. We do this because we love Jesus Christ, even though we haven't seen Him. We rejoice fully in all that He is. And for this we receive the goal we strive after — the salvation of our lives.

I Peter 2:1-2 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

We should work to study, to grow, to overcome, and to put all the wrong things behind us.

I Peter 2:3 If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

I Peter 2:5 You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Christ is of such great value to us that we humble ourselves in obedience and submission to Him, to become like Him.

I Peter 2:9-12 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: Having your conversation [your conduct] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation [in the day of their calling].

They will remember and understand. I don't know how many will be in the first resurrection, but

we do know, that aside from the great innumerable multitude, God is now perfecting a special group of 144,000 who are held to be of great and tremendous value to Him.

Turn now to Revelation 14. I want you to look at some of the qualification that help to put them in this group.

Revelation 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. [In other words, these are they which didn't get caught up in strange doctrines of other churches.] These are they which follow the Lamb whither soever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

This is exactly what we're talking about here today when we say, "believe Jesus Christ." We're to follow Him wherever He goes. We're to follow His doctrine, His teaching, His actions, and completely follow the law in the *spirit* of the law.

One of the qualifications was that they didn't compromise their belief. They were virgins. They followed the Lamb wherever He went and in all that He did.

Revelation 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Because they humbled themselves and were obedient to God, they were without fault before Him. In essence, this group works to please God in every single aspect of their lives. Peter wanted his people to understand that they had a future. Certainly this is encouraging for us here too — as we read some of these qualifications.

Philippians 3:17-21 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Normally, in the Bible the word "conversation" means "conduct," but here this word "conversation" is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Properly it means, "*any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of the state are administered, and then the state itself — the community, the commonwealth, and those who are bound under the same laws and associated in the same society*"

The idea here is that God already considers us citizens of the heavenly kingdom of God. We, as citizens, look for the return of Jesus Christ, our Savior. In doing so, we work to prepare

ourselves for His coming by believing and following Him. We work to put the things of the world in a right perspective, and not let them suck us in to destruction. We work to come out of the way this world does things that we might be approved by God when He returns.

He says that our vile body (our physical body) will be changed. According to the working whereby, He is able to subdue, hold back, suppress, control, check, and discipline all things to Himself. This is the power He has for us. Once He starts a work in us, He will never quit until it is completed.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

It is our job to stand fast in the Lord.