

Church of God, The Eternal

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The Testimony of Jesus Christ—Part III Jon W. Brisby; 10-28-00

Well this afternoon, brethren, we're going to continue on the topic I began a number of weeks ago—this that I'm calling, "The Testimony of Jesus Christ." This will be the third part. I can tell you that I'm not going to finish the subject in this message, but I very much hope to finish it in four parts. But we do want to continue an analysis of what this testimony of Christ is all about.

If you will remember, in just a quick summary, there is something that is so valuable to someone in the last days in those prophecies of Revelation before the return of Christ—something so valuable to the saints that they are willing to give up their lives. Very quickly, turn to Revelation 12 and verse 11 with me. Amidst all of the turmoil and all of the difficulties and the problems—those circumstances culminating in the final plagues before the return of Christ—verse 11 says:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. And they loved not their lives unto the death.

It was something—whatever this testimony is that became theirs—that was so valuable it was the thing that helped them get through those tremendous trials and those difficulties. What is the significance of that which is called the testimony? Whose testimony was it? And what is that testimony all about? Well we did the analysis and I showed you that when we're speaking of the testimony of Jesus Christ, we're not talking about casual statements or informal speech whatsoever, we're talking about the formal record exactly comparable to a sworn statement that Christ gave—that which He made, that which He recorded. We saw that it was recorded from the very beginning. There is continuity in all that is considered part of that testimony.

In Revelation 6:9 we found somebody who was slain for the word of God and testimony which they held. It was so valuable and so important that they put it above all else—even their own lives. And I wonder, brethren, to what extent we value what we have as the Truth that much—whether we really love that Way of life that we've been given enough that we would be willing to lay down our lives for it? It takes a whole lot more than just making a statement, being arbitrary, making proclamations. The only ones that I can tell you, brethren, that are going to be willing to lay down their lives in that day are going to be those who have found a love for that Way, and they value it more than anything else.

And those that do, will do so because they recognize what it is. They're going to recognize the value of that Way—to treat it as a pearl of great price—and there is nothing that they are going to value more.

We saw that Christ gave His testimony directly in His own ministry. We saw that it was—in all the language that He uses, the very references, and we'll see a few more of those today—given in the legal sense. He was attesting to the Truth as a witness. And He said, "I'm telling you what is true and what is right. I was a witness and I'm giving you those things that have ultimate value."

We also saw that in His communications with the Pharisees, Christ referred back to Moses, and He said exactly the things that He was speaking were the things that came through Moses. And so last time we went through and looked at those Old Testament Scriptures, and the revelation of that testimony. The testimony was the perfect Law of God. It was the Law that was recorded even with His own finger on two tables of stone. It was kept in the ark of the Covenant. Let's go back and quickly review, and look at Exodus 32 and verse 15: "And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand."

This was the same God that became Jesus Christ who gave Moses that testimony. He wrote it with His own finger.

Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand. The tables were written on both their sides, on the one side and the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

No, we're not talking about something that was manmade. We're not even talking about something that was improved upon, added to, or taken away from by the activities of man. Man has nothing to do with the creation of Truth. Truth only comes from a Divine, miraculous source. Exodus 25 and verse 21: "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony." This is what Moses was instructed to do with these tables of stone that represented the very sworn statement of the living God. "And in the ark thou shalt put the testimony *that I shall give thee*." You see, no human credit whatsoever was involved in that which was a part of this testimony, it was a gift from God.

And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony.

And so now we find that even the very ark was identified according to the value of that which it held—the fact that it held those tables of stone, the very sworn statement of that God. It even became called the ark of the testimony because its value and its purpose related to the fact that it contained and it held that Word, that deposition, that sworn statement.

I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

The source of all truth was this God and He gave it in a statement—that which embodied all of the law on those two tables and expanded out into the statutes and the judgements. But it was a perfect law that could not be improved upon in any way by any human endeavor.

We also saw last time that Israel became a witness. They were personal witnesses of the power and the work of that God, and yet by their failure, they also became a very part of the testimony because their failure to live up to all that was offered to them and expected of them by that God was in itself part of the lessons that were written for the benefit of even you and me today. Let's notice Deuteronomy 31 and verse 19:

Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that flows with milk and honey, and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat, then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness.

So the very Song of Moses was written as a prophecy to show what human beings do—no matter what they're given, no matter how many advantages and benefits they're given. These were a called people, separated out from the rest of the world and given the Truth—given the testimony. And yet because they were human, without some missing element that man does not possess of himself, they would not value it, they would not love it, but they would spurn it, disregard it, reject it.

This song shall testify against them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. For I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and

of a good courage, for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them. And I will be with thee. And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the Eternal, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Eternal your God.

Whose ark was it? Whose testament was it?

Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant *of the Eternal your God*, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck. Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, you have been rebellious against the Eternal, and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you and evil will befall you [when?] in the latter days.

This is a prophecy for our time, brethren. It has much less to do with ancient Israel than it does for the Church—for all of us.

Evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Eternal, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

And that's exactly what the body that God called out of this world in the last days has done. Just like that ancient nation which rejected the very testimony of Christ, saying, "No, we don't believe it's true. We think parts of it are okay, but you know, I think we can improve upon it, we can make it a little more up to date, a little bit more modern—more applicable for the world that we live in—if we do this to it, and we do that to it." But God said, "No, that is rebellion. It's a rejection. It's calling Christ a liar." We're going to see that as we go along.

We also saw last time that Christ was to be "that Prophet"—the prophet that Israel finally would hear one day. Notice Acts 3 and verse 20:

And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

All these things were destined to occur. God spoke them. He knew exactly the plan that He was going to work out, and He had those prophets record those very words.

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

It didn't happen back then. Unfortunately, for the most part, it hasn't happened even now.

Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

What is this telling us, brethren? Those who will not accept the testimony of Jesus Christ—value it more than anything else in life, be willing to sacrifice everything that they have, everything that they love, everything that they own, everything they possess—to value that testimony, that Word, that Truth—anyone who will not accept it—hold onto it—will not be there in that Kingdom. They will not inherit the promised land. "Every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." God is not going to give eternal life to anyone who will call Christ a liar. He's just not going to do it. John 8 and verse 13: "The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself." They were accusing Him of coming up with His own religion—concept—that they didn't accept and believe. "The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true." They were blatantly calling Him a liar, and that's no different than what most people are doing today, even those that claim to be Christians. They don't use the words, but in their actions, and everything they believe and pursue, they're doing exactly the same thing. They're just more subtle about it.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true [*my record is true*] for I know whence I came, and whither I go, but you cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. You judge after the flesh. I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me [*I and the Father that sent me*]. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

And here Christ again appeals to the legalities of that legal system, the rules of order that dictate how to verify and certify the truth—the testimony of two, the sworn statement of two individuals that corroborate and show what the truth is.

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.

How much more plain could He make it—who He claimed to be, what He claimed to be giving? And so we come full circle. That which Christ preached in His own ministry

was the sworn statement which was first put into writing on those tables of stone—kept in that ark which, carried forward, prophesied even of its future applicability. For Moses spoke of that prophet who would come, and so He came and He spoke exactly the same things, consistent in every way with what had been given to Moses for the benefit of Israel. Moses prophesied of the day of Christ's ministry, speaking of Him as "that prophet," and testifying of the fact that anyone who rejected that sworn statement as the absolute Truth would ultimately be destroyed.

That's how simple it is, brethren. The question is, do we recognize the value of it—that Christ did leave a sworn statement, and it's true and it cannot be improved upon? And if we believe that He did, do we know what that statement is and what it says and what is part of that Way? And if we do, are we certain that we love it enough that we'll be willing to hold onto it even at any cost or requirement of us before the return of Christ? John chapter 3, and verse 31. You see, most people don't love it. Most of our former brethren who once believed the same thing we do—who accepted the Way of life as that which came from the very inspiration of Jesus Christ—don't believe it anymore. And so now they want to debate and say, "Well, we never did really receive the Truth, it was all just Herbert Armstrong and the things that he figured out by reading the Bible, and copying and plagiarizing things from all these different authors." And so that's what you're told. "No," they say, "we didn't ever really receive a testament. We didn't receive a testimony. We don't really have a way to know what the Truth is. We just have to wait for Christ to tell us that when He gets back." John 3:31:

He that cometh from above is above all. He that is on the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth. He that cometh from heaven is above all, and what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth.

You see, there is a God and He did interface with man, and He did give human beings a sworn statement—a record—so that men would have no excuse for not knowing what the Truth is and what's expected of them in order to be right with that God. "What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth." No, it wasn't that which He saw and heard, and kept secret to Himself. No, He did testify—He wrote it down, He gave it. But what's the problem? "And no man receives His testimony." No, they're calling Him a liar. By the fact that He says, "I'm honest, I'm true, I was there from the very beginning, I'm the one who created heaven and earth, according to the instructions of the heavenly Father. I brought all these things into being to accomplish the plan for the salvation of mankind and His perfect master plan, and I'm writing it down and I'm giving it to you, and I'm telling you how to have happiness, and peace, and success in every way. Here it is, it's true, it's faithful and you can depend upon it." And mankind says, "You are a liar. We don't believe it. Because, you see, we have our own ideas about what Truth is and how to be happy and successful and have the things that we want."

No man receives his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

You see, anybody who accepts the things that were written on those tables of stone, and practices them in their lives, you know what they're really saying? They're saying they believe God is true and honest, that God didn't lie. Anybody who rejects those ten laws on stone, and the statutes and judgments that come out of those laws is calling God a liar. That's how simple it is. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Are you telling God right now, brethren, in your behavior and your actions, and the way that you conduct your lives that you believe Him, or by our actions, and by our behaviors and the things that we do, and the things that we really think and practice—regardless of what front we put up to others—are we really saying that we believe God is a liar? The distinction is that simple.

For he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him [No, Christ was full of the Holy Spirit]. The Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.

That's all you have to do to have everlasting life, brethren, is just believe Him. How many people have misinterpreted that, though? How many so-called, professing Christians say, "Oh yes, I believe on the Lord. I believe Christ. I believe He's our savior." But they reject everything that He said, everything that He set down as His sworn statement, and they say, "No, that's not important. It's not important at all."

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

It all relates to the testimony. Believing on the Son is accepting the word of the Son as true—that we're not going to call Him a liar, that we're going to accept all that He said was true and right, and we're going to practice it, and we're going to sacrifice in our lives, and we're going to crucify the self, and we're going to put on that testament in our lives, and we're going to make that a part of ourselves—putting Jesus Christ on in our minds and our hearts.

Do we begin to see then, brethren, how important it was to the saints, how important it will be to those saints, whoever they are—why they will be willing to sacrifice their very lives rather than to deny the testimony of Jesus Christ? Do we see the significance of that Way and what's involved in that testimony—that testimony that Christ spoke in His own ministry when He referred back to Moses?

That testimony that began with the tables of stone in the ark of the testimony in the tabernacle of the testimony, and came forward and even pointed to Christ's ministry was that which was handed down and given even to the representatives of Jesus Christ. That testimony, that same testimony, was the very thing that was taught to the disciples who would become the apostles—that which was given to the Church. And, you see, those ministers who were given responsibility to safeguard, and to keep, and to preach that testimony are equivalent to and continuing in the offices of the priesthood. The responsibility the ministry is to safeguard the testimony just as it was the responsibility of the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel to safeguard that testimony. Let's notice it. Numbers 1 and verse 51:

And when the tabernacle setteth forward [here are the rules and responsibilities concerning the tabernacle] the Levites shall take it down. And when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

You see, that tabernacle was special and it was holy, and God said, "It is the Levites—these that I have selected out of my people—that I have given the responsibility to take care of that tabernacle. Not just anybody can come and have access to it and do what they want with it. You cannot even just volunteer of your own accord—even if your intentions are good." No, it was given to those who were given the responsibility and accountability, and no one else.

The Levites shall take it down. And when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.

I had an opportunity to even have that become more clearly focused in my mind at the Feast of Tabernacles this year in Townsend during the presentation of the slide show we were able to see on the ark of the covenant. And it was interesting that one of the slides showed a picture of the encampment and how—according to the instructions of the Bible—all of the twelve tribes were set up with the tabernacle in the middle, and then all the different tribes were set in their camps, all in order, as they circled and encompassed it. And the Levites were the ones who set up directly around that tabernacle. That's where all of the families and all of their tents were set up. And then all of the tribes came from there and went out in their particular ordered areas. So you see, that was something that, graphically, makes all of this come together.

And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony.

Just as we saw the ark was called the ark of the testimony—because its value was in relation to what it held, the testimony—so the tabernacle was called according to what it held—the Holy of Holies, containing the ark, containing the testimony. And so it was called the tabernacle of the testimony.

The Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel. And the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

What was the value of that priesthood in fulfilling their responsibility to safeguard the tabernacle which held the testimony? They were protecting the very nation of Israel. "That there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel." So, now, think about the spiritual corollary in the Church which is spiritual Israel, and the role, then, of the ministry. And you know what those ministers are doing if they are faithful? They're doing exactly what the Levites were expected to do. They're safeguarding the testimony—they're keeping it, they're holding onto it, they're protecting it, so that no one else can violate it. And when you find a faithful ministry, you are finding the safeguarding of that very sworn statement of Jesus Christ—men who are not perverting it for their own benefit or their own glory. Their responsibility is only to take care of it as sentinels. They are not there for their own benefit—to get something, to merchandise the people. They are there to fulfil an office—to safeguard the testimony of Jesus Christ. Let's notice the instruction, that began even with Christ, and He set out these very instructions to those who would become apostles. John 15 and verse 25—it's all about that testimony, brethren. That's what it's about. John 15 and verse 25:

But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause [No, they didn't accept Christ at all]. But when the Comforter is come [which is the Holy Spirit], whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he [or it] shall testify [it shall testify—*martureo*] of me.

That Greek word again, giving you the legal reference—a testimony, a sworn statement, a deposition. That same Spirit would be the vehicle that would continue the means to safeguard the testimony. "And you also shall bear witness [*martureo*] because you have been with me from the beginning." Christ called individuals who would be witnesses of His own ministry. They were taught at His very feet. And then He said, after His death, burial and resurrection, when He ascended to His Father, the Holy Spirit would be given. And it was that Spirit, then, that would guide them—through which Christ would work to make sure that those men were able to carry on His ministry in the flesh. Matthew 28 and verse 18:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [Verse 19, here's the commission:] Go ye [Christ was given the power—the commission—but He was going back to sit on the throne with His Father. And He said, Go ye] therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*

No, not to use that office to become creative in coming up with clever interpretations of Scripture to justify certain concepts—licenses under the law. No, here you find the commission to those men to continue the very office of the priesthood. And Christ was the high priest. They were foolish, flesh and blood human beings, and yet they were going to be given the responsibility of continuing to teach the testimony—to uphold and protect, even as those Levites encamped around that tabernacle—and they protected it and they safeguarded it, and they prevented any corruption, any harm, to come to the testimony that was kept in that ark in the tabernacle.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

He commanded according to His testimony. Acts chapter 2 and verse 38. Here you see an example, now, of one of those men who was given this direct commission, who began to exercise it and to fulfil exactly what he was commanded to do.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did *he* testify [here now Peter is testifying]. With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized [those who believed that Peter was telling the truth. Those that received his word, which was not his word at all, it was a continuation of exactly what Christ had given for him to speak].

That word testify is the word, "diamarturoama." It's another form from that root *martus* from which we derive *marturea* and *martureo*. It means, "To attest or protest earnestly, to charge, to testify, to witness." We're also speaking of a legal statement, because Peter—representing Jesus Christ—was continuing to speak on His behalf with authority, and he was exhorting, and he was saying, "I'm telling you what the Truth is." And it was not that which came out of the very mind or the heart of Peter. No, it was that which he was given. Acts chapter 10 and verse 39: "And we are witnesses of all things which he

did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem." Yes, they were there. Christ made sure that He selected men who had firsthand knowledge, who witnessed all of those mighty miracles and those acts, and were trained by Himself, personally. They were witnesses. They could speak with authority on what they had seen themselves.

And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly. Not to all the people, but unto *witnesses* [there is the word *martus* again. And so Christ, even before His ascension, was seen of hundreds]. But unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people. [*He commanded us to preach unto the people*] and to testify [*diamarturoama*—to exhort, to protest earnestly, to witness, to testify] and testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness.

So, all of those men who wrote those things down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit were also testifying of the same testament, because it came from the same source. "To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." But, you know what? You have to believe what He said. It doesn't have anything to do with using His name. It doesn't have anything to do with claiming to be a Christian, or loving God, or loving Christ. No, it has to do with accepting what He said was right, and the only right way to live and to behave if we want a relationship with God. It means accepting the Law—believing in it as the very sworn statement of God. I Peter 5 and verse 10— a continuation even of that ministry of the Apostle Peter, as he used the authority with which he was vested in order to safeguard that testimony.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Peter was having to stand and testify. In essence, he was saying, "I'm telling you the truth—even under oath. What I am telling you is that you have been given the Truth. You weren't told a lie. You received it of those who were authorized by Jesus Christ to teach and to exhort. And we did not lie to you. We gave you the words of life. And all you have to do is believe it and hold onto it, and don't let anything pervert it. Don't believe the naysayers. Don't believe those who would try to talk you into a different interpretation—into a different Christ. No, believe who we are and what we're telling you and just hold onto it."

"Exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand." "Wherein you stand" means they already had it. No, they shouldn't have been wandering around. They didn't start in limbo and then over time figure out, piece by piece, through their own scholarship, where the Truth was going to be. No, it said, "Wherein you stand," because they were given it. It was revealed from the very beginning. "Exhorting and testifying." That word "testifying," is a different variation, "epimartureo." *Epimartureo* means, "To attest further, to corroborate, to testify. It is a strengthened form of the verb." A strengthened form. And so Peter was exhorting here, and he was certifying with all that was within him that what he had preached, and what those other apostles had preached, was the Truth—it was exactly what they had received from Jesus Christ, and they were continuing to be inspired, even then, by the Holy Spirit, which was giving them the words to speak. And it was consistent in every way with the original testimony, even with that which was put on those tables of stone. The true ministers of Jesus Christ knew then that they were not allowed to customize, to pervert, to change, to enhance, in any way, the sworn testimony of that deposition. Their role was to protect it at all costs—to keep it exactly in its perfect form, not to try and make it better, because they can't make it better. It was spiritual. It was perfect as it was given. Galatians 1 and verse 6—the statement of the Apostle Paul. Not even one of the original twelve, but taught personally for three-and-one-half years in the wilderness by that same Christ—that same Christ who gave this apostle even that very same sworn statement—that testimony, that Law, that Truth. And here he's exhorting as well:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ [Just like ancient Israel perverted it]. But though we . . ."

He's saying, even I cannot change it, as he's writing to these Galatians. And it was he who was responsible for raising up those churches. It was his ministry—his voice that taught them the truth. They existed as a church, they had been baptized, they were together as the Body of Christ because of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. So there should have been a respect for what he was teaching and what he was saying. And, yet, to emphasize how valuable that Way is—how indisputable, how perfect it is—as it was given, he said:

Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

He's saying, don't let anything take it away from you, even if I—Paul speaking as the one who initially preached it, by which you learned it—even if I change and begin to tell you something else, don't pay attention, because it was truth as it was given from the beginning. "Though we, or an angel . . ." Even if you see a miracle, even if you see someone come on the scene, brethren, who is able to do great signs and miracles as a

supposed substantiation of their authority to speak in the name of Jesus Christ, yet, it says, even if you see somebody with that kind of power who tries to tell you that the testimony is not what you thought it was—that Christ's statement of fact and truth is not really what it seems to be, that you really need to adopt this or that idea instead—even if they seem to support it with the ability to do great miracles and wonders, it says, don't believe it because you received the deposition that was truth from the very beginning. I wonder how strong *we* are. I wonder how many of us really are prepared to stand up under that kind of a test. What if somebody walked in tomorrow who was able to do some incredible signs? I worry, brethren, because in the last few years we've seen many of our brethren that have been tripped up for a whole lot less—merely for the personal relationships with human beings that are doing anything but signs and wonders. Or family members—people that we love, with which we have a personal attachment—or best friends, or we have a particular liking for a particular minister. And yet when that individual departs from the Truth, so many of us have been willing to throw it over and allow that deception to take over and to take us away. And not a single one of them has ever done a sign or a miracle in that sense. They've only used their personal influence to try and sway us. What would we do if we really saw some incredible signs? How much do we really love what we were given? Can we really say that we love it enough, that we respect it enough, to know that it came from Christ, that no act of any human being or even an angel would cause us to sacrifice it, to turn it over, to begin to doubt it?

Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

That's all we did, brethren, even at the time Mr. Armstrong himself began to approve the changes in that doctrine. Those of you who are here, those of you that have held firm to the original doctrines that were taught as a part of the Church, are those who said, "Even though the very man through whom we heard the Truth himself changed, we're not going to change because we know Who it came from."

Though we [even the ones we first heard it from] or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you [meaning from the beginning—in the past] let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

It's that simple. It is that simple. "For do I now persuade men, or God?" Who are we trying to fool? So we think that because we get upset, or we get a bee in our bonnet about something that offends us personally, that therefore, we're going to leave, and we're going to try and talk our friends into going with us and to believe something else, who do we think we're fooling? Do we really think, in that case, that God is the one who is buying into what we are saying? I just don't understand.

For do I now persuade men, or God? [With whom do we think we're playing?]
Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the
servant of Christ.

No, Paul understood his responsibility. He wasn't going to turn it over for anyone.
He wasn't going to compromise for the sake of keeping anyone in the Body.

But I certify you [But I *certify* you] brethren, that the gospel which was
preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was
I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

If you are in the true Church, brethren, if you have any part of the true Body of Christ,
then what you're holding onto, and what you're practicing is that which did not come out of
the mind of a man. It came by the revelation of Jesus Christ. If what you are practicing and
what you believe right now has a source in human beings—if a man came up with them,
taught them to you, figured out what's right and what's good out of his own mind—you don't
have the Truth at all. The only way you have any hope of being in the Church and having
a relationship with God, is if what you are practicing is something that came as a miracle
from the very mind of Jesus Christ. And yet to say that we believe that Christ revealed this
Way to Mr. Hebert W. Armstrong is scoffed at by so many—even of those who used to
believe at one time. They think it's arrogant or foolish to believe that the very God who
created all heaven and earth intentionally revealed doctrine—Truth—to that man. If He
didn't, then we have no hope, and we're just as deceived as the rest of the masses of this
earth.

I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after
man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the
revelation of Jesus Christ.

Find where that revelation is—where it was preached, where it is still being preached,
where it is being held onto exactly as it was from the beginning—and then you will find
where the true Body of believers exists. And wherever it is, it's going to be served by a
ministry, who—like those ancient Levites—are safeguarding and protecting that testimony,
protecting and shielding it and not allowing anyone to harm, to change it, to modify it, to
corrupt it, in any way. They're safeguarding it because that is their responsibility.

II Timothy 1 and verse 8: "Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our
Lord, nor of me His prisoner." Yet, that's exactly what hundreds and thousands have done.
They became ashamed of that which they once believed, and now they are ashamed to even
admit that they were once ever a part of that Church. How sad.

But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher [*Whereunto I am appointed a preacher*] and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things. Nevertheless I am not ashamed.

No, despite of all that Paul endured—all the hatred, the bitterness, the torture, the beatings, the imprisonments. No, you see, he recognized the value of what he had been given, and he knew it was the sworn statement of Christ, and he wasn't about to turn from it, no matter what. He knew the priceless nature of what he held.

For I know whom I have believed [*I know whom I have believed*] and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me.

Why, because Paul was anything special? No. Only because he was the vehicle through whom God worked to give that holy testimony.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you keep.

You have a copy of the deposition. In essence, you were given it, brethren. It is the totality of the Word—the Holy Scriptures—but more so the understanding that you have of the perfect plan of God for your salvation and for that which He is working out on this earth. "That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." That which ancient Israel didn't have—the Holy Spirit, the ability to exercise faith. That which we have, if we are developing it—cultivating it—asking God for it more and more, crucifying the self and valuing that testimony.

The called of God are also witnesses, just as ancient Israel became a witness because of the things that they saw firsthand. So is the Church today, and those who were called out of this world who heard the voice of that servant who taught the Truth that changed their lives. They are all witnesses. They can deny it. They can go back and try and say they didn't know—that they were just deceived by a charlatan. They can say anything that they want to try and cover it up, and yet they are witnesses. We are all witnesses. I Thessalonians 2 and verse 10:

You are witnesses [*martus*], and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged [that word "charged" is *marturoama*] every one of you, as a father doth his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

We did received something that was spiritual—it was not of man—it was priceless. It was Truth, it was the testimony of Jesus Christ—the embodiment of that Law, the picture of that plan—all that He's doing. And He called you, brethren—each one of you—to understand it and to give you a chance now to qualify to share in that realm, and to be with Him to rule in that Millennial reign when He returns. And all you have to do is believe what He said, and accept it as being true, and love it more than anything else, and let no one take it away from you—whether close family members, friends, or other people. No matter who comes on the scene, and what sort of powers they can manifest, or how clever they are, that you would know the foundation of what you were given and recognize it—that it was not of man—it was holy, it was spiritual, even though you heard it from the mouth of a foolish man. Yet, it was not of men at all. And it's so valuable to you that no matter what's going to happen in your life from here until the time you draw your last breath, or the time Jesus Christ returns—whichever comes first—you're not going to let anything take it away from you. Are we ready for that?

When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

It's not enough, brethren, just to have received it—you were all given it—but we must believe what's in the statement—the sworn statement of Jesus Christ. You must believe it's true and you are not going to let anybody tell you that it's false. Remember, ancient Israel failed because they did not believe. Oh, they were witnesses. They saw the mighty power of God. They couldn't deny the things that they saw and their exodus from Egypt. At the side of the Red Sea, in the wilderness, as they were fed, and they were given water, and they were protected, and they were strengthened in battle against their enemies. They saw all those things and they couldn't deny, and yet, they still failed, because in the end they still didn't believe in the trustworthiness and the honor of the God who was protecting them. Hebrews 3 and verse 7: "Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit sayeth Today, if you will hear His voice." That's all you have to do, brethren, just be willing to hear it. That means we believe it.

Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

They saw it alright. They were witnesses. They should have been able to give a testimony themselves of what was true.

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

Yes, they were given the way. It wasn't because they didn't have access to it. It wasn't because God didn't provide it. It was delivered to them as a gift. "They have not known my ways." They didn't accept it because they didn't believe it.

So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [which calls the testimony of Jesus Christ a lie—and thereby calls Christ Himself a liar]. Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

"Departing from the living God." These, brethren, who are out here, and have accepted all of these different variations of doctrine—who have corrupted a Monday Pentecost, who have corrupted marriage, who have denied God as our healer, and have thrown over every other doctrine, now, that was a part of that original teaching. They don't think they're denying the living God at all. They don't think they've departed from God whatsoever. They think they're drawing closer to God. They think they've gotten rid of the legalistic mandates of men that were there to harm them. And they think now they love Christ, and they are closer to Christ more than ever before. They don't realize they have departed from the living God.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day [there may not be that much time left, brethren] lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

It's not a matter of having to figure out new truth—to see how clever we can be in interpreting prophecy and figuring out what's going to happen before it occurs. The thing that's going to give us salvation is if we recognize the value of what we were given, if we hold onto it, we will not let anyone take it away from us, we're going to protect it and shield it—safeguard it to the very end. That's all we have to do, brethren. If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. That's what those saints are doing that we read about in Revelation—the ones that were willing to sacrifice their lives. Are you going to be part of those? If you are, it's going to be because you have found a true love for the

testimony of Jesus Christ, and you are going to value it more than anything else in this world.

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke. Howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

And, brethren, the ones who will not enter into His rest—meaning the very Kingdom of God, when Christ comes to reign on this earth—the ones who will not enter into *that* rest and have a part in the family of God, are going to be those who have proven they do not believe the statement that Christ made. They don't believe that He gave the Truth, and they didn't hold up under the pressure.

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. [Continuing in chapter 4 of Hebrews:] Let us therefore fear [Yes, let us take it seriously, brethren, let us really think hard] lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [that Kingdom] any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [unto us *was* the gospel preached, as well as unto them], but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

And people say, "What do you mean the gospel was preached to them? I know we received the gospel of Jesus Christ." And everybody talks about the Gospel. "I thought ancient Israel received the Law. I thought they received two tables of stone that were kept in the ark, I didn't think they received the gospel. They just received that old hard demanding Law." Or, is what we are finding here that the very gospel of Jesus Christ—that people think they believe and honor—was exactly that which was found in the testimony given to Moses in that Law? The gospel that was preached to us was the testimony of Jesus Christ—it was His witness under oath.

Notice Isaiah 8 and verse 13: "Sanctify the Eternal of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary." You see, the people who really fear God as a Father—knowing that He is the one who holds all power, who are not trying to make God in their own image, or to manipulate God for the sake of doing what they want to do—who recognize that He is a powerful, purposeful Being, and are truly seeking to do His will—to find out what God wants from us—those are the ones who have a healthy fear and a dread of the One who made us all.

Sanctify the Eternal of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling and

for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

And so we have seen the very demoralization of the body—even of the last days. Where are all thousands who once believed? Because they rejected the testimony, brethren—they threw it away, and they are the victims, now, of their own deceit and their own unbelief.

Many among them shall stumble [they certainly did] and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. [And what is the instruction in order to avoid it?] Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

That's what it takes—love that Law more than anything else. Hold onto it, protect it, safeguard it, believe it is true, believe that it came from Jesus Christ—that it's His own words, it was what He taught—what He gave us. Yes, brethren, that which was given to the ministry to safeguard is that which each Christian was originally taught—if you were a part of that Body. Those who were called into that Church through the ministry of those men through whom Jesus Christ is working, that testimony becomes part of them—it became a part of each one of you. If you really have received Jesus Christ, you have received and begun to partake of that testimony. I Corinthians 1 and verse 4, the last scripture this afternoon:

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ. That in every thing you are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.

That is the very testimony that was given on the mountain to Moses, and that he brought down and gave to ancient Israel and preserved in those tablets in the ark—in the tabernacle. And he pointed to the time when Christ would come in His own ministry—which He did, and He spoke of the very same things that were taught from the beginning, even though men rejected them. He preserved those disciples whom He trained and He commissioned, who became the Apostles, who raised up the Church in the first century. It is the very same thing that was revealed to someone, brethren, in the last days, in the very same way—that very same testimony—and it was given to you, because you were a part of that Church. You became a part of it when you were baptized, and you received the very same testimony that was given back then on that mountain. Do recognize that? Do you value how important that is in history? You received it.

Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come behind in no gift.

There's not anything that anybody can submit as being more valuable than what you have received. Do you realize what an honor you have been given? To understand that Truth and that Way of life? You have something that is more priceless than anything on the face of this earth. "So that you come behind in no gift." Nobody has received, brethren, what you have received. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end." He will confirm you unto the end. He will protect you, He will safeguard you, He will care for you, brethren. All you have to do is love it, against all odds, against everyone who is going to try and take it away from you under the inspiration of our adversary. All you have to do is remember what you were taught and hold onto it and love it. "That you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, the day of the wrath of the Lamb, when He is going to come back. He is going to take possession of His Kingdom by force. And the only question is, which ones of us are going to be standing there with our robes made white in the blood of that Lamb, because we valued, and we safeguarded, and we held onto that testimony? Which ones will have rejected it?

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing.

If we were all called of that one God, if we received the testimony of Jesus Christ—if we have made it a part of us—then we share that in common more than anything else. And if we all value it, then we should be able to speak the same things, should we not? There should be a unity among us all based upon our love and our value for the testimony that we each received and that we value.

That you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you. But that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

When that happens it is a manifestation of the true Body of Christ for those who have accepted and who have truly believed the word that He spoke as Truth. If we each believe the sworn statement of Jesus Christ, and are allowing Christ truly to live within us more fully each day, then each of us will also be in harmony one with another, sharing the very same mind of Christ. Next time, brethren, we're going to talk about the future—more about the sacrifices that are going to be required of those of us who will experience those things that will come before the return of Christ. What are those prophecies about, and how is the testimony of Jesus Christ going to play an incredible part? We'll see it next time.