

801115 Thanksgiving & Endurance HLH

While the chorale is being seated I would like to take this moment to remind you all that this was the song that concluded the first choral program that Mr.

Leon Eddinger presented to Mr. Armstrong. As a surprise I believe that the chorale was composed of approximately eight students. We sometimes forget those who have been among us. Mr. Eddinger was never a baptized member of the church of God. He however was one of those who was ever loyal and assisted Mrs. Lucy Martin in making the music department the kind of institution that lended certain character and culture to a small institution as we were growing. And on this occasion it's such a fine performance. If we're going to give thanks it's proper that for those of you who do remember those days of the college that we perhaps express silently the quality of appreciation for men whom God hasn't always called in this life but who played a loyal role far beyond many whom God did call. I had the chance to be at Imperial this morning I would also like to extend greetings from the two congregations in the state of Michigan where I was about two weeks ago in the churches in Dallas where one of the faculty members and I attended over a extended period of Thursday evening through Sunday. Some of the lectures of the varied assembled learned organizations including the American Schools of Oriental Research where Professor Shiloh gave a lecture. I thought it was advisable that we meet him over there partly because I'm responsible for editorial work. We are asking that an interview be done and in so doing I don't want to be an unknown entity in terms of my responsibility in editing. Anyway I should mention that Professor Shiloh who's in charge of the excavation in the city of David where our students had been this past summer will be here I believe it's the 2nd of December and I would hope that depending on where it is to be held that a number of you who would not ordinarily attend especially those who live in the community at large and would find the time I can tell you that some of his slides are remarkable and from an archaeological point of view are the most dramatic pictures of Jerusalem that you will see in terms of understanding the magnitude of the city in the past and the background of that city when you read Old Testament material. You've seen the New Testament material in fine photographs that have been done from the Herodian period but this is even more spectacular because it is unexpected and I hope Mr. McNair who's the Deputy Chancellor here will be able to make it possible and bring to the attention of those who are responsible for our bulletin to get the information to you. I think you would miss something if the room size were available if you didn't have that opportunity to see it. What we might do in the pages of the magazine you know are very limited in contrast to the presentation on a screen such as we could have at the college. We will do our best but that doesn't compare to what you would learn from hearing him directly and seeing the work that in part the students have participated in. This afternoon I will not address those questions that we have heard this morning in areas we should give thanks but since we are moving toward the end of this Sabbath day I would like to focus on a particular area that characterizes how we are seen giving thanks. As God looks down on us we have our role here on earth to give thanks to him but how do we view it if we were to momentarily step away to look down as God looks down on the church to see what in a sense is the most important and ultimate expression of thanks. I should like to address that ultimate expression of thanks that is our responsibility as a church and it may be defined in very simple terms. Dr.

Kessler indirectly addressed it at one level in terms of the family in contrast to those things that Mr. Tkach felt he had to bring to your attention yesterday evening. Let me explain. Joseph Tkach pointed

up yesterday evening that a new area tends to crop up when another area is shored up in the church and that is the chaos that too often develops in our individual family units and so Dr.

Kessler addressed that question. I would like to extend this concept to the church as a whole and ask you whether you have given serious thought to those trials and temptations that can come in the future that have in the past in one former another led individuals to bail out of the church as individuals from time to time bail out of their marriages. We will begin with the first particular illustration in the Bible that ought to illustrate best for us what it means to bail out at the wrong time for the wrong reason. There was a man who was asked to build a ship. His name was Noah having faith and having fear of God that is knowing that what God said he would do he was able to perform. He spent years in the building of a boat that enabled his family and life on dry land to survive at a time when God brought waters to the earth and drowned it as civilization. What if you had been on board the Ark? What if you had seen some of the things that had occurred in Noah's private life before the flood? You know that there was a scene after the flood and that was obviously not the first time Noah had made a mistake. If you had been on the Ark and you had seen as Mr. Armstrong has described that two of Noah's sons in all likelihood had been involved in interracial marriage that Noah seems not to have fully perceived the impact of alcohol at all times, would you have decided to bail out? Where would you have gone because there were no lifeboats? What I am getting to is that the churches of God through history are a collective group of people who have repented of sin and among whom are those who also have not.

And then there are those who look at this collection and I speak in terms of the public assembly when I include those who have not because really membership is ultimately a question of repentance and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit having been forgiven of sin. But when we collectively are together we don't all wear badges which say I have the Holy Spirit, I do not. And you look around and you see everyone here and then there are too many over the years who have decided if this is the church what am I doing here? Because surely God wouldn't allow those people to be in his church and then they think of sins they would never commit but those people do. If we had been on that arc we could have found fault too. In fact God found fault enough that he said that the next arc that's coming figuratively that if Noah were then to live into the future as Ezekiel put it that he would not rescue his family on the basis of his repentance and having been forgiven sin and having sought to do righteousness. So it is possible you see that from time to time God uses an instrumentality, shall we say the church, that is so far from perfect that you can find serious faults in it. Now part of the problem arises from the fact that we have too often been brought up in a world in which we judge other institutions by the faults that are in it and not by the validity or the error of what it teaches. I will use a simple illustration because we bring these things into our midst on the basis of how we learn them in the world. The question of the legitimacy of the Roman Catholic Church as to whether it is the church of God or not is not based on some personal flaws in individuals in it, but it is based clearly on its teachings. The church of God is not judged on the basis of the flaws of those who are in it, but whether Christ is ahead of the church and whether the individuals in it are willing to be led by Him. We could go on and take a look at a number of cases and just ask ourselves, do we give God the kind of thanks for having brought us to an understanding of where he is working and what he is doing irrespective of other people's flaws and faults. There was a man in Egypt, his name was Joseph, and in the 39th chapter of Genesis you will remember the story that Joseph's master tossed him in prison. Now you know that no one has ever put in prison who isn't guilty, right? That's the way you read most newspapers. That's the way you read most magazines. That's the way you listen to television and radio. That's the way the Attorney General listened to television and radio in the reports. Because who would ever bring an accusation if it weren't true? Now in a sense we all would deny such a thing as logical, yet most of you have never sat in the courts. You've only read and

what you read in the paper you begin to decide determines the guilt or innocence of people on trial. And how then do you expect the world around us to judge in any other way? Because this is the way they're taught. What would you have done if you'd been in Egypt? Let me bring you back there to this man Joseph who ended up in prison. Now the unusual thing is that the prison keeper was so impressed by Joseph that Joseph was put in charge of the conduct of affairs in the prison. That surely must have been, according to news reports, that he bought his way into position of power. And then there was a time that Pharaoh called on him. And Pharaoh was impressed by his explanations and his dreams. Pharaoh then asked, as you read in the remaining part of the 39th chapter of Genesis, well, where is a man then that can't execute the job that we have to do? And Pharaoh decided Joseph was the man. Now being good Egyptians, what would you have done? Bailed out of Egypt because Pharaoh appointed a man who was an adulterer, a man who bought his way to the top in prison? Because that's the way things are often construed. I want you to see how easy it is to read into a man's life or story. What may not be there? Just as I showed you on the Ark, what could be there? But does it really make any difference whether it is there or not? Because who is, after all, the judge? That is the question. You can pick up, of course, the remainder of the story in Genesis 41 where Pharaoh and Joseph, just so you know it isn't all in the 39th chapter, where the account is that I just referred to when Joseph appeared before Pharaoh and was appointed. We could go down the story a little further. If you had been among the Israelites coming out of Egypt, and God had given you the promise that you could inherit the land of the Canaanites who dwelt on the border of Egypt to a portion of the Euphrates River, and you had been promised by God that he would drive out the Canaanites and give you this land for an eternal possession, and now you come into the land of promise. You have crossed over the Jordan. You are west of the Jordan with Joshua, and before you is the city of Jericho, and there is a being who appears with a sword so significant that Joshua went over to meet him and discovered that he was the captain of the Lord's army, that he was, in fact, Yahweh himself. Joshua is instructed in the sixth chapter of the book named after him that the city of Jericho must be encompassed for six days, and you march around the city one time each of those days, and on the seventh day you march around seven days, sorry, seven times on that seventh day. Now there are those who might immediately have questioned whether this was the wise thing to do. In fact, it did not look logical. Think about it for the moment. What would you have done if you were asked to do that? Would you have decided to swim the Jordan and go east? We can pick up the story further. There was in the time of judges a crisis led to famine, and the family went east to the land of Moab. Not everything was well west of the Jordan where the bulk of Israelites were. An Israelite woman who had two sons now in Moab found that she had outlived both of her sons, and she was left with two daughters-in-law. One decided to stay in Moab, and the other decided to go with her mother, Naomi, back to the land west of Jordan. Now that events had taken a better turn. The story, of course, is the account of Ruth and Moabites. It begins in chapter one of the book named after her in verse 14. The primary statements, however, are in verses 16 and 17. She said that I want you to know that your people are my people, and your God is my God. What a strange statement for someone to make. Did she really know what those people were like? Now she had met Naomi, but she'd met a converted mind. She hadn't met the rest of the people. What would you have done if you had been Ruth? You had now crossed the Jordan with Naomi and discovered that your people weren't like you, Naomi. They were carnal. And the first time, Naomi, that I was out in the field, you should have heard what your people's young men said to me. What would you have done? Would you have said your people are not my people? I'll worship God the other side of Jordan again. I want you to think of the significance of it, because it was not to the Moabites to whom God had given his promise. It was to the children of Isaac, through Jacob, or Israel. To them, the written revelation was given. To them, the promise was given of a Messiah who would pay the sins of all the world. Yet to come and live among that nation was not any paradise. What would you have done? Would you have

decided that somehow God made a mistake to have called a nation and a church at the foot of Sinai and not promised his spirit to them? That you were going to live somewhere else because the spirit of God was not in all those Israelites? Where would you have gone? In whom was the spirit of God in India, in China, in Moab? We need to realize that if we're going to give God thanks as we should, on that plane, that level of thought and expression, the greatest thing that we can do is to recognize what God is doing and to stay with that work that he is using, and not to bail out either individually from an institution such as God is using or from any institutions within the work, and let us focus then on this issue of marriage as one illustration. For there are too many who do not choose to work out the problem, they want to work out of the problem by going their own way. Jeremiah described, of course, why we have difficulties, why ancient Israel had its difficulties, and why we might. I would like you to turn to a verse you're all familiar with, but it's after all basic to the question, it's in Jeremiah, in the 23rd verse you are familiar with it. Now this thing God said, I commanded them, here is what would have made the Israelites all like Naomi, what would have kept sin out of the ark, what would have prevented the false testimonies about Joseph. Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. Now God's people are supposed to be perfect, Jesus said, be you perfect, but you discover that you haven't met one yet, and the one you think you've met has fooled you, or you fooled yourself, because there is no man who does righteousness and sins not, that's equal also to women. Walking in all the ways, God said, that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you, but of course they harken not, nor incline their ear, but walked in the councils and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Now Jeremiah was writing more than eight centuries after Moses. How would you describe a nation that for eight centuries has been walking away from God? Now in the first century they got a certain distance from Him. It took a hundred years to get that far, and if every century they kept walking away from Him, and they never as a nation ever really returned, except the few.

It wasn't the whole nation that ever kept pass over in Josiah's or Hezekiah's day.

The nation as a whole spiritually simply walked backward one generation after the next, one century after the next, since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt.

Under this day, I've even sent you all my servants to prophets, rising up early in the morning, but you did not harken to me, nor inclined your ear.

They hardened their necks, and they did worse in succeeding generations than their fathers had done.

That is the reason. Now it may be on a grand scale as it happened with the children of Israel, and they were ultimately expelled from their land. There were times restored when certain leaders, whom God called and converted, led some back, but then they were expelled again by the Romans, and now some of them are back again in the land of promise, that is Palestine, as the Romans call it, the land of Canaan, and there is not perfection there.

And even in the history of the Church of God, if we were to trace those who don't directly altogether descend from Israel, we have people in the Church who've come and gone over the centuries in the state of the Church declines, and it rises and declines, and that's what the history of the Church has been. If you had been a member either of the nation-state of Israel or the Church of God, would you have given thanks that God brought you to the knowledge of the only group however flawed that he was using in the world, or would you have bailed out? Look at the state of affairs in the first half of the last century in the Church.

Such a bright light was in the Church that you can't even name anybody.

What a tragedy. It was really practically darkness. There was hardly a flame.

When Mr. Armstrong came among these people, he gave God thanks as well he ought to have, that here he discovered more truth, more understanding that he had found anywhere else.

And he studied and he pursued it. He didn't bail out.

He cooperated with them as long as they permitted.

And then when those who were responsible in leaders were unwilling to walk in the light that had come to brethren, and then Mr. Armstrong wrote up in his paper on the holy days, as well as other doctrines on the national identity of this people in Matthew 28-1, when they simply said, they simply said, no, then this Church had to walk separately. Two cannot walk together unless they're agreed. This work did not bail out. We were, shall we say, cast into the lifeboat.

The ship sank spiritually, but the lifeboat has brought us all to the place we now are.

There is much more to be done.

And the one thing that perhaps more than any other we should have learned from this experience is that we don't go backward and away from God, but that we walk as he walks in the lead.

And when he walks in the lead and the leadership in the Church does not always follow that lead, that does not mean that we should bail out. If Christ still says, come his way, we are to walk as he walks. Now, happily, we can say that two years ago, and I put it this way on some other occasions, two years ago, the overwhelming majority in the Church were walking as Christ led, but no small number of leaders were walking in another direction. And they were spreading all sorts of rumors manufactured in the Hall of Administration. And they spread these rumors out into the field. And these rumors bounced back in different words than they first heard them.

And they thought they were new truths. And they, was that Mr. Jack Webber? Somebody, anyway, he's the kind of man who would appreciate that joke, because this is what was happening. There you are. There were people whom too many might have used as an excuse to say, if Christ leaves this leadership in the Church, if Mr. Armstrong lets this happen, why should I stay around? I don't want to be a party to this. One lady said some six years ago, she said, I want to be in a quiet Church that doesn't have any difficulties, no troubles.

Now, the only place that I know where there are no difficulties and no troubles is the grave.

And there's one Church in the sequence that's headed there.

If you read Revelation chapter three, Jesus never promised that there would not be troubles. He said, I'm going to give you, if you give up your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your properties, I'm going to multiply all of these in different areas. And then we're going to salt it with tribulation. You'll like that. You either accept it or you can go somewhere else, because that's the way we do it. Christ allows these problems. And these problems basically occurs. Jeremiah has told us in chapter seven, because there are among us, maybe even a part of each individual in areas, those tendencies that lead to sin and sin needs to be redressed and corrected, pointed out. And that's why God allows these things. Yes, it would have been possible for the children of Israel to have inherited the promised land without having to sweat and toil for five long years to the time when the bulk of the Canaanites were expelled in the main part of Palestine or the land of Canaan. But the children of Israel had sinned, and God said, you do this kind of thing. I will keep my word, but you're going to have to earn your way.

And in the same way, if our ways had altogether pleased God, our enemies would have been at peace with us. And since our ways did not altogether please him, our enemies were not at peace with us. And then we had no other choice any more than the children of Israel did. But to protect ourselves by the court proceedings, does it mean that because that shouldn't have had to happen, that one should bail out? Where else was the church? Where else was the work? It is time we realized that there may be things that can happen that wouldn't have to happen. But they happen nevertheless. It may be a crisis at birth, an accident. It may be our spiritual state that creates a kind of accident with the whole church.

This case, a state-church confrontation. And we have to face up to solving it, because the church's work must continue if we're to fulfill the commission that God gave to the church in the end of, that is, the last chapter of Matthew. So Mr. Armstrong did not decide that the church can conduct itself in a manner as if everyone had been so perfect that our enemies were at peace. He saw that the battle lines were drawn and indeed there had to be a battle in the court, because we were commanded to be there and then we had to protect ourselves.

And this church, being an American church, did it in the American manner, as Mr. Armstrong said in February 1979. We had the American system. Now this day has been set aside beyond what God did to have us all give special thanks to him. I thought it appropriate before it is over that if we give special thanks to God, it is not just for our jobs, our families, and all the physical things we have here, not even alone for the deliverance that as a whole has come, though the battles are not all over, but that we should give thanks above all that God has called us now to his church and thanks that we can see clearly both the God who set Christ as head of the church, the Christ who paid the penalty for sin, and see clearly that there is no one who is without sin in the church, but that as we pray each day our Father forgive us our sins or debts as we forgive others, that we are in the fellowship of the only people who actually have that contact with God that makes that forgiveness possible.

And in the sense that having that forgiveness, we have the doors of eternal life opened, we can be more thankful than any other people because no other group, no matter what they think, has access to God because no other group has ever repented of what stands in the way between man and God. God may not have sundered those who are sincere in the world, as Mr. Armstrong mentioned, the man who prayed for Loma de Armstrong when she was ill, a Pentecostal person whose prayers were answered. He may not send them because they were sincere and did everything that they knew, but they didn't have the Holy Spirit. And when the knowledge of truth came and that man did not walk in it, his prayers were no longer answered. But here is a body of people that differs from any other, not alone in sincerity because there are sincere people in the world, not alone in good works because there are people doing good in the world, not alone in your willingness to give up your life for the church and for your brethren because there are communists who die for their faith.

But alone testified in this that God has revealed to you what stands between all men and God, and that is sin, and that this church is made up, and I'm speaking of those who are in fact imbued with the Spirit of God, made up of those who comprehend what sin is, who have repented of sin, who have buried themselves, and that wall of partition that separates man from God is torn down.

Because Christ now stands at God's right hand and asks the Father to receive our petitions that we call prayers. No others have such access. God has heard no prayer that is prayed in the name of a woman who is dead, who bore Jesus. She's yet to come up in the resurrection.

We do not pray, other than in the name of the only one who has gone through death and now is alive, immortal.

When you see what it means to have contact with people who have this kind of contact with God, can you do but give thanks and stay aboard the lifeboat? Paul summarized it when he wrote approximately AD 62 a letter to the Hebrew brethren and to the Hebrews in general in the 10th chapter, and we will close with this in verse 38.

Now, the just shall live by faith. Just are those who were previously unjust, whom God has forgiven. When God forgave Abraham, God forgave an ungodly man who lived in the ways of ore of the Caldees in southern Mesopotamia, and having forgiven him, he was now reckoned as without sin in the presence of God and could address him.

That, of course, was Yahweh, whom Abraham addressed regularly as he appeared.

The just shall live by faith. Abraham was the father of the faithful.

We are to live by faith. Now, if we're to live by faith, it means that we recognize that Christ is the leader of the church and that however slow he may be to get around to do what you know ought to have been done already, he will do it. Whether it has to do with healing or cleaning up the church or dealing with problems of sin in any number of ways, we live by faith, not by bailing out. But if any man draws back, that's bailing out, getting off the world. My soul shall have no pleasure in him. You see, there are people who said, well, Mr. Armstrong didn't correct this and that. Why doesn't he? Then Mr. Armstrong finally does. God sometimes is late at doing it through him.

Or don't you believe that? Haven't you wondered why people weren't healed and God heals them so late? But he does it in his time. And strangely, some of the very people that I have known for 30 and more years who criticized Christ and Mr. Armstrong for not doing things when it should have been done, then when he did it, they said, why does he do it that way? I'm leaving.

I sat at a table next to a charming person who I knew more than 30 years in the church who drew that conclusion. My soul shall have no pleasure in such a one. We are not of those who draw back, who go to the sinking ship to perdition, but of those who believe to the salvation of the soul. That is of life itself.

If we stay in the church because this is the church and are imbued by the Holy Spirit in this church and through faith follow Christ's leadership, even when it seems to take longer than we think to get things done, then we are not going to make the mistake of those who have prejudged Christ's decisions. It is our role today, as this Sabbath draws to a conclusion, to listen to those things that have been said for some of you in more than one service and for those of you who only attended here this afternoon, to listen to the various areas that we either have heard from the sermonette and the announcements or in song, to give thanks, and above all, to give thanks to God that he's brought us to a knowledge of where that church is that he's using and open the doors to us in it to be a part of it.

And a proof of our thanks is whether we stay with it.