

In the Starting Lineup

(Go to Meeting)
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(introduction left out of transcript)

One of the reasons for the title is because even sometimes Fred makes an analogy, and the analogy he made being in the ministry and speaking about himself is that the ministry are like coaches on the sideline.

When it comes to a relationship with God, there's not one person between us and God, it's really each and every one of us has to have a direct relationship with God.

What Fred referred to himself as is like a coach, who is on the sideline and telling the players and giving guidance as to how play in certain circumstances. It's a very interesting analogy as to the role, in this case, of the ministry. If we think a little bit about that analogy, what I want to do today is zoom out a little bit and continue that analogy and that perspective as to what is it that God is doing with us today, a little bit bigger picture of that.

I completely 100% agree that the ministry is like those coaches on the sidelines helping and giving direction. But the one important thing is, and Fred himself stresses this, that *the players have to play the game!* There's nobody else who can play for each and every one of them.

They are evaluated based on how they play the game. This time of year, especially, the world around us is celebrating their holidays. They celebrate Christmas, New Years and all of these things that the world is enveloped around and hold the seed. We are familiar with—and many of us who grew up in the Churches of God or have been in the Churches of God for many, many years—and understand that that is wrong. We understand the pagan holidays and many of those things. It's easy to get caught up in the basic repudiation of those practices and customs, which they are and they are to be. The Bible does say that they are inaccurate and incorrect.

At the same time, it's interesting if we think about what God has called us to be, and what God wants us to be doing in our lives, there's a very interesting analogy, and this is one that I've shared with a few people, continuing with this analogy of the coach, the game and the players.

God says that the Sabbath is a sign between Him and His people, and is a test commandment. If we were to go out and ask somebody who claims to be a Christian out in the world—not in the Churches of God—somebody who doesn't understand the Truth. To say:

If you're a true Christian, why don't you keep the Sabbath? The Bible says that you are to keep the Sabbath, and Saturday is the seventh day and has always been.

The reaction that we would get, and especially from some of the ministry or priesthood, in mainstream Christianity, probably would be antagonistic. Some of them have been receptive, but the majority of them have been antagonistic or immediately begins to talk about all the Scriptures that is not about keeping the Sabbath.

The Sabbath and Holy Days we know we are to keep and have kept for many years, and will continue to keep; that's never going to go away. *'Until heaven and earth passes away, these words will not pass away!'* And even then, God is 'the same yesterday, today and forever.'

We know that, but this warning is just one thing of this analogy of what that really is. The Sabbath and Holy Days, what those things really are. This same analogy of the coach and players playing the game. The only Mediator is Jesus Christ before God the Father, but nothing between us and Jesus Christ Himself and the Father. Only Jesus Christ is our Mediator, not a person in any of the churches, whether Catholic, Christian or anything.

In thinking about that analogy of the Sabbath and Holy Days, and the foundational letter of the Law things so to speak, but in particular those things that are hidden. I think that the majority of Christians would agree that all the Ten Commandments are to be kept.

The Sabbath and Holy Days they say are in special category and they have been done away or fulfilled, or however they want to call them. But those things—and the opening of our eyes when we were called into the Truth of God—in this analogy would be like the ticket to get into the stadium.

Not only do we have the ticket, but these other people don't have that ticket if they're not doing the things that God says to do. If they don't take God literally at His Word and say, 'Yes, the Sabbath is the seventh day and that's the day that I need to be keeping—clean and unclean meats, Holy Days, etc.—there are all these other commandments in His Word.

These things are the entry, and that's one thing that as the Church of God and people of God we have to realize that we have been given this

ticket. We have been given permission to enter into the stadium.

More than the analogy that we've been discussing, we are not only allowed into the stadium, we are the players, we are expected to play. We are in the starting lineup! That's where we are.

Throughout our lives we are expected to play. We have been given an invitation not only into the stadium, not only to come in, but to actually participate in this. Yes, with the coaches on the sidelines guiding us on how to play, what to do.

It's not a game—obviously, that's just an analogy—it's a life or death matter. This is really the purpose for which we were born, the purpose of our lives.

This is what we were called to do, and this analogy of the game we've been invited to, that's the ticket, but that doesn't guarantee in and of itself, as far as keeping the Law in the letter—the Sabbath, Holy Days, tithing, all of these things that we know and have been practicing for many years—that's the entrance, the invitation, the foundation.

That is what God is basing His Church upon, all His Laws and commandments and statutes. He wants to build from there. This is in the framework of what we're doing and we refer sometimes to mainstream Christianity or other religions of the world, but especially Christianity. That's the particular one I want to focus on as we think about our calling and what God is doing.

John 12:46—Christ speaking: “I have come as a light into the world so that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.”

That the very first step, *to believe in Christ* so that we don't remain in darkness!

That's when He starts opening our eyes. This is a process that lasts our entire lifetime. If we grow and develop, He continues to open our eyes to a deeper understanding and to continue to grow in grace and knowledge.

Verse 47: “But if anyone hears My words and does not believe, **I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world,** but to save the world.”

This is interesting, because Christ says, ‘I came and testified that I am the Light so that the ones who believe in Me may not remain in darkness.’ We've studied other times as well, and we've understood from many other messages that we cannot call anybody, but we can seek God and God is seeking those who are seeking Him. The seven spirits of God, the eyes of God, are going throughout the earth seeking those who are seeking God. God will call them if they are seeking Him

with sincerity and truth. God honors that, wants that, and is really looking forward to that.

This is what Jesus Christ came and did in His ministry on earth. He came as a Light so that everyone who believes will not remain in darkness. Those who are truly seeking God in sincerity and in truth will not remain in darkness. That's a promise!

Verse 48: “The one who rejects Me and does not receive My words has one who judges him; the Word, which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day”—*speaking about the Scriptures!*

Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. He spoke all those commandments, ordinances, all those things in the past. He is validating that He spoke them. He also says that ‘I come and lay down that witness and testimony and it has been there from the beginning, but I do not judge them,’ *that will judge them, that will be the measure against how people are judged!*

Verse 49: “For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father, Who sent Me, gave Me commandment Himself, what I should say and what I should speak.” *That's true from the Old Testament and even in the New Testament.* He always spoke the words of the Father because both of Them are ONE!

Verse 50: “And I know that His commandment is eternal life. Therefore, whatever I speak, I speak exactly as the Father has told Me.”

There's a lot of things here to unpack. The main point is that He says, ‘I do not judge them. I laid that testimony in the past, I'm doing it now, I'm speaking those words—I am the Light—and whomever really believes in Me, everything that I say and how I say it, and what I say to do and does it—then that person will not remain in darkness.

We know that the world, by and large, is in darkness, because they don't believe, either because they are not seeking God, or it's just not their time. God decides when to call people. It's His prerogative, and Jesus Christ also very clearly said that ***‘no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him.’***

We understand that there may be all kinds of circumstances, but the main point here is in v 47: “But if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him...”

We know that many mainstream Christians do hear the words, but do not believe. They may put up an excuse and say—or an understanding that they have—‘No, I don't need to keep the Sabbath because of this; I don't need to keep the Feasts because of that, or the Holy Days.’ But Christ says, “...I do not judge him...”

In the Churches of God maybe we've had the tendency—and it's part of what we grew up with hearing and listening—in thinking about those people and putting a certain light or place of deceit and classifying them. It's interesting because they're trying to do the best with what they can.

We're not going to judge anybody. Just like Christ said, 'I do not judge them.' We are not to judge the people. The actions, yes, we can judge righteous judgment of the actions, but not the people themselves and what they do, and whether they're deceived or not, why they're deceived, and what they do with what they understand; that is obviously not our place.

However, if we come back to this analogy that we have been invited and have been given this ticket, and we are actually in the starting lineup! We're expected to play this 'game' of Christianity—we'll call it that for the sake of analogy only.

- we're expected to play to the best of our ability
 - we're expected to live this way of life
- It's a way of life, not a religion!*
- we're expected to live this way of life
 - we're expected to continue to develop
 - we're expected to grow

An athlete on the field trains and puts for the effort and practices and does all the work and training, then when it comes to the game, it's about performing and doing. *That's exactly what we've been called to:*

- be trained
- grow in grace and knowledge
- understand the Word of God
- understand His Truth

Really, what He's doing in our life, because in the end, we are the end product. We are the end product of God's process.

In this analogy, not only have we been invited to play, to be active participants, not just get on the stage. I submit to you that the people in mainstream Christianity don't have the ticket. They cannot get into the stadium. It's not because we're better than them. God just, for whatever reason, chose to call us now and to give us that ticket to get into the stadium.

That doesn't mean that getting the ticket that we're actually playing the game, which we have been invited to and we are to do that, but that doesn't mean that we are playing the game. That's not all there is; that is the foundation, that's the start.

As we continue to grow in grace and knowledge and overcome, and deal with difficulties

and trials, God expects us to continue to grow and to develop and really play the game.

It could be that you have the ticket, that God opened our eyes we have a certain level of understanding of His Truth and commandments and His expectations. That's good, and to the degree that we do that then it's the level of how we're participating in this calling.

The Sabbath, Holy Days and all the basic commandments in the letter of the Law is the ticket. But God wants us to go on from there and continue, and not only get into the stadium and not only sit in the stands, He wants us to come and come to the field. We're all invited to be players and participants, and to be all-stars! He really want us all to be that.

When it come to mainstream Christianity, they don't have the ticket. They don't keep the Sabbath, they don't have the sign, and they don't keep the Holy Days. Again, it's not an indictment of them.

Part of the reason this analogy resonates with me is because I like sports. When we watch sports and think about that, we see the players on the field and see what they do, and we look forward to seeing that and we enjoy that, some of us wish that we had that ability and could play like that and do the things that they do on the field. Whatever sport it is it doesn't matter.

We have been invited to that in the sense of what it's all about. At the same time, there are people outside, and I picture myself, because I was there when I was kid; when I was a child I would do this: I would go to the field and I would play and try to emulate those guys. Sometimes when I played with my friend and cousins and it was literally like we're playing the game for us. We were not in the stadium, we were not playing for the trophy, the real trophy. We knew the rules, we used the rules and we played this game.

In a sense, mainstream Christianity is a little bit like that. There's a lot of people who are well-intentioned, and there are 'good' people in the world: well-intentioned and well-mannered. They do a lot of things, and many things they actually do better than we do.

We have been invited to do the *real thing!* The real game inside the stadium, where we're actually playing for something real, intangible, that we've been invited to. It's a very special calling.

For the people outside, it's like they're playing this game and in their mind—if God has not opened their eyes—they are playing the game. We know that they have not been given the ticket, yet,

but they are practicing the things they're able to see; they're doing them.

It's not the same, they're not inside the stadium and playing the real game. So, this analogy is kind of like the child that is doing it in the school or in the park or wherever they're playing. They're not in the stadium, they're not the real players, there's no trophy or reward. It's similar to that.

But we have been called into the starting lineup! We have been called not to come and take this ticket and sit in the stands. Sometimes—and I've been there myself, as well—come and start believing because I have the ticket and think that 'I'm good.'

We have the ticket, but if you're sitting on the sidelines, what good is it. If all I'm doing is the bare minimum, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days and tithing. Again, not to minimize that, or diminish that, because that's the foundation, it has to be there, and it's absolutely basic and an important fundamental. Without that we cannot go on to grow to more things. But it's just the beginning.

- What do we choose to do, brethren?
- Do we choose to get our ticket and sit in the stands?

or

- Do we choose to get our ticket and get our badge to get on the field?
- Do we know the One Who is actually in charge: Jesus Christ?
- Do we know God?

If we do, then as we continue to increase, yes, God gives us a ticket, and then the credentials to get on the field. He actually gives us—by the knowledge—the ability and invitation to come onto the field. It's almost as we're coming in starting with a ticket and a badge. But you don't need a badge, 'I know who you are, come on, play on the field. You're going to do this; this is what you were called to do.'

Compare that to children outside, even adults outside, they get so into the game and it's true and it feels real. Part of it is real, when you're in pick-up basketball game, or whatever. You're playing the game and you're playing by the rules. It's the same basketball, same height, same distance, same rules...

Many different church organizations gather together and play sports. They are playing the game.

- Is that Christianity in the things that they are doing?
- Is that all there is? *NO!*
- Do they have the ticket? *NO!*

- Are they still playing the game? *They're playing parts of the game!*

Not necessarily unto salvation, and that's one thing that Fred has clarified; *it's a very different thing to be called unto salvation* than to be 'good' in the world or to do 'good things' based on the understand they have. These are some of the things that we are going to study.

Luke 6:43: "For there is not a good tree that is producing corrupt fruit; nor *is there* a corrupt tree that is producing good fruit."

This has to be looked at in the light of people called unto salvation, and people not called unto salvation, *yet!* I want to point out that *they will be!*

Verse 44: "For every tree is known by its own fruit; for they do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather a bunch of grapes from a bramble. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which *is* good..." (vs 44-45).

We know that there is no one good, and we know that Paul said, 'There is no good in me. It's only what God has...'

"...and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure of his heart brings forth that which *is* wicked..." (v 45)—*rejection!*

It's almost like being given the ticket, and 'No, I don't want to go to the game. I can't make it. I've got other things.' It's almost like sometimes that people are presented with a ticket, and they don't want it. It's free ticket—*the calling is free*—available to everyone.

Those who are seeking God, God will call and obviously, in His planning, His mercy and understanding, God doesn't want anybody to perish, so He doesn't call people out of time or out of place. He does it according to His purpose, according to His good will.

"...wicked treasure of his heart brings forth that which *is* wicked; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but *you* do not practice what I say?" (vs 45-46). *That's what we're talking about, practicing:*

- practicing the Truth
- practicing the words of God

That's why Jesus said, v 46: "And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but *you* do not practice what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and practices them..." (vs 46-47).

I submit to you today, brethren, that this is

not only the ticket, it certainly includes it—the Sabbath, Holy Days and all the other ordinances of God—*but there’s so much more than just getting the ticket!*

“...I will show you what he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and **laid the foundation on the Rock**...” (vs 47-48).

That’s what we’re talking about, the one who practices them is like laying the foundation upon the Rock.

“...and a flood came, and the torrent beat against that house, but could not shake it, because it was founded on the Rock” (v 48)—*and that Rock is Christ and all His works—Old Testament and New!*

That’s the foundation that He laid with all the ordinances, commandments and judgments. Everything that we are to do, and not only in the letter of the Law:

Verse 49: “But the one who has heard *My words* and has not practiced *them* is like a man who built a house on *top of* the ground, **without a foundation**; and *when* the torrent beat against it, it fell at once, and the ruin of that house was great.” *There’s no foundation!*

If people are not yet called—mainstream Christians—and they’re doing certain things, all those things are still building something. Its not building upon a rock, and will fall when it gets tested against the real competition.

People come and watch these people play, whether recreational, school, whatever, and say, ‘Yes, it’s good, but you’re lacking this or that.’ That wouldn’t be enough to win you a title of anything.

It’s good that you’re practicing, and it’s good that you’re playing the game, but unless you’re dedicated fulltime and that you have a ticket and come into the stadium and perform there under pressure and you actually do it—that’s a pressure we all have from our childhood—it’s not going to avail you of much; of something, yes of course, but not much.

Unless people are given the ticket they’re not playing the real game. Yet, at the same time, what they’re doing is still a house. It may fall against the standard of the Rock, the standard of what God has called us to. But in a sense, in the same analogy of playing the game and being in the starting lineup—or not even being in the stadium at all—it’s important for us to not fall into the trap, or back into old habits that we may have developed. I include myself in that, of putting others down or what they’re doing in their limited understanding. Or criticizing or comparing, because it’s the same as

comparing us with professional players in our sport to children who are just trying to emulate the real players. Or adults that are just playing recreational games, or things like that.

It’s not their fulltime job. But also it would be silly for a professional athlete who compares himself to the person who is just trying to do it for fun and on the side. They have another job, these guy’s only job is to perfect their craft.

I think there’s a comparison there, an analogy, to not look at them and judge them or condemn them—even their actions—because we know they’re wrong and not Biblical.

John 21:18—Jesus said to Peter: “Truly, truly I say to you, since you were young, you have dressed yourself and walked wherever you have desired; but when you are old, you shall stretch out your hands, and another shall dress you and bring you where you do not desire *to go*.’ Now, He said this to signify by what death he would glorify God. And after saying this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me’” (vs 18-19). *That’s what He’s telling us!*

- follow Me
- come
- play the game
- play the right way

Verse 20: “But when Peter turned, he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had sat at the supper and *leaned* on His chest, and had said, ‘Lord, who is it that is betraying You?’ Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what *shall happen* to this one?’” (vs 20-21).

We could ask the same question: ‘Lord, what’s going to happen to all of these mainstream Christians that are keeping Christmas, New Years, their traditions and doing all this stuff that You say in Your Word not to do?’

The response from Jesus is, v 22: “Jesus said to him [Peter], ‘If I desire that he remain alive until I come, what *is it* to you? You follow Me.’”

That’s a very important thing for us to think about it. Yes, they’re keeping their traditions and doing their things, *but* “...**what is it to you?**....”

- I called you to come and follow Me
- I called you to come and play the game
- I called you to come and train and perfect your playing, your craft
- I called you to grow and develop in all aspects of the game (if we want to call it that)
 - *we know that it’s NOT a game*
 - *we know it’s life or death*

▪ *we know it a way of life*

But what happens if we do that? What would happen if that's what we say, or in our messages we talk about them, the world and this and that, and Jesus comes and says that *it doesn't matter!*

If you talk about them or judge them or judge them... Yes, their actions are wrong, you can point out that they're wrong, and move on. Don't be bothered by that, because you were called to an entirely different thing. Don't be bothered. It says that if an athlete would be bothered by what he sees by a school child practicing, it doesn't matter. I'm not talking about that, because we know that's not part of the game. We know that these traditions and things are not part of the game.

But there are some parts of the game that they do play, some parts in some things. This is a dichotomy and challenge! I've seen people—even in the Church—they see the game being better played outside instead of in the stadium of the Church of God into what we've been called:

- loving others
- caring for other
- showing compassion
- showing kindness
- showing mercy
- showing love

Sometimes when we get caught up with the ticket, do we get too caught up with the batch or the axis? *No! It's to actually play the game!* I don't need your ticket, because I know who you are! You come to play the game; you're invited straight into the court to perform. To do it, and to do it right, because Jesus Christ is going to teaching you to play the game.

But what if He tells us that whatever He desires to do, 'What is it to you?' This is something to think about. We're talking about this invitation and starting lineup and the game, but:

- What is this game?
- What is it that we are to do?
- What is it that we were called to do?
- How do we do this?
- How do we play this 'game'?
- How do we live this way of life?

Matthew 5:27: "You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (vs 27-28).

That's elevating! We have this foundation already, and now we're starting. We know that the

commandments of God in the letter—Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, Sabbath, tithing—all of these things are foundational, they're structural. Without them we cannot move forward. Same thing, without the ticket we cannot even get into the stadium.

Then, He says to start building. What do I do? *You build a frame!* Then we start getting into the *spirit of the Law*, not just the letter anymore. It's not enough to not commit the act of adultery, it's in our heart and mind to not lust after a woman when you see her.

Verse 31: "It was also said *in ancient times*, 'Whoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.' But I say to you, whoever shall divorce his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever shall marry her who has been divorced is committing adultery" (vs 31-32).

Raising the bar to a spiritual standard; in all of these things Jesus is raising the bar to a *spiritual* standard.

Verse 33: "Again, you have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, 'You shall not forswear yourself, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is *the* city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you do not have the power to make one hair white or black" (vs 33-36).

This is building, elevating, and it's so amazing how he's also teaching us that 'listen, you don't have the power within yourself to do this, so don't do this, learn your place, know who you are.'

It's almost like telling us our place on the field or court and 'you stand here and you do this, but don't do it this way.'

That's what God is telling us, that we don't have the power to make one hair black or white. No one understands where you are before God.

Verse 37: "But let your word be *good*, your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no..." *He starts to add on:*

- How are we to think?
- What we can do?

It's not to do just in the physical, on the outside in the letter of the Law. *It's on the inside, the spirit of the Law! This is the 'game'!*

Verse 38: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say to you, do not resist evil..." (vs 38-39). *It starts*

changing; this is different!

This is not just ‘don’t do this or that’! It is, but it’s deeper than that.

“...rather, if anyone shall strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (v 39).

Wait a minute! That’s completely the opposite. We’re going to do these things on the outside to doing these things in your mind, to do something that is completely illogical in your mind.

I’ve heard many times, sad to say, people in the Churches of God say, ‘No, I don’t have to be there. I can forgive and forget, but I don’t have to stand there. I’m going to remove myself altogether from all of these things. I don’t want to meet with anybody or I don’t want to do this.’

NO! God says that if somebody strikes you, turn the other cheek also. He didn’t say to runaway. It doesn’t say that if someone strikes you on the cheek, run as fast as you can, because you’ve got to be smart and you cannot put yourself in harms way.

Obviously, He also said to be ‘wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’ We have to take everything together and in context. But He also does say that if anyone should strike you on the right cheek, turn the other one also.

This is what we are called to do, to suffer for Him, for His way. This is part of the game.

Verse 40: And *if* anyone shall sue you before the law and take your garment...” *It doesn’t say sue him back and take it back.* It does not say that. It says:

“...give him *your* coat also” (v 40). ***Go beyond!*** This is a change of mind. It’s not like the foundation is laid and we have the ticket, the frame is built in the spiritual sense, but now it’s totally and completely different; it’s a transformation to something different. Also, do what they’re not expecting, because He tells us why; that’s the nature of God, because that’s the nature of God.

He wants us to be like Him, and that’s what they ‘game’ is all about. He says, ‘I want you to come in and perform, because that’s Who I am, and this is how I do things.’ He wants us to do things the way that He does things. Sometimes, people outside of the stadium, so to speak—people out in their backyard, school field or gym—are practicing some of these things better than we do.

That does not mean that they’re playing the game. Let’s not be confused, that does not mean that they’re playing for salvation. God has not called them to that, *YET!* He will in His time.

It’s almost like Jesus told Peter, ‘What is it

to you; you come and follow Me!’ This is what He tells us to do.

Verse 41: “And *if* anyone shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two.... [Give more] ...Give to the one who asks of you; and do not turn away from the one who wishes to borrow from you” (vs 41-42).

Do it! If somebody is asking for money on the streets, *give to him!* It doesn’t say to run a background check or see if he’s going to use it for drugs. *NO!* Just give! That’s what He says and that’s what we’re called to.

Verse 43: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”

This is the ultimate transformation. I’m not there; we’re not there yet, brethren—many of us—because it’s really tough to do this.

Verse 44: “But I say to you, **love your enemies...**” [pray for them, but it actually says] ...**ble**ss those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you.”

It’s illogical and irrational in the human mind. But that’s the real game. In this analogy of us being in the starting lineup, some people are ‘outside the stadium’ and they’re practicing ‘the game’ sometimes better than *we* play it.

- that doesn’t mean that they’re called unto salvation
- that doesn’t mean that they’re better than us

Maybe in that aspect they’re better than us, and they certainly are and that’s the reality! But we’ve been given the ticket and invited to play. God knows our face, just like anybody that we know who is famous in whatever sport or whatever country. Everybody knows! They will not need a ticket or badge. They will go straight in and go to play, because that’s who they are. Everybody would want them on their team.

This is what we’ve been called to do!

Verse 45: “So that you yourselves may be the children of your Father...” *That’s when there’s a transformation!*

If you’re going to be My children, you’ve got to look like Me and talk like Me.

“...Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and on *the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and on *the* unjust” (v 45).

The ticket is not enough, and we know it’s not enough; I’m not suggesting that. But we’ve been called to play the game, and the exhortation today is

twofold, it's to continue to do that, to know and understand that this is:

- our fulltime job
- our fulltime calling
- what we're to do

Professional athletes are out there practicing every day, eight to ten hours every day with all their might Preseason, before the season begins, in any sport is brutal! It's the worst!

That's exactly the trials that we're all going through. We're in pre-season, we're in burn with everything we have. That's the one side of the of the exhortation, for us to continue to do this and understand what we're being called to.

The other part is to understand the difference between those who are God's and those who are not even in the stadium. Yet, they still could be practicing and practicing some things better than us. Sometimes if we see certain examples, instead of casting them in a certain light, just say, 'I should learn from that,' because:

- I'm playing the 'game'
- I'm playing for the 'trophy'
- I'm playing for the 'read thing'

We understand that it's not us, it's God doing it in us, but for the sake of this analogy, we are 'playing the game' and we are in the starting lineup. We're not on the bench. We were not called to sit in the stands with a ticket, or sit on the bench with our credentials, or even with a uniform. **NO! We were called to play the game!**

These are things we are called to do, and how to play the game. He says that we're going to be transformed into the image of your Father, but you have to do the things your Father says:

- love your enemies
- repay evil with good

That's what you are to do! He says:

Verse 46: "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary?...." (vs 46-47).

Yes, we are to love even more of those within the house of God, and the Bible says that; we are and that's great. But it's more than that! **It's:**

- **loving everybody**
- **repaying evil with good**
- **suffering long**
- **trusting that God will make everything**

right in His time

- He wants to see us perform the game
- He wants to see us come and actually perform and doing all these things

That's how we get to the conclusion, v 48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect."

It's His perfection in us when He comes and lives His life in us, we start looking like that, we start to bless, we start to do that! But not say, 'I've got to get away and remove myself from this situation, it's too painful.' **NO!** It's almost like in training, 'no pain, no gain'—whether in the gym, pre-season or practicing, whatever it is.

Christianity is the same: *no pain, no gain!* If we don't suffer, if we're not tested, if we don't get all of these things that we have—physical, mental, spiritual, relational—if we do not test it, then we're not getting better in the game; we're not doing what we were called to do.

Luke 12:32: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father delights in giving you the Kingdom."

It's almost like your trophy is there and God wants to give it to you. He wants you to win! He wants you to come and play and win! He would love to do that, that's what He says.

Verse 33: "Sell your possessions, and give alms...." How many times do we do that? This is also part of the 'game.' giving to the poor whenever the opportunity presents itself. To actually love others, not just the ones in the Churches of God.

"...Make for yourselves purses *that* do not grow old, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief can come near, and no moth can destroy.... [not setting your hopes on the things of this world] ...**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**" (vs 33-34). *Setting our heart in Him, in His Kingdom!*

Verse 35: "Let your loins be girded about and *your* lamps burning, and you yourselves be like men who are waiting for their lord..." (vs 35-36).

We can't be practicing the entire time; we have to be playing the entire time!

"...whenever he shall return from the wedding feast so that when he comes and knocks they may immediately open to him. Blessed *are* those servants whom the lord, when he comes, shall find watching..." (vs 36-37)—*playing, doing what He says to do!*

All of the things that He says to do, not just the basics, not just the foundational, not just in the letter. Not even just in the spirit; He wants to see

that transformation, He wants to see us go to the next step, not just the spirit of the Law' that's great and amazing and super important, and absolutely incredibly tough. none of us will get 100% down in this life. But we will try because that's the next step to the transformation, changing the heart to really be looking like Him, the One Who gives and has compassion:

- regardless of whether the person who needs compassion is in the Church or not
- regardless of whether they're deceived or not
- regardless of whether they attack us or not

That goodness of God in us, that's what He wants!

"...Truly I say to you, he will gird himself, and will make them sit down, and will come *and* serve them" (v 37). **Why?**

- because we have served others
- because we have actually lived the way that Jesus lived when He was in the flesh
- because we have actually followed His example

'The one who sees these words of Mine and practices them...' *Not only hears them, but sees them!* That's exactly why "...he will gird himself, and will make them sit down, and will come *and* serve them," because we have done the same thing. *It's a requirement!*

Verse 38: "And if he comes in the second watch, or comes in the third watch, and finds *them watching*, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Now you, therefore, be ready; for the Son of man is coming in an hour *that* you do not think" (vs 38-40). *That is exactly what we are to do, continue to practice!*

Verse 41: "Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You speaking this parable to us *only*, or also to all?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is the wise and faithful steward, whom the lord shall put in charge of his household, to give to *each one* the portion of food in season?'" (vs 41-42).

Whoever wants to be the servant the door will be open. Whoever wants to play the game; whoever wants to come in. That's exactly what He wants to do.

Verse 43: "Blessed *is* that servant whom the lord, when he comes, shall find so doing." *Doing everything!*

- the letter of the Law
- the spirit of the Law

- the things that go against our nature!

Verse 44: "Of a truth, I tell you, he will set him over all his possessions." *Because now He trusts him; he's like Me!*

Verse 45: "But if that servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delays *his* coming,' and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to be gluttonous and become drunk"—*that's the Churches of God!*

We have work to do, a lot of work to do. Not only in our personal lives and building this foundation, but also doing all these other things. Doing them out of a good heart. Not too do them for show, because that's a problem sometimes with mainstream Christianity. Sometimes they do it for show, sometimes with conviction and love, and those are part of the things that we lack; that conviction, that level of care, love and understanding toward others inside the Church and outside.

I think that's part of what we need to continue to do, to have this and not be man-servants or maid-servants, to classify people—the called, not called, the deceived, poor people, whatever. *NO!* God is in charge of us all, and He loves us all and wants all to come into His Kingdom. The fact that they don't have a ticket it may or may not be their fault. Most likely is not.

It has to start with the Father, and there's nothing special that we've done to deserve this ticket, but we have to continue to be encouraged to move forward. We've been given the ticket and it starts with the ticket and turns into a badge, then that badge turns into recognition.

It's interesting that when He says, 'That I do not know you.' He doesn't say to those who are not going into the Kingdom of God, 'I do not know what you did.' *or* 'I do not like what you did.' He says, '*I do not know you!*'

Recognition! Like a superstar! Or like a person who plays the game. That's exactly what God wants to do, *I know you, you've been playing on the field, not sitting in the stands, or sitting on the bench and warmed it up.* You're allow here, you've been given permission to come in. No, you've been here and you've been playing and I know exactly who you are. And I know exactly what you're all about. I know that you're coming into My Kingdom.

Verse 47: "And that servant who knew the will of his lord, but did not prepare, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*; but the one who did not know... [those outside the stadium] ... and did *things* worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For to whomever much has been given, from him shall much be

required; and to whom much has been committed, from him they will demand the more” (vs 47-48).

We have a great responsibility. We have a great opportunity and calling. It’s the most unbelievable things that we’re going to experience in our lifetime no matter what.

It is not just a responsibility just to do. It’s to rely and trust in God, and to get to know Him, to delve into His Word and to play the game. To be trained to be taught and coached by Him, and also through the coaches that He uses on the sidelines: *the ministry!*

At the end of the day it’s really doing what He said to do; it’s playing the game, playing that game right. Whatever happens with people outside the stadium is whatever happens. If we see somebody playing the game and playing it right, let’s give them the ‘thumb’s up’! It’s something learn for us as a the Body of Christ, to learn and understand that they do take certain Scriptures and apply certain Scriptures—not all of them—and they do understand and whatever they do we can learn.

We’re in the *real game*, and let God grow these things from the foundation to the house and to everything that is in it, so that that house built upon the Rock may not fall. That’s what God wants us to do. That’s what we’ve been called to do.

Matthew 25:31: “Now, when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the Holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon *the* throne of His glory; and He shall gather before Him all the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at *His* left. Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* foundation of *the* world. For I was hungry...’” (v 31-35).

This is the parameter, and it’s not just doing those things. I think the people outside of the stadium are doing these things. They’re doing them better than us, but the Scriptures says that that’s not the foundation. The Son will come and take that away because it’s not real.

But we have the foundation, and we have the house and are in the process of building—we’re not done—and this is going to be the result of that.

Verse 35: “For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; *I was* naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me” (vs 35-36). *These are the things that we do; how we play the game!*

- not only the ticket
- not only getting in
- not only practicing the things that we know we have to do

They don’t even see it anymore, because it’s part of their nature, part of who they really are.

Verse 37: “Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed *You*? Or thirsty, and gave *You* a drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and took *You in*? Or naked, and clothed *You*? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to *You*?’” (vs 37-39). *This became second nature! This became who they were!*

Verse 40: “And answering, the King shall say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you have done *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done *it* to Me.’” *There’s the transformation!*

This is exactly why He says, ‘Come.’ Now you not only have gotten the ticket, not only dressed up, not only played the game, but you have transformed into what God wants you to become, so that you do these things automatically. So automatically that you don’t even realize that you do them. “...**inasmuch as you have done *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done *it* to Me.**”

Then the opposite side, v 41: “Then shall He also say to those on *the* left, ‘**Depart from Me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire**, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you did not give Me *anything* to eat; I was thirsty, and you did not give Me *anything* to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not take Me in; *I was* naked, and you did not clothe Me; *I was* sick, and in prison, and you did not *come* to visit Me.’ Then they also shall answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and we did not minister to You?’” (vs 41-44).

We would have done it if we would have seen you! We want to be there, but we want to do what is required.

Verse 45: “Then shall He answer them, saying, “Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, neither did you do *it* to Me.’ And they shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (vs 45-46).

James 1:22: “Then be doers of *the* Word, and not only hearers, deceiving your own selves, because if anyone is a hearer of *the* Word and not a doer, this one is like a man considering his natural

face in a mirror. Who, after looking at himself, went away and immediately forgot what he was like. But the one who has looked into *the* perfect **law of freedom...**” (vs 22-25)—*the Law of God*, in the letter and the spirit that changes our heart and mind to really become as Christ wants us to become.

“...and has continued in *it*, this one himself has not become a forgetful hearer, but is a doer of *the* work. This one shall be blessed in his actions” (v 25).

We don’t want to be of those whom Jesus says, ‘I do not know you. Who are you?’ *I’m part of the squad...* ‘I do not know you.’ ***We don’t want to hear those words!***

But if we do these things and continue to consider everything that God has called us to that results in

- giving bread to the ones who lack
- giving the word of encouragement
- giving and doing the things for the brethren in their time of need
- always to suffer offense
- turn the other cheek
- to the one who takes, give him your cloak also
- to the one who sues us, to repay evil with good

Teach that nature, to really be like our heavenly Father; Jesus Christ gave us this great example. He was the best example the Superstar! He’s our Guide, Coach and the Owner of the team and everything.

That’s exactly what it is, and at this time when the world will be celebrating their things, let’s not think about that. If they’re doing some good things, that’s fine in terms of the doing. We’re not going to go to them for doctrine; we should never do that.

- we have been invited
- we have been given the ticket
- we have been given credentials
- we have been given access to the field
- we are expected to play as the superstars that God wants us to be

Not by propping ourselves up, but by lowering ourselves down, by knowing our place and letting God living His life in us and working His miracle transformation. Let’s do that and think about these things and continue to grow in grace and knowledge, and in this way of life.

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 12:46-50, 47

- 2) Luke 6:43-49
- 3) John 21:18-22
- 4) Matthew 5:27-48
- 5) Luke 12:32-45, 47-48
- 6) Matthew 25:31-46
- 7) James 1:22-25

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