

The Promises Of God

Encouragement & Motivation in the Promises

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I do not know that I have an unusual mind—a mind that is much different from yours; although some would think, by my sense of humor, that I might have a very unusual mind. The word "unusual" is sort of a nice word, because you can sort of play it either way. But I must admit that sometimes my mind seems so cluttered that I have a difficult time sorting out things as they should be.

With the world we live in having so much confusion and misinformation demanding our mental attention, I like to have things in order if I can—with a ribbon tied around them, so that I feel secure—on whatever the subject might be. And I do not think that I am any different than you are, in this aspect. We want things that we can lean on and that we can be sure are the truth—because it is true that *the truth does set us free*. Having things that are solid makes it easier for us.

I know that the Sabbath day is the correct day. Jesus Christ kept it, and all the apostles. I can put that in a box, trust it, and put a ribbon around it—feel secure in that. I know that the holy days are correct as well, and that they were kept by the apostle Paul and Jesus Christ Himself. I know that they are sure and solid. I know that we do not go to heaven when we die; but, to reassure you, I know that we do not go to hell to be tortured by little demons with funny horns and red suits and tails and pitchforks. That is a solid thing that I understand.

The calendar issue is something else that I feel very secure in. For some this may not, indeed, be the case. But for me, it is inconceivable that Jesus Christ (Who created us with such infinite care, and understanding the way that He works with us so tenderly and so surely) would have left His people to suffer with the wrong calendar for 1500-2000 years. To me, the Hebrew calendar is exactly correct; and that is what we should be using in our worshipping. Jesus Christ would not let His people sin for that long, and I know that.

Another area that I have longed to have organized in my thinking are the **promises** made by God to those of us who are called in this end time. So today I would like to try to assemble some of them into a package that we can refer to when we are down, or disheartened, or when confusion sets in. When I told Evelyn Ritenbaugh that I was doing this, she said, "Well, good luck;" because there are *so many* promises that God has made to us.

What you are going to be receiving today are certainly things that you already know. But I think that the review that leads up to it will be helpful. And I would hope that we could put some of these things in our minds as being sure and solid; because, as this end time progresses, we are going to need to have solid reassurance.

Because these promises are tied to the covenant, I would like to take a look at both the Old and New Covenants—the agreement that God made with Israel, and with us (individually). So, if you would, turn back to Hebrews 8.

Hebrews 8:1-9 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum [the main point]: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the

Lord pitched, and not man. [This is a tabernacle that God made.] For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: [He was not a Levite.] Who serve unto the example [copy] and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished [divinely instructed] of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mount. But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry [That is, Jesus Christ.], in as much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. [That is the key thing that you ought to remember.] For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he has made the first old [obsolete]. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.

So here we see that the Old Covenant is gone, and the New Covenant is here. What is a covenant? The term applies to various transactions—between God and man, between man and his fellow man. It is an agreement. It is an application properly of a covenant, or agreement between man and man (either tribes or nations, or between individuals) in which each party has bound himself to fulfill certain conditions—and was promised certain advantages, because he fulfilled those conditions. It is just that simple.

What was the Old Covenant? What were its promises? This is probably very basic here; but if you will turn over to Leviticus 26, we will start in verse 3.

Leviticus 26:3-5 If you will walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

What a wonderful promise!

Leviticus 26:6-13 And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And you shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.

That is the agreement. Let us take a quick look at Deuteronomy 28. This is just before they go into the Land. Moses repeats this, in a little bit different fashion.

Deuteronomy 28:1 And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the LORD thy God will set you on high above all nations of the earth.

Here is a little bit of an expanse on that original promise.

Deuteronomy 28:2-10 And all these blessing shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, and the increase of your kine, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your store. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to be smitten before your face: they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon you in your storehouses, and in all that you set your hand unto and he shall bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. The LORD shall establish you an holy people unto himself, as he has sworn unto you, if you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of you.

You will be *so special!* God says, "I'll do so much with you."

Deuteronomy 28:11-13 And the LORD shall make you plenteous in goods, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give you. The LORD shall open unto you his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto your land in his season, and to bless all the work of your hand: and you shall lend unto many nations and you shall not borrow. And the LORD shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath; if that you hearken unto the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day, to observe and to do them.

So here is *the agreement*. "If you will do this, **then** I will do this." It is simple to understand. Simply stated, God was just stating, "If you will obey My laws and statutes, I will do this for you. I'll give you wonderful physical blessings." This is something that each of us can understand in society. "IF you do this, **THEN** I'll give you this." We do this all the time in the world. You put so much down on a home, the interest rate is so much, and that is in the agreement. If we buy a car and make the payments, the car is ours. We have agreed to it. The guarantee is there; and all of these things.

For instance in our contracting with the Capitol Plaza Hotel, there is a clause in our contract that states that if we do not attend the Feast, then we have to pay them \$60,000. We asked that the clause be waived. So they sent the contract out this year, and that was not waived. It was not taken out of the contract. And so they said, "Well, we agreed to it verbally." Well, we sent the contract back—not because we did not trust them; but because whatever we sign our name to (whatever is written there) that is the contract that we have to honor. So they sent it back to us with that amended.

The nice thing about these covenants is that everything is carefully listed for both parties to fulfill. It is a simple thing. When a question comes up, one can go back to the agreement and review what was agreed to in black and white. "This is what I said that I'd do; and this is what you promised."

God's Old Covenant with Israel was this way: "If you do this, I will do that for you." But how about the New Covenant—the **better** covenant. This deals with *faith*. This deals with *believing* the promises of God. This involves *trusting* in the statements uttered by Jesus Christ. It does not involve a list to check off against, so that we can feel secure. There is more to it than this.

Turn over to Matthew 7. Our covenant is different. What is required of us is, frankly, far more exciting as well. This is at the end of the Beatitudes.

Matthew 7:28-29 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine [They were stunned by what He taught them.]: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The scribes with their "Do this and you are okay; do that and you are wrong." He taught them in a much greater fashion. The reason the teaching of Jesus was so different is that He did not just teach that sin was transgression of the stated law. He taught that sin was the transgression of the **principles and concepts** of the law. And Jesus upheld His Father's law in every way; but He amplified it too.

In the Old Testament it said, "You shall not kill." He said, "You shall not be angry." Why? Because anger leads to killing. He said, "You have to do better than that." It said, "You shall not commit adultery." He said, "You shall not look on the opposite sex [in a lustful manner]" with the new law; because lusting with the opposite sex leads to sin and to adultery. It used to be "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But He said, "Now, it's 'don't hold resentment; but turn the other cheek.'" He taught concepts and new things—and the most difficult one was "You are to love your enemy." Well, that is just way too much.

He teaches us how to pray. And, in that outline, He stresses that we must **forgive**. He says, "If you don't, I won't." That is not a hard concept to follow. And (in Matthew 18) He caps it off by saying that *if* you do not forgive from the heart, *then* He will not forgive you. God is serious about these things. It is a whole new concept. It is a change of mind, a change of personality, a change in the way of thinking and conducting ourselves that is far different from the covenant in the Old Testament.

Now, with these changes of our "requirements" comes the changing of the "rewards." These are part of the **promises** of God. Certainly physical blessings come from being obedient. But with our obedience to the **new requirements**—which are placed upon us—comes far **greater blessings** than Israel ever conceived of. These are blessings that are *eternal in nature*—something that was never offered to Israel.

Also, the New Covenant ceased to be "national" and became "individual." The New Covenant actually was never national; but the Old Covenant was. This new one is individual. God selects, today, who He is going to give this New Covenant to; and, brethren, that is **you**. You have been personally selected (John 6:44) by the Living God, the Father, to receive the New Covenant. So please take that to heart and realize how **special** this is. That you have been offered this long before the world; and, yes, those will be offered this as God sees fit in the future. But right now, God personally selected the ones to whom it would be given; and that is you, within the sound of my voice.

Now, what is the process that we should go through then? What is *our requirement* here, under the New Covenant? I hope this next section helps you. It did help me, because it was a good review for me. **Righteousness is imparted by faith**—and we cannot obtain it any other way; and that is the absolute truth.

Let us go to Romans 3. Just to give a little background here, back in verse 9 Paul asks his audience if they were better than the Jews. And he answers his own question by saying that both the Jews and Gentiles are sinners. In fact, he continues that the whole world is held under sin; and there are none that seeks God and understands. They are all unprofitable and not one does good—not even one. He spells it out flat. There is no one who is righteous before God!

Then he states that a man's throat is an open grave. He pretty much pegs us right on the button. His tongue is used for deceit, with poison under his lips; and his mouth is used for cursing and bitterness. And they rush (and if you look at the past history of man, they rush) to shed blood. There is no fear of God in them; and, indeed, the ways of peace they have not known.

Then, in verse 19, he begins to explain the only way to be saved. But, he said, first you have to understand that you are really guilty.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

This is a prerequisite. He starts out by saying, basically, that we have all admitted (and can see) this plain point—that the law speaks to them to whom it was intended; that is, the Jews and Israel. He is talking of the law that they knew was divinely inspired. The Jews had to live correctly under God's law. The Gentiles had to live right under their own moral law. The Gentiles committed adultery, killed, lied, cheated, and everything else. And so Paul's conclusion to them was to "be quiet"—because the whole world is subject to the judgment of God (and to the punishment of God), because they honestly deserve it. He said that **they all deserve death**.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

I wanted to add this from *Expositor's* too, where he said: *When human achievement is measured against what God requires, there is no place for pride or boasting—but only for silence, that lends consent to the verdict of 'guilty.'* So, you are guilty. In verse 20, Paul said that no one is going to be saved by the deeds of the law. The Jews had failed miserably, in keeping the law. The Gentiles had shattered the moralistic law to pieces, with their killing and rape and the whole works. And thus Paul's conclusion is that by no law made by man could man be justified—Jew or Gentile—in God's sight. And he wants them to understand this.

But God's law was given that man might understand what sin is. It is a rule of action. The effect of applying it to our conduct demonstrates to us what sin is. It shows us what sin is, in God's sight. And it also convicts us that we are guilty.

Romans 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without [apart from] the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law, and the prophets.

So what is he saying here? After showing the utter failure of trying to be justified by the law (whether among the Jews or the Gentiles), Paul presents the plan that God has set forth for man's justification—apart from the law. This does not mean that God did away with the law, or that Jesus Christ did not regard the law. We have to understand this as well. Rather, he was showing that *justification could not be arrived at by strict law keeping*. Paul states that this was a doctrine that they all knew about, because of the animal sacrifices. They pointed toward the future, when the Sacrifice would have to be given for man's justification.

Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

So here he is just stating that *the righteousness of God was by faith in Jesus Christ*. That is the only way it could be accomplished. It was the method of saving all of mankind. Faith in Jesus Christ—as opposed to those who were attempting it by the physical works of the law. And it was the gospel (the good news) of the Kingdom of God; and it was available to all of mankind at their calling, by God the Father.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

He just simply restates the point that we have all come short of what God has expected. Mankind has failed, and all they were doing had not gained God's approval. Therefore, they would have to face the death penalty that awaited them. He said, "You have to understand this. This is where you are, before you are called (and before you respond to it)."

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

What he is saying here is that the reason we must come to God in faith is because we have **all** broken His laws. That avenue that we had available to us (the avenue of doing the law perfectly, that we might be justified) is closed to us all; because we have all sinned. We cannot go back to that way at all. So he is telling them, "There is no amount of law keeping that is going to justify you before Jesus Christ."

Now coming to God in faith, in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, causes God to actually view us as being righteous. (And verse 25 is really an amazing verse to me; but let's not go there quite yet.) The **justification** that is given to them is **a free gift from God**. And the sense is that we have *all* been redeemed from captivity—as Israel was out of Egypt. Mr. Armstrong often said this—that *we* have been redeemed from the world, and from slavery. Again, this does not mean that we are righteous by some miracle (because we are not), but that our past sins have been forgiven. So we are now able to start (with our past sins forgiven) on the road to redemption.

Romans 3:25 Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare [demonstrate] his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. [For withholding His hand in punishing us.]

Now this was interesting. (I realize that this has been chopped up; but I just wanted to stress these parts.) God the Father has set forth His Son as "an atonement" for all of mankind. He has presented His Son as preaching the gospel, and as being a sacrifice for mankind.

Then it says that He is a propitiation—"a propitiation through faith in his blood." The word here literally means **mercy seat**. That is, that Jesus Christ is *the mercy seat*. The word "propitiation" is used elsewhere, as in Hebrews; but it is not exactly the same word. This individual word that applies to Jesus Christ means that He is the mercy seat. This is what He does for us. He is the lid of the ark, in a sense, showing the power and the mercy of God.

This came from the word *kapporeth*; and it means "to cover, and to conceal"—which is exactly what the sacrifice was to accomplish. It was to cover and conceal our past sins, and to give us the gaining of favor of God the Father—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is part of the covenant that we are in, and this is part of what has been paid for us.

Romans 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his [God's] righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.

So, he says that at the time Jesus Christ came as a sacrifice, that He (God the Father) "might be just" refers to the fact that God the Father has retained His integrity by providing a sacrifice. We would have had to die, if He had not done this. So He has *retained His integrity*. He shows that He *had a regard for the law*. Had He just given us freedom from sin, with a sacrifice, then the law would not have meant anything. So He provided Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for us. And there was no other way for salvation. Jesus Christ, in His love for us, decided (and agreed with His Father) that He had to be the penalty that had to be paid. So He showed His regard for the law by sacrificing His Son in our stead. That is what has been done for us—that He might be the justifier of those who believe in His Son.

Romans 3:27 Where is boasting then? [What can you boast of? Look what has been done for you! You did not do a thing.] It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

In other words, "How can you boast? Any of you?" The price that has been paid for you has been **tremendous**; and you did not do a thing. He loved you while you were yet sinners, and He gave His life for you. By what law have they been saved? By what works? There is only one way, and that is by the law of *faith* in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without [apart from] the deeds of the law.

There is only one way to be **justified before God** (for *us*, under the New Covenant) and that is **by faith**. Paul is not saying that we do not have to have righteous works, or that the law is done away. But he is saying that no man of himself possesses righteousness that will justify him before God.

Romans 3:29-30 Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

So he is saying, "After the whole thing is done, God only has one way of salvation for the entire world." One way is not for the Jews and another way for the Gentiles. There is only one way—and this is the New Covenant. Therefore, both must come by faith. And they cannot hang on to their own

righteousness. "I've done this correctly, therefore God owes me salvation." No. We are to humble ourselves. We are to realize that we are deserving of death (that we have sinned) and humbly, with deep thanks, accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

If the law had not been important, brethren, Jesus Christ would not have had to die. And so He wants us to understand that this is part of the New Covenant. Now knowing that we are to live by faith, what exactly is it that we must do? And here comes the interesting part. Turn with me over to Matthew 5. Richard touched on this last week, and I thought about that as I was preparing this.

Matthew 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law; and that is exactly what *our job* is, in the New Covenant. It is a lot tougher. Jesus came certainly to fulfill the prophetic aspects of the law; but from the teachings that He gave in The Beatitudes, we have a lot to do: forgiveness, mercy, and kindness—all of these things. He came to teach the fulfillment and the intent of the law as well; and in doing so, **He lived the law perfectly**. And guess what our job is! Under the New Covenant, we are to live the law as perfectly as possible. This is what we must understand and do as well.

Now turn a few chapters over to John 6. This is where they asked, "What is the work?"

John 6:28-29 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent.

When He said "Believe on Him," He means believe on the way He lives, believe on the way He thinks, and believe on the way He acts. Imitate Him and do everything that He does—that we might be like Him and that we might obtain the mind of Jesus Christ. This is part of what we have to do.

Now, the apostle Paul referred to this as well—to *believe on Him*—in Hebrews 6, when he said to *go on to perfection*. And Herbert W. Armstrong said the same thing, in a little bit different way. He referred to it as *the building of godly character*. We are to continue to grow—not live in the past, but to grow. I think all of us will remember this definition. And notice that it is not given to the church collectively. This is something that each of us has to understand. It is given to us **individually**. This is our individual responsibility, just as the New Covenant is given to us individually. Someday everybody will have it, and it will all be "collective;" but right now it is "individually" given. So this squarely places the responsibility of *overcoming* on each one of us (by ourselves).

Mr. Armstrong said,

Godly character is the attainment of the ability, in a separate independent entity [This is not "collective."] with free moral agency, to be able to discern right from wrong, the true values from the false, truth from error, the right way from the wrong—and then make the right choice or decision (even against self-desire, impulse, or temptation) plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and do the right.

Wow! That is even tougher. It cannot just be the letter [of the law]. It involves change in our mind, change in how we think, change in how we act and live—our calling summarized. We have a much *larger job*, but we have a much *greater reward*.

Matthew 22:35-36 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

And that is the question we have to ask for ourselves, when we are called.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said unto him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

That is, the entire of the Old Testament—the spirit and intent of God's law. This is what we are to strive for, to grow toward. This is what the covenant has been given to us for—that we might accomplish this. Brethren, we are to set our will to esteem, and to venerate, and to fulfill our duty. We are to love and serve God the Father and Jesus Christ with all of our heart. It is no small thing that we have been called to.

Notice what Albert Barnes said. (And, indeed, Albert Barnes' language is 1800s language; and you will have to adjust to it.)

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." The meaning of this is, you shall love him with all your faculties or powers. [Not TV sometimes. Not something else sometimes.] You shall love him supremely, more than all other beings and things, and with all the ardor possible.

I put a note in here that says that **our love is to be proactive toward God**. It is not to be passive—where we just sit and say, "I love God." We are to be *proactive* to where we step out and do what God wants.

To love him with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely on him, more strongly than on anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear at his command. With all your soul. Or, with all your life. This means, to be willing to give up the life to him, and to devote it all to his service; to live to him" [This is what Romans 12:1 talks about—to be a living sacrifice, to deny your ways and to live God's way. The New Covenant requires a lot of us, brethren. It just does.] "and to be willing to die at his command." [Or, to give up our life. To remain faithful and to love . . .]

With all your mind. [And this is one that can be more difficult.] "To submit the [our] intellect to his will." [That means that we change our way of thinking to His way of thinking.] "To love his law and the gospel more than we do the decisions of our own minds". [That is a real toughie. "I want to do it my way." and God says, "Do it this way."] "To be willing to submit all our faculties to his teaching and guidance, and to devote to him all our intellectual attainments and all the results of our intellectual efforts." [That sounds a little formal. But, in the book of Mark, it adds...] **With all your strength.** "With all the faculties of soul and body. To labor and toil for his glory, and to make that the great object of all our efforts." [In other words, we live for God now.]

The second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. You are to serve them and sacrifice for them—in our homes (with our wives and our husbands, and our children); and we are to serve one another (in gentleness, patience, kindness, and forgiveness). We are to serve the brethren. I won't go into Matthew 25; but you know that says, "I was in prison, and you visited me. I was hungry, and you fed me." We are to put our money where our mouth is, brethren, and serve one another gently, and carefully, and honestly, and faithfully. That is what God is after.

This is the spirit and intent of God's law; and it is also what the Kingdom of God is all about. And God wants us to have this mind now. So this then, brethren is the job that each one of us has been given to accomplish with this New Covenant. It is accomplished by means of **faith**, and all we are told to do in God's Word. And as an encouragement, we are to have faith in the promises that God has given to us. These you all know, but I am just going to touch on them a little bit. Turn back to Hebrews 11 please. God wants us to stand on *His promises*, His faith.

Hebrews 11:1-2 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

They had faith in what? *The promises of God!* And they understood that the world was created in a single day; and they were not concerned about evolution. So what he is saying here is, basically, that faith is the **substance** of things hoped for. The term "substance" indicates a way of living that is given to us by God, and promises that are made to us. These are what we are to use to be sure and certain of the foundation of the way we are to live.

The word "sub" means "beneath", and the word "stance" means "to stand upon". Thus all that God has told us is what we *firmly stand on* as being absolutely true. And that is what God wants us to have in our minds, and to understand.

Brethren, I hope we appreciate this. So many times, when we have been in the church for so many years, we begin to take these things that we have learned for granted. But God has opened our minds to the truth; and because of that, we have the ability to see and know what others in this world do not have the foggiest idea of—no concept.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no prophetic vision, the people cast off restraint: but he that keeps the law [in spite of that, will be], happy [because he is obeying God].

Brethren, God realizes that we want prophetic vision. We were discussing earlier here, that I do not know too much about prophecy. I do know what God says, but I cannot put dates on it. I cannot put names with it. I know that God is going to come. Jesus Christ is going to return. And we are going to be saved. I know that there are prophecies to encourage us, and that is good.

But God gives us **promises**, in a sense, that do not require a great deal of understanding of prophecy. And God wants us to call into remembrance what He has revealed to us through His apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong—that we might be encouraged, that we might be lifted up (in times of trial, in times of concern). It is these promises from Him that give hope to those who have gone before us, that we might be forward looking (as they were forward looking).

Some today feel discouraged. But when we know that God is with us, brethren, it lifts us up. We have an example of this with Asa. Please turn back to II Chronicles 15. Hopefully, before the day is finished, we are going to know that God is with us and that we have Him on our side completely.

II Chronicles 15:1-9 And the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear you me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while you be with him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel has been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. [How encouraging that is for us today.] And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. [Sounds a little like the church today.] And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. Be you strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. [And that applies to us today. As we go forward, our faithfulness will be rewarded.] And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell [came] to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

So it was encouragement. Brethren, God wants us to know that **He is with us** as well. And He wants us not to lose heart in the trials that we go through.

Now, some view the church today as in Lamentations 2:9; but I assure you this is NOT the case.

Lamentations 2:9 Her gates are sunk into the ground; he has destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

This is how some people tend to view us today. Many, in and out of the church, think the church is floundering and without overall direction from God. Certainly, in some cases that is true or it may be. And yet we know that God is, indeed, working very diligently with His church—in, perhaps, a way that the church does not appreciate. They would like things, perhaps, as they used to be. But we must not faint. God is working with us. He has given us promises that are sure and solid, for us to hang on to, that we might not lose heart in these times of trials.

Now, thinking back on what Mr. Armstrong has taught us and the blessings that we have had of that knowledge, God shows us who He is and what plan He has for us. He does not want us to focus on the confusion; but He wants us to consider what He has revealed to us.

The first thing that God has revealed to us is that *He is a Family*. Turn with me back to Genesis 1. Mr. Armstrong taught us about this.

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

The word here, for God, is *Elohim* ; and it indicates *Family*.

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image. [We know what that is for, brethren.] After our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

God created us. He gave us dominion. And He showed us that the earth was set in space for this one purpose—to create man, that we might be created *in His image*, and that we might have a future. This was the God of the Old Testament. We see here that certainly that there were at least two Family members, because God said, "Let Us create man in our image."

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word [That was Jesus Christ. We have had that revealed to us, as well.] And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

This was the plan that God had. You can read about this in Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; and Hebrews 1:2-3. God the Father made everything through Jesus Christ.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.

He points out that **we** are going to be the Family of God—something that those in the old covenant and in the world today have no idea of.

John 1:13 Even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

God had a purpose for mankind, and He wanted him for His Family. What a wonderful promise for the New Covenant! So we see that God is a Family; and that man is to be created in the image of God, and has dominion (as we read) and the ability to think and to create—with the potential (upon being called by God) to repent, and to be accepted into the Family of God. We understand this, and nobody else does. And that, brethren, we can put in a box and put a ribbon around it.

We understand also that the wages of sin is death. We, at this time, do not have eternal life; but it is available to us as a gift from God the Father. Our sins brought upon us the death penalty. We understand that. And this can be forgiven by accepting Jesus Christ (as we heard in Romans 3) as our Savior, through His sacrifice. This is *a promise from God* as well—that we can be forgiven.

Turn over to Colossians 2, because this has not been touched on for a long time; but we have had IOUs that had our name of them. We have sinned; and, because of that sin, our IOUs have to be paid. If it had not been for Jesus Christ, *we* would have had to suffer death.

Colossians 2:6-14 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him. [In other words, imitate Him. Do exactly what He does.] Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. [Do not go back into the old ways.] For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. [He is in charge

of everything! And He has **power**, completely to help us; and that is a wonderful thing.] In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened [made alive]. [A change has come about in us, brethren—because of Jesus Christ's death, and because of the New Covenant.] [You] He has quickened [made alive] together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us.

I think the word here is *cheirographon* [in the Greek], and it just means an IOU. You sinned, and you owed God your life. But by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that was paid. That IOU was paid in full, and you now belong to God. (And we will see how wonderful that is, later.)

So He has ***made us alive***, and that is a wonderful gift from God. We can have that surely in our mind, as being a truth. And as we *slip* throughout the years of our calling, we can have the assurance again (from I John 1:9) that:

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So when we have made mistakes (when we have made a fool of ourselves, or done something really silly) and *repented*, we have that promise as well—that we can be forgiven of the mistakes that we have made. And that is sure, as well.

We know the promise of being Family forever. This is sort of a special one of mine, because of Dr. Stavrinides. He had a really difficult time with this one. I was on an airplane (going to Reno, Nevada) when I read his comments on this; and it certainly almost made me put my head through the side of the airplane.

Romans 8:28-29 We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. [And that is you.] For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Dr. Stavrinides had that question. And he said, "How can He be called the firstborn of many brethren, if there aren't any more brethren?" I thought that was a really logical question. So Dr. Stavrinides put his answer down; and he said, "It's just a title. It doesn't mean a thing." And that is how he solved it.

Why would you call somebody "the firstborn of many brethren," if there were not any more brethren? We have promise, as I said, of being Family together; but he had a difficult time with this.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. [That is not too hard to understand.] And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.

We are going to inherit all that He inherited. Once somebody asked me *what we will inherit*. We will inherit the lifestyle that Jesus Christ lives in, the environment that He lives in. We will inherit a mind

that is so clean and clear and pure that we will be able to help and to serve, and energy plus. We will never get tired. Even though we are older, we will just never wear out. It is a wonderful thing. And one more thing that He will give us—He will give us **power!**

At this time in our life, we see things that need to be done; but we do not, perhaps, have the mind to do it. But at that time Jesus Christ inherited all power. You can read about that in Matthew 28:18, where He said, "As a result of **all power** being given to Me, you go forth into the world" and so forth. At that time, **we** will have power to make corrections, to teach, and to actually work with this world—as it says in Revelation 2 and 3—to correct the world, to rule it, and to do it correctly. We do not have that now; but that is a promise that we can count on, because it will be there for us.

We are even told what we are going to be like when He returns. That is in I Corinthians 15. Here we read again that Jesus Christ will be resurrected first, and that we will follow. That should be encouraging to us as well, because that is **a promise** that has been given to us.

I Corinthians 15:19-23 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept [The first of all who have died.]. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

So here we have I Thessalonians 4:16 and on—that at the last trump, the dead will be raised. We have that assurance [or, promise] that we will be with Christ.

I Corinthians 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come [up]?

And He tells us—and this is a promise—what we are going to be like.

I Corinthians 15:40-41 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.

This indicates, at least from what I can tell, that there will be a difference for those who are resurrected; and it will be noticeable by the glory that they possess. He goes on to say:

I Corinthians 15:42-47, 49-52, 54-57 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. [And that is what we have to look forward to. This is coming to *us*.] Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural [which is what we are now]; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

I Corinthians 15:49-52 And as we have borne the image of the earthy [or, the dust], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. [We have this to look forward to. It is **a promise.**] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God [We all know this.]; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [And that is something that *we* have to look forward to.].

I Corinthians 15:54-57 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. [Then, in an exhalant fashion, he goes on] But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Death and the grave will be done away with. They will be no longer here, and we will have eternal life.

Now, God repeats this in Hosea in a different way. Because of sin, death has had control over us.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction: repentance [pity] shall be hid from mine eyes.

God will not change His mind. He is going to save.

I Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Why? Because of **God's promises.**

To encourage us, we are told what form we are going to take.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is [which we cannot do now].

Philippians 3:20-21 For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake [With what?] with your likeness.

So *we* will be like Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:10-16 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke unto me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. [Again, we see His power.] And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

Is that going to be *us*? God says it is.

Daniel 12:2-3 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Matthew 13:43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

We are going to be just like Jesus Christ, brethren; and that is *one of the promises*.

We will not go through this; but there is another promise that is in store for us. That is found in Matthew 25:14-23. (And it is in Luke 19 as well.) Those that have been given talents, and have perfected their talents, will be put in charge of cities and governments. And it will be based on their ability—not on their IQ, or something of that nature. It will be based on how well we have done with what we have been dealt in this life. God is completely fair. And every one of us—from the greatest to the least—will have opportunity for *great success!*

You see—God wants us in His Kingdom; and there is no doubt about that. We even have the promise of *an office* being prepared for us (in John 14:1-3). An office is being prepared *specifically for you*. God did not just call you randomly without a thought. He looked at your talents, your abilities. And, granted, many of us do not realize why God called us. We look at ourselves and see our imperfections. But God has an office for *you*. Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you." That could easily be determined as "office." So God has called you, for a specific purpose. He is going to see that you have that office—one that you will be thrilled with and that you will accomplish great things with, and be fulfilled completely.

We have the promise, brethren, of the Last Great Day—when all of our loved ones who have died, and all of those lost in the wars of history, and all of those in the world who have never had a chance to really understand the truth will be resurrected. And we will have a chance to work with them. It will be an exciting life for you—a life of fulfillment. You may have the chance to work with mother, father, brother, sister, child (perhaps) that has died. You may have a chance even to work with your archenemy, that hates you. What a wonderful chance this will be, that God will give you.

Does God heal today? You bet He does! He may work with us sometimes in our illnesses. As the apostle Paul said—once he saw that God let him keep his affliction for his own good, then he rejoiced in that. But we can look forward to the complete healing that is going to come, beyond our wildest dream (in I Corinthians 15).

Considering Hebrews 13:8 (which simply states that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever), let us maybe answer the one question that the church is asking today. In this scattering of the church, the one big question that people have on their mind is, "Is God with us today?" And the answer is "You bet He is! He has not left us."

I have listed a group of scriptures; and I am going to just read them, because we do not have time to turn to them. But **God is faithful to His people**. He has been through all the ages, and He is faithful today.

II Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect [at peace and loyal] toward him.

Psalms 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

He has not gone off somewhere. To show how He takes care of His people:

Psalms 113:5-9 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwells on high, who humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise you the LORD.

Genesis 28:15 And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

And those things are **His promises**, which He has spoken.

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD your God, he it is that does go with you; he will not fail you, nor forsake you.

I Samuel 12:22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it has pleased the LORD to make you his people.

Isaiah 41:10 Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isaiah 41:17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

Psalms 37:28 For the LORD loves judgment [justice], and forsakes not his saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Psalms 9:9-10 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know your name will put their trust in you: for you, LORD, have not forsaken them that seek you.

Isaiah 44:21 "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are my servant: I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you will not be forgotten of Me.

Even in Lamentations, which is such a sad book, it says:

Lamentations 3:31-32 For the Lord will not cast off forever. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 28:20 Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world [age].

I would like for you to turn over to John 10 now—because, to me, this is exciting. This is where Jesus Christ is discussing those who hear His voice and belong to Him.

John 10:25-29 Jesus answered them, "I have told you, and you believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not, because you are not of my sheep. [And **we are** His sheep.] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. [Here is the exciting part.] And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand [ever]. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

So you see, brethren, Jesus Christ is in complete charge; and no one can take us from Him!

Hebrews 13 is one of the best confirming scriptures that God is with us.

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conversation [conduct] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he has said, I will never [never, never, never, no **never**] leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

That is what it means. It means that this is just as solid as a rock. But did these promises encourage those who went before us? We use Job 14 in the funeral services.

Job 14:14-15 If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands.

Job understood that he was the work of God's hands. Genesis 1:26-27—he knew that he was made in God's image; and he knew about I Corinthians 15—that his change would come. What about Abraham? Was he encouraged about this? Did he understand there was a kingdom coming? He had an opportunity, perhaps, to be the king of the world—because of his position. Yet, let us turn over to Hebrews 11 and just read about that—because all of these individuals hung in, because of **the promises of God**.

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

Here we see that he left, much like Moses left being prince of Egypt (not like the movie, but in fact) to humble himself and to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Why? Because of faith in the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:31-39 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith [trust in God] subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the alien. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection [and the **promises** that God extended to them]. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy.) They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report [or, testimony] through faith, received not the promise.

And yet it was so important to them that they did not let down. Now what about us brethren? Will we have all the help that we need to become sanctified by God and to make it into His Kingdom? Sure you will. Please turn over to Romans 8, and we will conclude with this scripture.

Romans 8:31-32 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

He gave His life for us. He wants us to make it.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that dies, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

He is on our side, all the way.

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors [How?] through him that loved us [and **the promises** that He has given us]. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus Christ was given for us. He sits in judgment over us, and He intercedes for us. We are to take heart because (as we read in John 10) nothing can take us from Him. We can rebel—and that is up to us. But *nothing* can take us from Him.

Indeed, these are trying times. Times not only to try men's souls, but also times when Satan tries to take men's souls from God. Many try to discourage us with different doctrine, different focus, stories of this and that—to get us off the right track. But, brethren, we cannot allow that to happen.

We cannot allow ourselves to have our eyes taken off the truth given to us by God through His apostle about the future that is in front of us.

Brethren, we have been given the New Covenant—with its forgiveness, with its requirements to overcome, with its gifts of God's Holy Spirit. And we have agreed to it—because we are here today. Because of our accepting this contract (so to speak), we are now heirs to **all the promises** that God has set forth for us. All the wonderful things that God has prepared for them that love Him—things that we cannot even begin to imagine. But I have got to tell you that it must be the most wonderful future in the entire universe. So based on this, brethren, be faithful and do not let down. A wonderful future awaits us all!