

Prepare

The 21st Century

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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This is not a typical Last Great Day sermon, as the title of it is called “Prepare.”

For many years, Mr. Herbert Armstrong always said that God was giving man time to come to the understanding that he, man, could not govern himself apart from God. Man had to realize that he could not save himself, and that man’s way would lead to destruction. I am here to tell you that is about to take place.

It was said that what made Winston Churchill a great politician was that he could not only see what was on the horizon, but he could see what was over the horizon. I recently read a book called *Preparing for the 21st Century*, and I am going to give you a book report. It is by Dr. Paul Kennedy. I started to read the book, and I got to page 60, and I had to put the book down. It was not like *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, but the information in there was so traumatic that I just had to put it down, I had to give my mind a rest.

While my wife was buying clothes the other day, I was sitting outside, like all good husbands do, and there was a man sitting next to me. He was a doctor, and he was waiting for his wife to come out, and we got to talking. He brought this book up, saying that it was just reviewed, and that it got an excellent review. Somebody back East had reviewed the book, and he said when he finished it, he was so enervated as to what is coming on us, he could not even close the cover.

My purpose, in part, is to give you a little insight, probably an insight that you had not seen before, as to what is on and over the horizon.

Paul Kennedy, the man who wrote the book, is a PhD from Oxford. He is now a professor of history at Yale. He has a focus on modern strategic and international affairs. He also wrote a book called *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. The book, *Preparing for the 21st Century*, is based on the storyline or the premise of a man named Malthus, who wrote an article in 1798. He wrote a paper on population, and this is what Dr. Kennedy studies. He studies population, and what happens when it gets too large. He understands what happens when you cannot support a population, what is happening with technology.

He took this old paper, written by Malthus back in 1798, and it appears that Malthus focused on what appeared to be the greatest problem facing the human race: the power of population (and I will say this, the power of population without God) is infinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce substance for man. What he is saying is that as the population increases, and especially with the way that we are treating the earth today, that man cannot be supported.

Robert Malthus based his argument on the fact that Britain was doubling their population every 25 years. What was happening was England and France were being crowded more and more, and the land was not able to produce. Malthus wrote this paper, saying that everybody was going to starve. It would be catastrophic. But he could not see what was on the horizon for England. Dr. Kennedy feels that Malthus’ paper, written in 1798, is far more important today than it ever was then.

What saved England at that time was 30 million people migrated to America. The agricultural revolution hit, with crop rotation and new breeding techniques, and this staved off starvation. The Industrial Revolution came, the steam engine, coal to supply the steam engine; that produced electricity, thus they had industry. Even though the population grew by four-fold, the national product grew by 14-fold. There was money and there were jobs for everybody. England had 5 million pounds of export in the 1780s, and it grew upwards to 40 million pounds in the 1820s.

Dr. Kennedy said that Malthus' theory was absolutely correct, that the population would double every 25 years, and it would cause a tremendous race between consumption and resources. But what Malthus could not see was the power of technology. This is the power that we tend to look at all the time.

Today, we have overpopulation, pressure on the land, and social instability on the one hand. On the other hand, we have technology's power, both to increase productivity, and to displace traditional jobs. This is what is confronting us.

What Dr. Kennedy said was it is not so much the nature of our global problems, but their intensities. Populations are now in the billions, rather than the millions, and they have to be dealt with. The "have not" type nations are the nations that are growing the most. He mentioned Africa, and how as Africa reproduces, and their children grow up and marry, they buy herds of cows or cattle, putting the cattle on the land. The cattle graze the land, which becomes depleted, turning to desert. Even though on the one hand you have increasing population, on the other hand, you have devastation because of it. This is what is facing the world.

The structure of Dr. Kennedy's book is in three areas. First, it analyzes the major forces bearing down on our world, and the term "bearing down" is really important. It discusses their implication, it looks at the new technology (computers, satellites, information systems, instant communication), and how they are globalizing the world's businesses and how companies operate. It shows the differences between the developed nations and the underdeveloped nations. It looks at the world's different regions and their capacity to handle all of the changes that are on the horizon.

Interestingly enough, he said that Japan is probably the one nation that is best able to handle what is coming. The reason is, they have a tight little island and they are accustomed to following a plan—you only have 2 ½ children, only 1 ½ children—the entire nation tries to go along with it. They also seem to pay themselves first.

In the book, he also said the Europe would unite. He did not say how many nations, but that they had a pretty good chance of surviving. But for England and America, he said they are just going to try and muddle through, which is sort of interesting—no plan, just try and muddle through.

He has a section discussing how can the world prepare for the changes that are coming.

As population grows, it competes for available resources, but all people cannot compete on an equal basis. He said the best guess for world population, between the year 2025 and 2050, what will that be? In 1825, there were 1 billion people on the face of the earth. In 1990, there were 5.3 billion. He said that in the year 2025, there will be 8.5 billion. People have suggested a range of where the population will settle: some say 7 to 9 billion, some say 10 to 11 billion, some same 14 billion. These numbers do not mean much to you yet, but they will.

In 1950-1955, the world's increase was 47 million annually. That is all the world grew. 1985-1990, the increase was 88 million annually. From 1995 to 2000 is 112 million annually. The increases are taking place primarily in the developing nations. It is going to cause some problems.

For example: last year, the increase in Europe was 2/10ths of a percent. The increase in Africa was 3%. Africa was 1/2 the population of Europe in 1950. In 1992, Africa was equal to the population of Europe. By the year 2025, if they all do not die off from something else, they will be 3 times the population of Europe. Do you begin to see where some of the things are taking us?

China is 1.1 billion. By the year 2025, it will be 1.5 billion. India was 853 million, they will jump to 2 billion. Pakistan will be 267 million, the size of the United States. Indonesia was 245 million, they will be 263 million. Mexico will be 150 million. Iran will be 122 million.

The interesting part is that these numbers, and we have to realize this, represent human beings that require 3-4000 calories of food and 4 1/2 pounds of water a day. It is important that we realize what is coming—I will tell you why later. This is from the *Los Angeles Times*, called "Servings at the World's Table":

Serving at the world's table gets smaller. Cropland and fisheries are less productive, experts warn, but each year, the planet has 91 million more mouths to feed.

Washington: the world's 5.47 billion people are sharing a dinner table that is slowly shrinking, according to agronomists and environmental researchers. As 91 million more crowd in per year, the world's farms, ranches and fisheries are putting less and less on their plates. Degradation of the world's cropland and grazing lands, and depletion of its fisheries, as well as an ominous decline in the effectiveness of fertilizers, are beginning to slow, and in some case, reverse, the growth of food supply that has steadily reduced world hunger since 1950.

Our future world grain output per person, which climbed 40% between 1950 and 1984, has fallen 8% over the last eight years, after a rise of 78% over 40 years. World meat production per person has declined nearly 1% the past two years, and the catch of fish, which more than quadrupled from 1950 to 1990 has dropped by 7% in three years.

The reasons for worldwide decline in production follow a clear pattern. All appear to be the result of a reckless exploitation of land and ocean resources.

Ocean-going fishing fleets have netted such high yields that dinner table staples like cod, mackerel and tuna cannot sustain their population.

In other words, they are catching so many fish that the fish cannot reproduce. We stopped at the museum down here to see the whale exhibit. When Greenpeace, who have the boat that goes out to try to stop the whaling, went out, they found that the hunters were going after small whales, because the larger whales had been depleted. They could see that if this continued, there would be no whale population left, because the whales never had a chance to mature.

The apparent downturn in meat production comes from a different sort of environmental breakdown. The grasslands that nourish cattle and sheep are being pushed to capacity on every continent, including North America, experts have concluded. Because much of it has been overgrazed, the soil

has eroded and been robbed of nutrients, which stunts the growth of grass and eventually changes the grazing range into desert.

You begin to see what is coming, brethren.

The growth of irrigated land worldwide has fallen since 1978, due to a spreading scarcity of fresh water. I used to live in the San Joaquin valley, in the Fresno area. They would love to flush out the aquifer if they could. It is so full of pesticides and things of that nature that the water and the soil is just hurting. I have heard the farmers say that they would love to get rid of it, but where do you put it? Into the ocean, which has its problems as well.

Meanwhile, farmers have discovered that crop yields for grain have been falling as overworked soil becomes depleted of nutrients. In *Vital Trends*, they noted that farmers used ever-larger quantities of fertilizers to raise the productivity of grains by 3% from 1950 to 1984, but as farmers in the United States and western Europe have learned, more fertilizer no longer brings higher yields. Their use of fertilizer has leveled off.

With population increase, people will be leaving the land and moving into the cities. It is estimated that by the end of the century, there will be 20 megacities with populations of 11 million or more. That is a lot of people in a city.

On the news, China is having a problem. They have what they call "the blind crowd." The blind crowd are people coming off the land. They have 90 to 100.2 million people that are just wandering all over China, coming off the land and going into the cities. The cities cannot handle them, they are not sure what to do. These people do not have any skills, they are very rural. They come in, and they just stand and gawk at the buildings. One of the things they are doing is stealing manhole covers, cutting them up to melt them down to earn some money. This would be difficult on your car as you drove along the street. But crime is taking place now, because these people have to eat.

Mexico City will be 24.4 million. Sao Paulo, Brazil, will be 23.6 million; Calcutta, 16 million; Bombay, 15 million; Shanghai, China, 14.7 million.

This will change the concepts of urban living. In the past, the cities were centers for culture, wealth, creativity, and fine homes. But megacities will be the center of poverty and social collapse.

We heard Mike Ford comment that there were 25,000 people per square mile in New York. Statistics indicate that there will be 143,000 people per square mile in Jakarta, 130,00 people per square mile in Singapore.

Dr. Kennedy said consider what this is going to do to the cities, to our society. Consider the burdens on housing, transportation, sanitation, health care, food distribution, education. You can begin to see the pressure that is going to build up in this world, it is just coming.

To satisfy a labor force of 1.76 billion people, and by the year, 2025, 3.2 billion people, there will need to be 38 to 40 million new jobs per year, just to give these people hope.

We had the Los Angeles riots. The government comes in, and they want to do something for the people there. The people do not have hope, and that is where the riots come from. There is no hope for a job, for a house.

One of our men said, back in the 1940s nobody ever thought of not being able to purchase a house. Everybody bought a house, it was “your right.” You could buy a house, it was cheap. But here, this is not going to happen, and these people are not going to have any hope. When you do not have hope, you become restless, and when the people are restless, then governments are forced to do things.

This goes into national security. Dr. Kennedy brought out that as the population in the wealthier societies declines, so does the manpower available for military (and I might add, the heart for being in the military). But in the nations that are developing at a very rapid rate, their military is increasing. With the dissolving of the Soviet Union, their missiles are available for sale. So many things are taking place around us, we have got to be aware that pressures are building.

Dr. Kennedy asks, what causes a decline in birthrate? You might say “less children,” and that would be a valid thing to say. Socially, in the western nations, it is the woman’s role that has caused the decline. She now wants a career, she postpones having children, and less growth opens the door for other nationalities to fill the jobs that would have been taken by the children that she would have produced.

Dr. Kennedy comments that in a very real sense, when we have less children, we vacate the future. I had never thought of that, because other nationalities come in, and they take over the jobs that our children would have filled.

Our population is set to rise 25% by the year 2025, while our neighbor Mexico will rise by 88% and Guatemala will rise 225%.

Because of the many increases in these other countries, they are going to want to leave the poverty and come to our shores. Dr. Kennedy refers to the tens of millions who will cross our borders and change the lifestyle that you are so accustomed to.

In Los Angeles, there is an area called Little Saigon. It is filled with Vietnamese citizens. Our government had to go in there and ask them to allow us to go into their stores. They were not going to let Americans go into their stores; this was their own little city, their own little Vietnam. We know that “the stranger among us is going to rise up over us.”

Dr. Kennedy brought out that the 1/6th of the world’s population that controls 5/6th of the world’s wealth is going to feel tremendous pain.

I want to read to you about communications and the financial revolution and the multinational corporations:

Except for black marketers and drug dealers, the physical handling of large amounts of currency notes is rapidly becoming redundant. Flows of paper have been replaced by electronic transmissions that take place around the clock, picked up in one capital market when another capital market shuts down for the night. From one major exchange to another—Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore; London, Frankfurt and Zurich; New York, Chicago and Toronto—trading yen futures or General Motors stock goes on 24 hours a day, and creates a single market. Daily foreign exchange flows amount to about \$1 trillion a day, [can you picture a business that will do \$365 trillion?] and far outweighs

the sums employed for the international purchase of goods and services, or investments in overseas plants. Indeed, by the late 1980's, more than 90% of this trading in the world's foreign exchanges was unrelated to trade or capital investment.

As companies become globalized and move facilities from this country, we suffer with unemployment and it erodes the people's capacity to govern or to control their own affairs.

I watched the Senate investigation on CSPAN concerning Japanese automobiles in this country. One senator said, "I foresee that we will have riots in the streets within 10 years. There will be massive riots over loss of jobs, loss of being able to purchase food, homes, things of this nature." It was quite sobering to hear him say that. Brethren, things are changing, and I want you to realize that. I want your antenna to be up.

With every book of this type, the author always makes the comment at the end, and he is very candid, that this type of thing portends disaster, but, science and technology will overcome all of this, and we will be able to go forward and have a bright, cheerful future.

But on page 330 of this book, he did not say that. I quote:

Moreover, efforts to harmonize economic and political structures will be complicated by trends which were scarcely evident three generations ago, but now threaten to exacerbate or accelerate social relations in all manners of ways, and may even threaten the long-term existence of humankind itself.

What he is saying is that what is on the horizon, as far as he sees it, may rip the fabric of our society and bring destruction to all mankind.

What could alter population? What could slow this down? He said AIDS is like an iceberg, with just the tip showing. There are certain areas of Africa where 25-35% of the people are HIV positive. He brought out that there are probably an additional 100 million.

We have statistics that show that 70 million have been lost in wars, which may be high. Here, we have 100 million, outside of Africa, will probably die of AIDS. I heard a comment from Ireland, where they expect that 13 million women will contract AIDS or die of it by the year 2000.

In our area, we have a disease that has just cropped up from the Four Corner area. You have flu-like symptoms, and you are dead within 24 to 36 hours. This is the hantavirus, and they found this in field mice in Southern California. They found this in deer blood in Southern California. We have not had cases that I know of, but things are on the horizon.

Some of you have read Pat Robertson's book on new world order. This is something that else that can deplete the population. He says that going into the new world order would cost 2 billion lives, killed trying to bring one world government.

Most of you are aware of all the things about the new world order and the one world government. These are things that if what the John Birch Society and other authors say are true, America will be

taken over from within. Instead of San Antonio, it will be “Area 6.” The name *America* could even be gone, forever. Things that we are so accustomed to. Because nobody is going to take over America from the outside, we are too strong.

One of our ladies who had reads a lot of these things asked, how can we prepare for what is coming? Brethren, the answer is that we cannot prepare for what is coming. We have to prepare for the Kingdom of God. That is what I told you all of this for.

We cannot store ammunition, we cannot store water, we cannot store bullets. Some of these people are saying we have to defend Christianity by killing all of those people. That is certainly not the answer. We cannot prepare for what is coming, there is not any way that you are going to prepare for it. The only choice you have is to not prepare at all, or to prepare for the Kingdom of God.

It would appear that life as we know it, in this world, will be altered drastically in the very near future, whether that is 5 or 10 or 15 years, I do not know—or 1. It may be that the most frightening time ever to come upon the face of the earth is just over the horizon.

It is interesting to note that nobody can be a conscientious objector, and say, “I’m not going to participate in it.” It will not matter if you have millions of dollars, you are going to be in it. There is no place you are going to hide. We had better realize that it is coming.

Why am I telling you this? Is it to frighten you? No, it is not to frighten you.

Sometimes I do not have the depth that I would like to have when I speak. But I learned something in the service, and it is this: unless you see disaster coming, you will not train. You flat out will not train. You will give it “lip service,” but you will not put your back into it.

When you know you are going into combat, and that your life is going to depend on your training, you listen to every word the instructor says. You make a change in your habits and in your life, your body and your thinking, in every way, because you know that your life is going to be threatened. That is what I want you to understand here. It is sort of a sobering thing, in a way.

I would like to relate our calling, and the things that we have to do, to some of the experiences that I had in the service.

We all know that when the Army gets a brand-new recruit, they work at changing him, mentally and physically. They put him on a military base; he cannot go off the base. He is there from morning to night for 8 or 10 weeks. He is taught to do things the “Army way.”

I do not know if you have ever thought of this, but this is exactly what God has done to you. He has brought you into basic training, and you are being trained now to stand at the end time. You better listen-up to your training.

The new recruit is taught to conform to the Army’s thinking, to their way of doing things, he is taught to keep himself as all of the other men do. He is taught to act the same way in every aspect of his day, as his contemporaries. His soft civilian body is changed by tremendous exercise and running, to build up his strength, so that he can withstand the stresses of what is coming on him. He is training with the weapons that he is going to be using and the equipment that he is going to be using. Then he is given the tactics of how he is going to be using it. Certainly, this is what God intends.

When I was 21, I weighed 228 pounds and I had a 34 inch waist. I learned something at that time. I was in pretty good condition, I could run pretty far and do lots of calisthenics. We were getting ready to go over to Korea. They had a bunch of old sergeants—they would be young to me now—these men, between their ears, in their minds, were soldiers. They knew they were trained. But when they finally had to participate, they found they were out of shape. I can remember them wheezing on a 15-mile hike. I remember them almost dying; nobody died, but the agony was all over their face. It took them a long time to get back in shape.

You probably have an idea of where I am going. We have to get back in shape. That is why God calls you and puts you in this special outfit, if you will.

Brethren, we have to come out of the world and start to conform to our leader, and that is Jesus Christ and God the Father. We have to strain to change from the sloppy habits, sloppy thinking, sloppy conditions we allowed in our life, and start to conform to those things that are going to help us to be holy, to be perfect. Perfecting those skills may well spell a life or death difference for you, and it just may keep you alive.

When you go in the service, the sergeants tell you, “You can give your soul to God, but your body belongs to me.” For those of you that have been in the military, you know they did not put it that nicely. But they meant, you are going to do what we want you to do, and they make you sacrifice. That is what God is talking about here:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

That is exactly what God expects now. He expects you to put things behind you that have been wrong, to turn around, to do it right, and to sacrifice. We will discuss how to do that in a few moments.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This talks about exactly the same thing:

II Timothy 2:3-4 You therefore must endure hardship [hardship *is* going to come] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life [you begin to see what God wants here. We cannot serve two masters.], that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

You have been enlisted by God the Father. Why is that? Because we are to come out of the world.

I John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. . .

This is what Romans 12:1 is talking about. Do not have a warm regard for the world. Do not be in love with the world.

I John 2:15-17 . . . If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is

not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

We cannot love the world. The world is going to pass away. The closer we draw to God, the less effect the world is going to have on us.

How do we toughen our soft spiritual bodies? By putting God first; in consistent, fervent prayer and fasting, and in meditation. Those are the old four “tried and true.”

When I was employed, many mornings I would get up and try to get my prayers done by 6:00 AM. They would be half-hearted prayers, because our switchboard back East opened up at 5:00 in the morning, and I would be on the phone with phone calls.

You have to put God first, and that may mean that you have to get up at 5:00 in the morning. That means, conversely, that you probably have to go to bed at a decent time at night. But God comes first. There have been times that we have to get up at a quarter to 5:00, just to get the prayers in on a consistent basis. It is not easy, because the world is going to pull at you.

I do not know about you, but if I do not get my prayers done first in the morning, and my study, I might as well forget it throughout the day, because it just does not work. You are going to have to toughen up your habits and your spiritual bodies.

Ephesians 5:1-4 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting [These are the things that we have to put out.] . . .

Ephesians 5:14-15 “Awake, you who sleep” [Awake, you who are soft and flabby. Awake, you who are out of shape.], arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise . . .

To walk circumspectly is to look from left to right. I have only had to go through one minefield in my life. You walk carefully when you go through a minefield. You hunt for the three little prongs that stick up, you hunt for a depression in the ground, you look for a mound in the ground.

Can you imagine what walking around in the world that is coming is going to be like? You had better walk circumspectly. You had better be looking to the left and to the right, and to make sure where you are putting your feet, and even more importantly, where you are putting your mind.

Ephesians 5:16-17 . . . redeeming the time, because the days are evil. [Plan for time, use it wisely.] Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

He said to redeem the time with blameless, prudent conduct, gaining as much opportunity as possible, in view of what is on the horizon. In other words, you see what is coming, redeem the time; buy all that is anywhere to be bought.

I happen to like television. I am not going to like it too much more, because of what they are putting on it. The Ritenbaughs do not have a TV. That has to be one of the bigger blessings in life. But whatever takes your time away from God, you had better just cut it out.

How do we learn to use our spiritual weapons? We learn to use them by doing.

I feel sort of sad here, because I have given this to Anaheim twice in the past year and a half, but each time I give it, I keep on seeing more in it, and I think I have seen something that will help today.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“Put on the whole armor of God” means to hide in it, to wrap yourself in it, to clothe yourself with the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:12-13 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God [indicating that perhaps it was sitting down, or hanging on a peg], that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

These are not just things that we read over, or things that we pick up. These, I have come see, are things we do. These are active steps that we must take to stand.

He says, “that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.” This does not necessarily mean the end of the age, it means when your trial hits you—whatever severe trial hits you—you take up the armor of God to stand.

Brethren, he does not mean just to stand, he means *to stand and be victorious*, because God is going to see that you are going to win. You are going to win, we all are.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth [Truth comes from study, learning God’s truth.], having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Step number 1. I do not know why it took me so long to figure this out. But when you are having trials, the first thing you want to examine is yourself, and ask, “Am I living righteously?” Remember the “official inch?” The first thing you want to do is measure your life against the official inch, and say, “Am I doing it right?” You will be surprised, in many cases, you have not been doing it right, and God is going to show you.

The first thing you do when are in a trial is to start to live righteously. Check yourself, change, make the moves that are required, that you may please God and live righteously.

Ephesians 6:15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

It means literally, “and having shod yourselves as to the feet, in readiness of the gospel of peace.” God is saying here that He has given you a good foundation, a good footing. You have feet to go down the path, now continue down the path. Do not let anything slow you down. Continue on the way that you have been going, into the Kingdom of God.

The same word for *shod* was also something that was used onboard ships as an emergency gear locker. When storms hit, you took out the gear and you saved the ship.

God says, do not slow down. No matter what the odds are, continue down the path. You have a good, solid footing, you have the right foundation. You know the coming of the World Tomorrow, so you are going to be operating from good, strong foundation.

Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith . . .

Above all things, have faith. This is the kind of faith that will quench the input of fear that is going to come at the end of this age. It will also quench the darts that Satan will thrust at you. The type of faith mentioned here is an active faith, it is the faith that you might say that Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, and Daniel had. No matter what the problem is or what the cost, you trust God, and you step out, actively trusting Him in faith. That is what this is about.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation . . .

The helmet protects your mind, and the knowledge that God has called us to succeed and to deliver us.

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness [you can see over the horizon], so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

We are going to be delivered.

Ephesians 6:17 . . . and the sword of the Spirit.

This was not a broadsword, this was a short, thrust-and-parry sword. It is God’s Word. You know how Jesus Christ used it, in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Satan said, “Throw yourself down,” and Jesus Christ responded with the truth of God: He said that God said not to tempt Him. “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”

How do we get that truth? That is the only offensive weapon that we have. We get that by attending Bible studies, where there is a Bible study available. We get that by studying ourselves, by attending services. We have to really put our back into learning the Word of God.

All of us are running late. It is like we have been asleep for a thousand years. Coming back and trying to get ourselves back in gear was so difficult, and we are still trying, we are still working at it. It is not like it used to be. It is sometimes a lot tougher to come back and to get back into training once again.

I want you to understand that Jesus Christ wears and wore the same armor that He is telling us to wear.

Isaiah 11:5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Isaiah 59:17 For He [Jesus Christ] put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head.

How did Jesus Christ stand? The same way. He is giving us the same armor that He wore.

How does it feel to go into a fight or into a battle for the first time? I will tell you, it is scary, it is frightening. The reason it is frightening is because one does not know what to expect. You have not been there before. They used to tell us that if we could last two weeks on the frontline, that we would probably live throughout the entire war. The reason was that you began to learn the sounds, and you began to get the feel of what was happening. So you began to behave wisely.

It is going to be the same with us, as we face what is coming. It is going to be a frightening experience. There will be times that we will be under tremendous stress.

You have to realize that if you have done all of your homework, and all of your training, and done the best that you can to stand—and this is where the training is going to pay off—instead of being terrified, you will expect it, you will know what to look for. This is what basic training does for you: it helps you to react to the various situations.

So this is why we have to train. We have to be able to look at Jesus Christ at that time, who will not let us down, with confidence, because we have done all that we can to stand with Him.

One of the most important responsibilities in the military is guard duty. There have been some tragedies because people have gone to sleep. One of our members is an example of guard duty. When he heard there was going to be a film on sex education at school, he went down with another parent and watched the film. He was pulling guard duty for his family. He said, “My son, my children, are not going to watch that film.” He was guarding them. Every head of house should think about guard duty, whether you are a man or a woman—guard your house.

We had a very sad example overseas. There was an outpost that was overtaken by the Chinese. It was a post that was out away from the main line of resistance. Usually, the soldiers threw all of the c-rations cans over the side of the hill, which was about 500 feet high. That was so that when the enemy came, they had to walk through all of those cans. It was like having a burglar alarm. But there were always two or three trails left open. One trail is access to the outpost from your own lines, and there

will be one or two trails exiting from the other side of the outpost. The two trails in the front are to go out at night and to listen to the enemy.

One of the men fell asleep at one of these entrances. He fell asleep on guard duty. The Chinese came up, and they put a gun at his back. They took the entire outpost without firing a shot. They marched off almost 100 men without firing a shot, because somebody fell asleep.

Do you people at the head of your house see how important it is to stay awake? Watching is tremendously important.

What are we to watch? We are to watch where we focus our mind and heart.

Luke 21:34 “But take heed to yourselves [Do you see what God wants us to watch?], lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.”

God is saying, watch what goes into your head.

Matthew 24:48-51 But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ [things are slowing down] and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

So you see, brethren, God wants us to watch what we are thinking and what we are doing.

II Peter 3:1-4 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

That is another area that you want to watch out for.

As this world starts to crumble, the world is going to try to escape. It is already rushing to escape. I have cable TV, but I do not have any of the movie channels because of what is on there. I presume that you are all aware that national television is now going to show nudity and graphic sexual scenes. They are going to be coming right into your home on national television. This is what is coming to national television.

For you computer buffs—maybe I should not use the word *buff*—Playboy and Penthouse have programs that you can put in your computer, and the playgirl of the month, or the bunny, or whatever, and you can program her to do any sexual act you want, on your own home computer. Do you see what is coming to your minds, what is available to you?

There is an international bulletin board, which you can hook into on your computer. They are trying to stop all of the “kiddie porn” that is coming from Europe into America.

This world is going to try to rush and escape. You have to understand that you are going to have to be awake, and your mind is going to have to be on guard, or you are going to slip right into it. God will reward you for being awake.

Luke 12:37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. [on guard duty, not asleep] Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

Do you see the reward for watching? For watching what goes into your mind, for watching your family, for watching what you listen to.

Luke 12:38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. [who are on guard duty, who are watching what goes into their minds, who are watching their actions, who are focused on Jesus Christ]

Guard duty is probably the most important thing that you can do for yourself and your family, and for the brethren. If you have any trouble guarding, make telephone calls, talk, communicate, get together with other people and discuss the problem, but do not let your mind go to sleep.

After the desire to escape this world happens, fear and uncertainty is going to come upon it, and unless you are close to God, fear and uncertainty are going to fill your mind and your heart. Brethren, we should not be asleep to this, we know it is coming.

Have you ever stopped to think about the confidence that God has in you? I marvel at the people that God has called. None of you are supermen or superwomen, and yet God is going to help you to stand through the end of the age. Who has the power to stand? I do not. John Ritenbaugh does not. You only have the power to draw close to God and do the best that you can, and God will do the rest. God is completely confident that He can bring us through. He has called us to stand, and if we stand and draw close to Him, He will do it, He will bring us through.

I Samuel 7:3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”

Did you get that? He said “prepare your hearts.” I know that some of us have not prepared our hearts, or we are in the mode of starting to prepare our hearts.

I Samuel 7:4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.

That is what God wants. If we have prejudices, angers, hatreds, habits that are unseemly, lusts, things like this—God says, take them out of your heart. Get rid of them. Prepare your heart. Clean yourself.

What happened? The children of Israel were afraid:

I Samuel 7:8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

I Samuel 7:10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.

God destroyed the enemy, and that is what He will do for us. God gave them victory, and He will give us victory.

It is important to realize that God is on our side. He expects us to do our part and to prepare our hearts. That means to make the changes that we have to make to conform to the “official inch.”

Psalm 91:1-16 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.” Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. [here is God responding] “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him [there is a key: we have to set our love upon God, truly, that means change]; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

This does not mean that we will not have trials, but it does mean that God is going to bring us through them. As John Ritenbaugh mentioned, God looks, His eyes go to-and-fro over earth to see who He can be strong for, of those who love Him. God is truly on our side; He truly wants to protect us. He wants us to grow and to go forward.

The apostle Paul was rather unique. He looked at everything that happened to him with a very positive attitude. When he was in jail, he was not in prison with the Romans, he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. When he was called, as it says in Luke 21 to defend yourself in the courts, he did not consider himself being tried, he considered it to be an opportunity to be a witness for Jesus Christ. It was the attitude. He was positive through the whole thing, because he knew that God was going to sustain him and keep him.

At the end of some of Paul’s books, he would put in a little word of encouragement that did not seem to fit with everything, it was almost an afterthought—“Oh, by the way, do this”—so I will conclude with two of these. I could not help but think what good advice for the end of the age the apostle Paul gives us, in one little sentence in the middle of a paragraph. It is good for the young, it is good for the old.

Romans 16:19 be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.

That may sound like a very simple thing to say, but if you are wise in the ways of God, then you do not investigate evil. That is what Paul is talking about, he says, you put your effort into being wise in God, and being simple concerning evil.

Next, Paul inserts a verse that can apply to us today:

I Corinthians 16:13-14 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

Pretty good advice for the end time. Watch, because you have many enemies out in this world, in a sense, that want to destroy you. There are many demons that want to, if they can, cause you to leave the truth. Watch against evil, do not be slack. Control yourself. Cause your mind to change, discipline yourself, watch what you are doing. Watch for opportunity to receive good. Go to Bible studies, and I stress this, when you can. Make sure you get your study from God.

Watch for opportunities to serve others, to help them when they are down and need bolstering up. And watch that none of you are drawn away. That is what Paul is saying.

Stand fast in the faith and “quit you like men.” They say that the coward dies a thousand deaths, but the brave man dies but once, so stand that way. Even if it costs you your life, you stand for what God wants, and do not be afraid. You stand upright in faith and trusting God.

Paul says do not be tossed to-and-fro by every wind of doctrine. Set your mind on never letting the truth of God go, even if it should cost you your life.

Paul says something interesting, he says “be strong.” Be strong in vigor, be full of energy, it will establish you. If you are not strong, then you are weak. But when you handle weights and pick up weights, gradually your body begins to strengthen. The same thing happens when you draw close to God, and start to study and pray, and put your back into it. You start to be strengthened. Then a wonderful thing begins to happen: the more effort you exert, the closer you draw to God. The more effort you exert, the stronger you get.

II Peter 1:3-8 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence [all work, all effort to be stronger], add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not like building triceps or biceps, but as you put more effort into it, these things are added to you. This is what God wants from you. In I John, it says that we are to be spent.

Years ago, we were traveling through Missouri, back to Washington D.C. We had a camping trailer. Our kids had never seen fireflies, and on the first night, “Dad, come and look!” We had a jarful of these poor creatures. We stopped in a little town in Missouri to attend Sabbath services.

A deacon got up and said, “Brethren, you are God’s pocket change.” What he was going after was, come out for the activities in the church. He said pocket change falls down the cracks of the chairs, and you have to dig for it. But then he said something I have never forgotten, just like the official inch. He said, “God is a coin collector, and you are His pocket change. But He does not want His coins in mint condition. He wants them scratched, worn, used and tarnished.”

That is what God is after.

If you put forth your strength and your energy, you will grow stronger, you will grow closer to God, you will be able to help others , to strengthen others, and you will continue to become stronger and stronger and your faith will increase. What is coming on the horizon is not going to scare you, like it is if you are not prepared.

II Peter 1:11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That term *entrance* was a gate that was only open for victors. It was in the city wall. Peter was using this as an example. Nobody who was not victorious could go through it. When you came back from the games, and you had won and achieved what you went after, crowds lined up and the gate was opened, and you got to go through it. After you went through it, it was closed, because only victors could go through it. That is the entrance that God is talking about for you.

When I returned from the Land of the Morning Calm [South Korea], and there were plenty of times when it was, it was a very beautiful country, I had a desire to share all that I had learned. Because when you go through something like that, it is not like you are anything special, because you are not, but I had learned to survive and behave myself wisely. I had a lot of confidence then. I have much less now that I am getting older; the older I get, the less I know.

I wanted to train the troops. I was a staff sergeant when I came back, but the war was just about over, so nobody wanted to listen. They just wanted to put in their time and go back to the world they came out of.

That is something that I hope none of you do, I hope you listen and see what is coming, and realize that you are going to have to face it, and so am I.

We have been in a temporary place of safety here in San Antonio, it has just been wonderful. The messages and the food, we have been filled to the brim with good things. We have had a chance to spend time with those of like mind, we have been encouraged. But after today, we head back into the world. We head back into the world that is going to change, and we have to go back to our jobs and our daily life, and we are going to have to dedicate ourselves to the overcoming that we have to do.

What are we going to do? We have the opportunity to slack off again, drifting back into old habits, thinking, “Well, it’s so far away.”

We also have the opportunity to take the instruction that we have been given at this Feast and to change our life, in preparation for what is sure to come. Not just what is coming on the horizon, and over the horizon, but for the Kingdom of God.

So this Feast should have prodded all of us, brethren, to reaffirm our dedication to truly overcoming, to not letting our sins and our bad habits stay with us. It is going to be painful, because it is hard, hard, hard, to root out all of the sloppiness of these years. It is hard to get our bodies back in shape, and our minds, and everything about it. It is just difficult, but we have to do it.

So we have to plan to put forth the needed effort, and to take the training so that we will be prepared. If each one of us do this, we will be prepared for not only what is on the immediate horizon, just over the horizon. More importantly, we will be prepared for the Kingdom of God.