

## God Wants You

### Promises

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Several years ago, when we had the Watts riots in Los Angeles, I was calling on Interstate Restaurant Supply in Watts. As I was about to leave, I noticed a small Japanese man waiting in the lobby. In my 'flawless' Japanese, and in his 'flawless' English, we struggled to communicate.

I found out his name was Manabu Yamamoto, and that he was trying to gain some information regarding the restaurant supply business. He was planning to walk to a bus stop and catch a ride back to his hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Seeing the riots had just ended the day before, I doubted if he could get there in one piece. I volunteered to take him with me to his hotel. So I put him in the car and took him downtown

From that time on we had a pretty good lifelong friendship. When he came here on trips, Manabu would come and stay at our home. We enjoyed having his company. Over the years, sometimes he would attend church with us and with John Ritenbaugh as well.

Then he started to ask if we could take some Japanese children into our home. He brought children to stay with us that they might get a taste of America and how we lived. We enjoyed that. There were had two girls, Akiko and her sister, Tamoko, who were just delightful. They did not speak English and we did not speak Japanese. It left a little bit to be desired, but we really had a pretty good time. When the summer was up, our lax simple home as compared to the tight structure Japanese home had been a pleasure to them. They did not want to leave; they wanted to stay and be Americans.

The parents of these children wanted them exposed to America, and they wanted them to see what its citizens lived like and what our values were. This is why they were there. And on the other hand we had a great deal of enjoyment and fun in showing them how we did things. It was exciting for us to show them how Americans lived and what we ate, the sights that were worth seeing, and things like this

In a sense it was exciting for us to share our lives with others. God gives us these experiences in sharing so that we can, in some small way, begin to understand how excited God the Father is to share what He has with us. We cannot see what God has; we do not see the spirit world. Yet God the Father is extremely excited—and so is all the host of heaven—to share what they have with us.

I imagine your guardian angels have seen you goof and make mistakes. I know my guardian angel probably shakes his head and says, "How can he be that way?" But he is going to enjoy showing me all the things that we now have in common. They have watched us strain; they have watched us grow and to overcome; they have watched us slip and get up; they have seen us struggle; they have seen our tears in trying to overcome. They have also seen some of our little, puny successes. And they cannot wait to share what they have with us! I think that this time pictures that.

We know that we are the first fruits of Gods calling, but what does that mean? How are we called to be first fruits? Why are we first fruits, and for what purpose? Will we have inheritance; if so what will that be?

Will we be members of God's Family as God is God? What will we be doing? What is our future? Much has been written discounting all that we believe by the churches outside, and by the critics. But God gives us the holy days as a reminder of His purpose for us today. I would like to review the promises made by God regarding our future.

What are the first fruits? The term first fruits means to ripen first, the beginning, i.e. the first fruits of man or beast. The first fruits were sacred to God. All through history God pictured, by offering of the first fruits, what was to take place on Pentecost—the selection of His first fruits by the giving of His Holy Spirit.

What caused us to become first fruits? We were called by God. Turn over to James 1.

**James 1:18** Of His own will [referring to God the Father] He brought us forth by the word of truth [He opened our mind, He called us; He gave us to Jesus Christ], that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.

That is really exciting. Nobody else realizes this, but you have been called to realize this and to understand it.

**John 1:12-13** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right [the ability] to become children of God, to those who believe on His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but God.

So God has called you and He has given you and He has given me the power to become a child of God, to be in the God Family, to be in the Kingdom of God. And in Galatians 3, what is our part in being the children of God?

**Galatians 3:24-26** Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

We now have faith. We have been called by God. We have been given faith by God. We trust God. We now have faith in Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 6, please.

**II Corinthians 6:15-18** And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God [that is who you are]. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty."

What a wonderful opportunity we have been given!

Romans 8 please, verse 14. We must humble ourselves and be lead by God's Spirit.

**Romans 8:14** For as many as are lead by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.

And they are called the sons of God that they might glorify God by the way they live.

And we are going to hear during the Feast some wonderful things about our calling.

And finally, as children of God, a wonderful thing has to happen. We are going to possess all that God possesses. We could look up at the top here in verse 15 of Romans 8.

**Romans 8:15-17** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God [And it is a wonderful honor.], and if children of God, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.

And being heirs with Christ, we are going to inherit everything that Christ has. That is what is in store for us, and that is what is important this Feast to realize.

Now in Galatians 3, it talks about adoption, and it did here in verse 15—the Spirit of adoption. The adoption here pictures the Roman adoption, in a sense. It is to secure legal and social standing. In every aspect the adopted one belonged to the family and carried the name. When a child was adopted into the Roman family it was as if he or she were born there. That child became part of the family. He or she was entitled to everything they had. Everything that they had, that child had.

In Romans 8 the term for adoption implies more than legal and social standing. It implies total legitimacy. That the child is legitimately (as if were born) entitled, as opposed to being illegitimate. And with that comes the rights of the family, the obligations as well, and in the case of God, the obligation to carry on the Family name.

We have three adopted children. They are wonderful; we love each one. I just use this as an example, because prior to their adoption, they were not wanted. When they were adopted, we raised them. They gave us a tremendous amount of joy—as I am sure we give God a tremendous amount of joy—amidst all the headaches we sometimes give Him as well. At the same time they will inherit all that I have when my wife and I die. They will inherit all that I have because they are adopted into our family. When you adopt they can legally take them back for one year without any recourse. I can tell you from being an adoptive parent that within two weeks after they came into the house, if they had tried to take them back they would have had to go through me with a shotgun, because I was going to stand in that front door. They were my kids; there was no doubt about it. That the way God feels about you too. You are God's kids!

### **What will we inherit?**

Well, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are adopted children of God and then as children heirs, then joint heirs we have inheritance is to be joint heirs with Christ. Because of that we will share in the glory to come with Him. That is the future that you have. How was He glorified? He was changed from flesh to spirit, and that is going to take place with each of you.

### **For what purpose did God set us apart?**

He set us apart to make us heirs. Refer to Herbert W. Armstrong's *Mystery of the Ages*. You probably have not heard some of these things in a lot of years. "God saw that no being less than God [in the

God Family] could certainly be relied on to never sin. We must be like God who cannot sin in order to fulfill His purpose for the entire vast universe. God saw that nothing less than Himself, the God Family, could be absolutely relied upon to carry out that supreme purpose."

### **What assurance do we have that this will take place?**

God has a pattern.

**Romans 8:27-31** Now He who searches the heart knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son [to be just like Jesus Christ], that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. [And that is for us.] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

God knows what He is doing. When you are changed you will be ready, you will be perfected, you will be glorified—it will be tremendous! The exciting part of this verse is that we are to conform to the image of Christ. That is what God's purpose is, and He is the perfect Father. He is going to see to it that we do it; He is going to see to it that it is done.

**Colossians 1:12-19** Giving thanks to the Father who has made us qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light [Here we see that God is making us partakers; He is going to do it). He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation [That includes you; that is you.]. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell.

So here the Father states that we are qualified, as if we were. He views it as already done. To share in the inheritance of the saints in light, the truth and benefits of God. We are to have joy, wisdom, and love to the fullest. We have been delivered from the power of darkness, the power of evil (this world's value system)—even though it pulls at us, we have been delivered from it and all the grief and pain of living the way that Satan does in this world. Jesus Christ owns all the power to create, to set up thrones and leaders, to help and defend. By Him all things exist, and He has all the power to help us—to help us to stand and to make it.

**Colossians 1:18** And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have preeminence.

He is the beginning, the cause, the act. He is the cause of the beginning of creation. He is the efficient cause of creation. He is the beginning of something as the beginning of a line, of a family line. He is the beginning of the Family line of God. He is the firstborn from the dead. That is who we are going

to follow. He is the beginning of the line, and you are to be part of that line. That is exciting, brethren! That is exciting!

I Corinthians 15 please.

**I Corinthians 15:15** Yes, and we are found false witness of God, because we have testified of God that He has raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.

In other words, Christ had been preached as having been risen from the dead. Some of you say that there is no resurrection. If that is true, then Christ has not risen and if that is the case, then we preach in vain, and then your faith is in vain, and then we are found to be liars, because we say that the Father has raised up Jesus Christ. And you say that it never happened. However, 500 people saw Him (in verse 6), so there is something wrong with your thinking. If it did not happen then the dead do not rise.

**I Corinthians 15:16-19** For if the dead do not rise, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep [or have died] in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.

In other words, if in this life we have no other hope and confidence except in Christ, and if He is still dead and not yet risen, then we are to be more pitied than any other men. We are sadly deceived. We have denied our elves and been denied by our fellow men, because of our belief and hope in one who is not existing, because He does not exist, and He cannot help us.

**I Corinthians 15:20** But now Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

But in His resurrection, it has been demonstrated, it is fact and that means that ours will follow. Our resurrection, our changing will follow. He is pictured here as the first fruits—picturing a harvest to follow.

And when will that harvest take place?

**I Corinthians 15:23** But each one in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

What will signify that event? It will be by us changing.

**I Corinthians 15:51-52** 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 trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.

**I Thessalonians 4:13** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep.

But the trumpet will sound and those that are dead will rise first and then we who remain will be changed. That is a promise. That is a promise of God. We have that to stand on.

Now staying in I Corinthians 15.

### **What kind of body will we have?**

**I Corinthians 15:35-36** But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. [He said you have to lose this body.] And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

**I Corinthians 15:42** So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

We are going through the corruption part right now. We are all suffering and straining in the body we have, but it is going to change.

**I Corinthians 15:43-49** It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, and 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 became a living being." The last Adam was made a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

This is what he is talking about.

Let us get a little bit better handle on this.

**I John 3:1-2** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Now the word children here is another word indicating adoption, just as we had heard before, but is much stronger and has a much more tender meaning. I do not think we can begin to realize how much God is *for* us and how He is pulling for us. It means descendant posterity; it means true children. In the most tender of terms, it means, My child. God would be standing here at the door with a shotgun, if they tried to take you away. That is how special you all are to God!

Go to Philippians 3 because that shows where our citizenship is now.

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see God calls us as though we already were; God does not mince any words. He knows; God does not make any mistakes. You are going to hear this too. God trusts you; He has faith in you, and He does not make mistakes. He has called you.

**Philippians 1:6** He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And that is God. He knows that you are going to make it. So He says here, "Our citizenship," and we should start to consider our citizenship in heaven. We are so physical! We think of our bills. We think of our house. We think of our infirmities. We have the vision of a myopic. And I will raise my hand to be the biggest myopic. We have got to start looking past that. We have got to start realizing that we belong to the living God! And that our citizenship is in heaven with Him. That is what it is all about. That is why you are called.

So that is why God says,

**Philippians 3:21** Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

You know the old saying when you were a kid, "My dad's bigger than your dad. My dad can lick anybody on the block." Well, your Dad can lick anybody—period.

It shows where our citizenship really is, and what will happen on His return. King David knew his destiny too. Let us take a quick look at Psalms 17. Here David was asking God to vindicate his cause from the wealthy men of his time who were fed by the goodness of God. These people were all taken care of by God, and fed by God. But they did not realize it and they did not stop to consider it. David said he did not envy them, but in verse 15 he says why. He doesn't envy the men of this world. In verse 15 he says why.

**Psalms 17:15** As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.

You see, in one way or another, brethren, each of us, when we awake, will awake, if we remain faithful, with the likeness of God. We are going to see Him as He is. It will be truly wonderful!

**What will we be doing in the Kingdom of God?**

**Revelation 20:4-6** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

That is what you are going to be doing. You are so special; you have such a wonderful future! You see, you have to prepare now for that future. I hope we realize that too. You have not been called to just sit on your lower exterior posterior. You have been called to work and to get ready. I heard of one thought going around, not with us, but with somebody else: "Don't worry about overcoming now. Just support the work. You can overcome in the place of safety." Well, if you wait to the place of safety to overcome, you are going to have an extremely long wait. It is now that we have to overcome.

You will be learning how to be God. You should be learning how to be God right now, having been putting into practice all that we have been taught. This is what you are here for. We are leaving our physical world and entering into a spiritual world. If we are going to be different, we have a lot to learn.

When Manabu Yamamoto came to our house, he thought nothing of running around the house in his undershorts, as they do in Japan. Well, in our house, I did not particularly care to have Manabu running around in his shorts. So I had to tell him our custom is not that way. In the Orient, in Japan, I went into the restroom, and all of a sudden a lady came in with me. That was a custom I was not ready for! They have the little half Dutch doors, where the ladies have their commode, and the men have their apparatus over on the wall. You could chat and so forth. Like I said, that was a custom I was not prepared for. But, I have got to say this, after a while it was no big deal. But the first time it was really a shock!

Well, we are going to have customs, not those kinds I am sure, but we are going to have customs to learn. We should understand from going to kindergarten, just from watching our children growing, just from watching ourselves growing, that we have to grow up. We go from K-6 through 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, to advanced schooling. We have to learn; we have to grow. You do not just all of a sudden take a super pill and become what you want to be. It takes grunt work; it takes effort. I think everybody understands this. We are going to have to learn to help those coming out of the tribulation. Let us turn to Isaiah 49.

**Isaiah 49:22-23** Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."

We are going to be kings and priests, and we are going to be nurturing those who come out of the tribulation. We will have to learn how to heal the earth and God's people. Read Isaiah 35 about turning the deserts into springs and things like this. The animals are going to have their natures changed, and we are going to have the blind and the lame and the halt and the deaf and the dumb. We are going to heal and teach those people how to live.

God, in His great mercy for us, is going to start small. Mr. Armstrong always said that God always starts small. It is going to be such a small portion of the population left that we are going to start to work with so we will be able to grow in our jobs. But we better be learning now how to work with those people and take care of them. That is what God is doing. These are some of the things we will have to learn then, but we had better be learning now how to apply what God is teaching us.



At the end of the thousand years, we are going to have to prepare for the Great White Throne Judgment. By that time, hopefully, there will be thousands or millions more that will be spirit beings as well, because there is something like 40 billion people who have lived on the face of the earth. I have no idea how God is going to do it. I do not know if God is going to bring everybody up all at once, and that is a distinct possibility. It is indicated in Ezekiel 37 that that will happen—certainly all of Israel. There will be homes; there will be farms; there will be cultures. There will be teaching to be done.

There is so much hatred and anger in this world. There have been so many mistakes made that we do not have any idea the size of job that we are going to have on our hands. But that is going to be your job. Of course, you will have started with the first fruits at the beginning, and therefore all that come after you will probably be under you, and you will be over them and guiding them. It is going to be a really interesting time, brethren—a really interesting time!

Go to Hebrews 2. The universe is going to continue to expand.

**Hebrews 2:4-8** God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in certain place, saying "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visited him? [Psalm 8. of David] You made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. And you have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not see all things put under him.

And that "not all things put under him" is the universe. I do not care if we have something on Mars or going around Saturn. We have a lot more coming, brethren, the entire universe! What a wonderful future we have all been called to, every one of us!

But what about the trials we face now? I know nobody has trials but me out there, but let us turn over to Philippians 3.

Paul had been going along so peacefully and quietly and all of a sudden he was blinded, and God sent Ananias. Now I will just say this for a minute, because Ananias always amazes me. Paul had been struck blind, and God said, "Ananias." Ananias said, "What, Lord?" God told him, "I want you to anoint Paul." And Ananias said, "But Lord, he's a bad guy." God says, "I know, Ananias." What struck me about that was that God talked to Ananias like I would call you on the telephone! He said "Ananias"; Ananias says, "Yes, Lord." If God talked to me, I would probably collapse. Yet Ananias took it as being normal, and I asked John about that. I said, "John, will that happen again?" He said, "Yes, it will." He said God will talk to us like that.

He said anoint Paul. And then He told Ananias, "I will show Paul all that he has to suffer." And boy, Paul had a lot to suffer. He gave up a lot. He was the best at what he did. He was tops.

**Philippians 3:8** Yet indeed I also count all things loss [all the things I have] for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

That word rubbish (dung in the King James Version), if you want to make a modern translation, is what we used to pick up in the backyard after the dog. He said I count it just that low. All the excellency, all the prestige I had, all the wealth, all the honor, I count it as nothing for Jesus Christ. He says that is where my focus is; that is where the excellency is; that is what I am going to pursue.

**Romans 8:18** I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

He said they will not even be remembered when we see the glory that is to be revealed to us. Just as my wife and I were pleased to show these little Japanese girls California and so forth, when we see what God has in store for us, we will not even remember anything, any of the trials we faced. Mr. Armstrong often stated that God had allowed mankind to govern itself to destruction. And that is what we are doing. Man had to come to see that his way was a failure and thus we have the terrible problems we see all over the face of the earth. And we, along with the creation, must suffer until the return of Jesus Christ.

**Romans 8:19-23** For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. [That is us. For the manifestation, for the making evident of the sons of God—for the change, when you and I are changed into spirit beings.] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him [God] who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs until now. [Because we are not handling the creation correctly. It is dying.] Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

All of us groan. I cannot tell you how many people said to me, "I can't wait for the Feast to come. I need to be uplifted. I can't wait for the Kingdom of God to come, because I need to be changed. I'm tired of the world." We all pray for the Kingdom. We want it to come, but we do not like what is going on now. But we are going to have to go through part of that, or perhaps much more. I do not know.

We see the entire earth suffering. It does not function as it should. We see slaughter and war. 30,000 people, the statistics say, lose their lives every hour in war. That is a hard number to even fathom! Every day goes on like that, according to the stats. How much more starvation and pollution, how many more will be in fear of their lives, their food, their property? How many more handicapped, blind, and deaf, and lame are there, just longing to be whole? And does your heart not go out to them when you see them? When you see the person limping, or the person in the wheelchair that cannot make it, your heart goes out. You want it changed. The whole earth is coming under attack.

I think one of the saddest things (this does not compare to an adult that is suffering) is when seagulls and albatrosses, and so forth will lay their eggs and look for them to hatch, but there was not any shell there because of DDT poisoning. It was just laid there, and sat there, and then broke wide open. And they looked stupid. What is wrong, what have I done wrong? But that is the creation. The whole thing is dying; the whole thing is hurting. Of course the rain forests are being cut down and we have oxygen problems. We have a lot of problems that are facing us.

Paul, who had been through so much, wanted relief as well. II Corinthians 4 please.

**II Corinthians 4:16-18** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day [by drawing close to God]. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory [In other words, going through the trials and remaining faithful to God works for us a tremendous weight of encouragement, a tremendous weight of glory.], while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary [or temporal], but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We look for the Kingdom of God! We look for a future. That is where our focus is. We are citizens, and that is what it is all about.

**II Corinthians 5:1** For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This is what we have in store for us, so even if we fear death, and even though we get really nervous when we get very sick, in the back of our minds, brethren, we know that we have the Kingdom of God. We know that we are going to be spirit beings, and that God is watching over us, and that He is with us in everything that takes place in our lives.

**II Corinthians 5:2-10** For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee [the down payment]. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are also absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be welling pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. [We all know this is in the future.]

In Ephesians 1, God gives us the guarantee of His Holy Spirit. Let us take a quick turn over there.

**Ephesians 1:11-14** In Him also we have obtained an inheritance [we have been adopted], being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. [That is what our calling is all about.] In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

That means you have received the inheritance, the down payment of becoming a spirit being, and you will be redeemed and you will be changed into spirit being. Even though the labor is hard at times, which it is, sometimes we fight the uphill battle to where we almost cannot do it. Yet it is going to be worth it.

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man who endures temptation [or trial]; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When you get thorough the trial, the crown of life is going to come. II Timothy 4, please.

**II Timothy 4:6-8** For I am now already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. [Paul knew this.] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but to all who have loved His appearing.

And that is you. You will receive that crown.

Now we all realize that here Paul used the example of the Grecian games as an example of achieving victory. He says, I wrestled the good wrestle. He was basically saying, I started for the prize, I came up to the goal, beating my competitors, and I have gained my prize. I kept the faith. I followed the rules, which were God's laws. I conquered each exercise that I was in, and now I have the right to expect the prize. He said the crown is not just laid up for me, but for others who were also faithful.

The Lord is the righteous Judge, and he pictures the righteous Judge as being the umpire at the games. He says He is going to judge correctly. That is for those who love His appearing, those who look for Him to come. And remember the reward is not earned, it is by grace. We do not earn our salvation; it is by grace. The reward is what we earn by how we compete.

There are two words basically translated as "crown" in the New Testament. I think we think of crown with the spikes and the jewels and the things like this. One is the *diadema* and one is the diadem, which means to bind around. It is not a crown as we think of a crown today, but as a filament of silk or of linen. It was tied around the head. It was a symbol of kingly, imperial, royal dignity. It was that type of crown. It showed the offices that one held. You can read about that in Revelation 19:12.

But the crown we are to receive is *stephanos*. It primarily means that which surrounds the wall, as a wall or a crown. The word is used for a crown or for head ornaments of various sorts. When it was used for kings, it was used as a state crown, an official crown. And in our case it denotes a victor's crown, a crown of victory, a symbol of triumph in a game or contest. It was awarded as a prize.

A secondary meaning: It was used as a token of public honor for distinguished service that was accomplished by the person who achieved it. So it was either a military advancement or achievement or festal gladness. Now these crowns were not made like the crowns of today. They were woven of a garland of oak (hopefully it was not poison oak), ivy, myrtle, olive branches, or an imitation of these in gold. The one we receive will never wither or fade away. It will be forever; it will be a permanent crown! Imagine the ceremony that will take place.

Remember how I told you how we enjoyed having Manabu here and telling him about America. We took Manabu camping out in the desert. We went geode hunting. We went 20 miles off the highway. Now a man that comes from Japan has never seen a desert. In Japan you cannot drive too far without getting in the water. When he saw the desert and camped under the stars, he had visions of John

Wayne. We ate by bonfire at night, and Manabu was thrilled. He bought a 10-gallon hat. (He was only about so big.) He wore that back on the airplane, and he got off back in Japan with this huge hat on his head.

But can you imagine the ceremony that will take place when the firstfruits of God are inheriting the Kingdom? We all rejoice at coming to the Feast. But we are anxious; we do not know what we are going for. We know that we are going to look like God. We know that we are going to be like God. We will be changed into spirit beings, but we do not have any idea of what that means. We know that Jesus Christ could walk through a wall, that He could appear, but we do not have any idea what that is going to be like. And yet, they do!

God the Father, Jesus Christ, and all the spirits know just what that is going to be like. And they know what it is going to be like to give up these tired bodies that are getting older and weak, the eyes do not work quite right, or those that are crippled, or something like that. They know what the change is going to mean to us, and they are on the edge of their seats to see us get there.

A special meeting will take place. Turn over to II Peter 1, please, because I think we should go through this. He is talking about all the articles there from verse 3 that pertain to this life and godliness, and precious promises, partakers, and so forth, giving diligence, add to you faith, virtue and knowledge and so forth. Then in verse 10 he says,

**II Peter 1:10-11** Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In one of the commentaries that I read, it brought out that this entrance was a victor's gate. The victor's gate was never opened, except for the victors. So they had the wall. They had the games. They had all these things, but the victor's gate was opened only for the victors. It was a special entrance. And a special entrance is going to be made for us.

Where will this take place? Very probably at the throne of God with all the angels, all the spirit beings, the judges, the elders, everybody. Turn over to Revelation 1, please.

**Revelation 1:6-16** And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were like a

flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

That is the party you are going to. That is going to be the individual that is going to be there to greet you, and to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Twenty-four elders will throw their crowns down and will bow and will give all the glory to God. The only description that I found of God the Father is in Daniel 7. Let us turn over there as we draw to a close on this.

**Daniel 7:9-13** "I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated and the books opened. I watched then because of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, and their lives prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him."

You can just see thousands upon thousands and ten thousands of angels and God the Father sitting there. And that is where you are going to go when we are changed. That is going to be, brethren, from all we can tell, where you are going to receive what God has in store for you. And if you do not think that God is not excited, He is thrilled.

But brethren in all the confusion and pressure at the end of this age we sometimes need to take a look over the top. When I was in the Army, they told us whenever you are lost, climb a tree. Look over all the forest and see where you are going. This is so important to do, because if you do not, you can walk in circles. Get on some high promontory, climb a tree, and look out and see where you are going.

We have to do that. We have to look over all our problems to see where we are going. We need to have a compass to fix our destination. This is, in essence, what I tried to do tonight on short notice. I was worried about speaking tomorrow, but I did not have time to worry about speaking tonight.

In conclusion, I remember how excited we would get when we knew Manabu was coming over with his children. We planned activities and events for them. But far greater than anything man could plan or conceive of is what God has planned for each of us. And God wants to make sure that we are there. So in Luke 12:22 through verse 32, He gives us some sound advice and some wonderful encouragement.

**Luke 12:22-32** Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor your body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If then you be not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? [In other words, if you cannot do the small things why are you concerned with all these

great things?] Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."