

Prepare For Your Future Now

Be Not Deceived

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Brethren, when we meet someone more than casually, we want to find out all about them. It is just something that we do naturally. We automatically put them into specific categories—they are friendly, they are not friendly; they have a nice appearance, they do not; they are tall, they are short; they are stocky, they are thin. They are serious, they are cheerful; they are studious, they are lighthearted; they are mannered, they are not so mannered. They may be kind, thoughtful, inconsiderate, they are energetic, idle, and so forth. We just tend to do these things automatically.

To further our information, the question eventually gets around to, "What do you do for a living?" If it is a wife and she is in with the girls, they usually say, "What does your husband do for a living?" If your children are in school, they will say, "What does your dad do for a living?" I sold all vegetable shortenings and oil all my life. In the field I was in, they referred to that as fat. So when they asked my children in school what their dad did for a living, they'd respond, "He sells fat." That always made them wonder!

I can remember my grandmother, who was born in the 1850s. To her the identification of a person by his/her last name was extremely important. If they were German, she would say that is a German name; if they were Italian, she would say that an Italian name. If they were Irish, she would say, "Oh, those Irish, they are terrible." And I learned later on that I have a lot of Irish blood in me. I did not know whether I caused that response to come from her or not.

But people do make the categories. Are they blue collar versus white collar? They want to see what they have in common or what they do not have in common. Names in the past were used to identify not only who the person was, but also where he was from, what he was like, and possibly what his occupation was. Names could also picture an event to come. We can take a quick look over at Hosea and get a little bit of this.

Hosea 1:4 Then the LORD said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel."

The "I will avenge the bloodshed" is generally understood to be put in here for the murders perpetrated by Ahab and Jehu in this place. Though Jehu was carrying out God's Word, he left God. So thus the name Jezreel pictured an event to come.

Hosea 1:6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel." [So here we have a walking message that simply states, "I will have no more mercy."]

Hosea 1:9 Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people." [Again the name indicated something, another message to Judah and Israel.]

From the 1964 Encyclopedia Britannica concerning names, "They are descriptive of a person's appearance or character. A blond girl might be called Flavia, which is Latin for yellow, or Blanch

which means white in French. As to what the character might be, someone might be known as Honest John or Richard the Lionheart, indicating the character of the individual. They might record an incident or an exploit. We use names to identify an event. A girl born during a famine in Celtic might be called Una, meaning famine or auna."

Genesis 35:18 And so it was [A baby was being born here.], as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

Now the name Ben-Oni means 'my sorrow' because he was costing her life, and so that was the name that she gave the child. Now the name Thomas means 'an unusual event.' So now all of you that are named Thomas, you now know that name means an unusual event.

They also identify an individual by his connection with other people, usually their fathers, Johnson, Robertson. They give individual residence or former residence, Joseph of Arimathea. The name is descriptive. It tells something about person. Names record his occupation, Smith, Weaver, Farmer, Plumber, Taylor, Tanner. All these indicate what the person is about.

Now I do not know what you are known for. Perhaps you are a housewife, a salesman, a mechanic, a carpenter, a plumber. Maybe you are in air conditioning, you are a pilot, a well driller, a gas station attendant, you manage a parking lot, you put things into space. You may be at home, incapacitated, unable to do much of anything and you feel fairly worthless.

Those who know us know us in these circumstances or in these situations. They know our build, our general age, how we dress, our proclivities given to us by God. They know if we are positive or negative, or industrious or lazy, trustworthy, healthy or sickly. They know us this way, because this is exactly what we are. The way we live is how we portray ourselves to others.

It may seem comfortable to us. We have been raised this way. This is what does it. We have been influenced by family, by friends, by town, by the era we are raised in, by the people we work with, by the jobs we have. This has all molded us into what we are today. Because of these influences, we have become what those around us see us as.

It may seem comfortable to be where we are, or we may be uncomfortable with ourselves.

We may be just toughing it out. We may be resigned, be discouraged, or losing hope that we will ever be able to change and become something better. Well, brethren, we have not been called to be complacent or to feel that we have to put up with what we are! I think that is so encouraging.

God does not view you as a housewife or a plumber or a salesman. He does not view you as you have been in the past. He sees you in a far different way. God views you in a position that will *confound the world*. And that should be encouraging to us!

So many times we see that we do not have much self worth, and maybe we do not. But God sees that we have tremendous worth. We are going to take a look at that. Please turn over to I Corinthians 1. I am going to spend a little time on this, because I really want us to understand what God is doing here.

I Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

It says this is the general character of those whom God is calling. There are some mighty and some noble, but very few. They are not taken from the wise or the rich or the learned or the popular, but from those who are of humble circumstance. God has chosen to show us the plan he has put forth. He does not rely on the leaders of this world or cooperation with them. God wants us to stop and consider our calling. He really does. He wants us to stop and consider that not many wise, by this world's standards, are called.

God has not consulted with the leaders of the world in the setting up of His church. There are not many after the flesh, or man's way. God sets up His church according to the Spirit, to what He is doing. He does not call the mighty, and He has called very few nobles or families with power. He has called the lowly. Let us see whom He has called. Turn over to I Corinthians 6. It is not a very pretty picture of whom He called.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 Do not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomizers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed [you are changed], but ye are sanctified, but you were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

He says do you not know that those who are unjust with others will not inherit the Kingdom. That is what He said. Be not deceived, do not trust yourselves, do not be deceived by circumstances, do not be fornicators, do not be effeminate, do not live the soft life indulging in soft lifestyles, do not give in to sensual desires, do not give in to homosexuality, stealing, coveting, being drunk, reviling others, or extorting money from others. This applies to us, because some of us were this way. He says, "such were some of you." He asks us to stop and consider what we were and stop and consider what you have got now. Consider how special it is.

Let us take a quick tour here. We want to get a really good look at what we were.

Romans 6:20-23 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. [He could put a preface here and say, "Remember that when you were in the service of sin, you were free from righteousness."] What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. [He says that is what you came out of. You were slated for death.] But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now we can turn back to I Corinthians 1, verse 26 again.

I Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, how not many wise men according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Now for reason known only to God, He called each of us. He cannot say I called this man or woman because he/she was wonderful or pretty or whatever. We, who by the world are considered foolish, considered of no position, authority, or power, or wealth are called. And here is the reason why. To put to shame, or to drive home to the wise of this world, that their worldly wisdom is a stumbling block to them.

I Corinthians 1:27-28 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised God has chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

Barnes notes on this,

The language here is a striking instance of Paul's manner of expressing himself with great strength. [Because he meant this in an exceedingly strong way.] He desires to convey in the strongest terms that God had illustrated His plan by choosing the objects of least esteem among men. He'd chosen those of ignoble birth and rank, the base things of the world, but this does not express the full meaning. [You thought you were bad enough already, but you are about to find out some more.] He'd chosen objects of contempt among men, but this was not strong enough to express His idea.

I remember that one minister in the early years of the church said, "We are the cream of the crud." And I think that Paul says that we are not the cream. Barnes continues,

But this doesn't express his idea. He adds therefore that He had chosen those things which were absolutely nothing, which had no existence, which could not be supposed to influence Him in His choice.

God chose from things which are nothing, are worthless, have not existence, things which were beneath contempt, things which were beneath the notice of men, totally disregarded by this world, and this group has been called to change the world. But He wants us to consider from where we came.

Paul wanted the Corinthians and us to see our position, with all their flaws in contrast to the marvelous future to which we are called. We should take that view.

I Corinthians 1:29-30 That no flesh should glory in His presence. [That no man, nor class of men could ever boast before Him and say, "See I did it. I made it. I am in God's Kingdom because I'm wonderful."] But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom for us from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

He said by the calling of God the Father, you are now in Christ. And Paul wants to make it clear that it was not our power, beauty, strength, wealth, or intellect, or any other thing that caused the Father to call us. It was His desire to take us in the state we were in and to give us His Son. And it is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that the price He paid for us, that has given us the future we now have in store.

For us who did not know how to come in out of the rain, how to live life correctly, Jesus Christ was made our wisdom and our righteousness. He is the source of our wisdom. It is by obedience to Him that we are made wise. It is by Jesus Christ that we understand our future, that we will be the sons of God. It is by Jesus Christ that we have God's Word. It is by Him that we are in the church and that we are here today. We owe all this to Jesus Christ.

And the sense of all this is that it is by Jesus Christ we are redeemed, by Him that an atonement was made, by Him that we are pardoned, by Him that we are delivered from sin, from our enemies and by Him that we are delivered from death. Quoting from I Corinthians 6:11, we "were washed and

sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God" and by obedience to Him, and all these things that Jesus Christ has done for us.

Now brethren, we see our contrast. The difference is tremendous from what we were to what God is going to do with us! I took considerable time on this, because all of this has been done for us. We can see the contrast of where we were and what our future was, what our destiny was—that it was death. And now we see what God has done by His calling us. This should produce a response in us—a wonderful response! It is this response that I would like to talk about in the remainder of time I have today.

How do Jesus Christ and God the Father feel? We are told in Romans 4:17, "God calls those things which are not as though they were." We may see ourselves as plumbers. We may see ourselves at home as being an invalid. We may see ourselves as not being highly educated. We may see ourselves in many negative ways, but that is not how God sees us.

How are we seen by God? What are we called to be by God?

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

Those who submit to God's influence, those who humble themselves before God, who resist being proud, who fight the pulls of the flesh, who control their anger and wrong ambitions, who yield in obedience to the laws of God give evidence, by subduing these things in them, give evidence that they are the sons of God. This is how we tell if we are baptized, by the changes in ourselves. We look back and say I have seen a change.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry out, "Abba, Father."

We have not been given the attitude of slavery. We have been given God's Spirit that we might not live fearfully, because we have got a wonderful future in front of us. We live in freedom and confidence of what God's doing in us and of where we are going and the opportunity we have. We have a spirit of adoption, a feeling of deep love and appreciation and affection toward God for all that He has done. Because of this, with full realization and understanding of the Father, as it reads, we can call Him Father. If we take a different translation, we can call *the Father* our Father, the very Father, the very living God of heaven we can call our Father, because He is.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

If we obey and we come under God's laws, and do all the things that we need to do, God's Spirit will produce the right effect in us. It will cause us to grow. And His Spirit bears witness with our spirit reflecting obedience and reflecting the fruits of that Spirit. This verifies that we are children of God, that we are adopted into His family.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

We will be spirit body. What a wonderful body we are going to have and a wonderful future. We are going to be able to inherit all the things that Jesus Christ possesses. We have a future that is just astounding!

All this is ours if we suffer with Him, and if we stand fast as He did. We must not compromise our calling. What is that calling? His title is King of kings. Have you ever stopped to think, who are the other kings? Well, if you look at the person next to you, you will find out! Revelation 20, please.

Revelation 20:4-6 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and 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. [This is your calling.] But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. (See that is your calling, to have part in the first resurrection.)

What else will be coming to us? What will we be doing?

Revelation 2:26-27 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works to the end [and this is endurance again], to him will I give power over the nations [This is what you are going to be doing. You are going to have power over the nations.]—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as also I have received from My Father. [You will receive the same type of power that Jesus Christ received to rule.]

Where will all this take place and what will we be?

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

There you have how God sees you. He does not see you as the plumber or the person that is down. He sees you as the person who has the wonderful future, as the king and the priest. We will have a dual role of leadership and instruction and teaching and guidance. God does not see us as we are now, in the occupations that we are now pursuing. He sees us as what we will be. He called us as the foolish of the world, but He did not intend us to stay that way. He saw us as what we will be, kings and priests.

If He sees us this way, then I guess the question is, should we not start to see ourselves in a different light? We should not start to focus on all of our flaws and our problems, and feel down. We should start to see ourselves as God sees us. We should start to see ourselves becoming what God already considers us to be. Should we not start to see ourselves as being in training to become kings and priests? The answer is yes, that is exactly how we should start to see ourselves.

The concept should not be strange to any of us in business. We understand we have to pay our dues. My son, Brian, is in air conditioning. I remember the first few years. He was in attics of 150 or 180

degrees in the summertime. He would be under the house. One day he came out and he was covered with fleas. He had to do all the grunt work. Everybody understands that. Nobody starts at the top. You have to start somewhere at the bottom. And so are we. The journeyman electrician started out as a grunt. The successful businessman started out at the bottom of his profession. As children, we have to grow into adulthood, being trained to make adult decisions. This should not be any surprise.

It should not come as any surprise to us that God is training us now for the reward He has set before us. As Paul said in Philippians 3, He expects us to press. We are to press toward the glorious mark and the high calling of Jesus Christ. We are to become like Him. That is what He expects. If we were hiring for a specific skill, those hiring us would expect us to have that particular skill. If you took your car into a mechanic you expected him to know how to fix it. If he said, "Oh, that's what they look like!" you'd say, "I'm taking my car elsewhere." You would expect the mechanic to say, "Yes, I understand how it works and I'll fix it for you."

So, for the field that we are going into, we would be expected to know the laws that govern what we will be doing. And we will be expected to make decisions based on those laws. We are going to have a lot expected of us, brethren. So today I would like to have us consider at least some of the characteristics that we are going to need.

For the first one, because we are going to be kings, turn over to Deuteronomy 17 please.

Deuteronomy 17:14-16 When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, "I will set a king over me like as all the nations that are around me," you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; thou may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, "You shall not return that way again." [Now the horses meant that he should not gather great power to himself, a huge army. The king was to depend on God, of course, and not on his army.]

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself [make foreign alliances by marrying foreign wives, because they are going to turn his heart away.], lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. [At the expense of the people, high taxes causing them to starve, while he gets rich. You can apply this to some of the characteristics that you are going to have.]

Deuteronomy 17:18-19 Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. [The king was expected to know the law.] And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life [Why?], that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and to be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, [The king is supposed to know what God wants and how to administer his kingdom under those laws. Why?]

Deuteronomy 17:20 That his heart not be lifted above his brethren [The king is the servant of all and that is what we are going to be. We are going to be serving the people just like God has served us, so faithfully, and with so much patients, and with so much love.], that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left,

and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

So this is what a king is to do. Then he can judge righteously as a king or a priest. How could he do that without understanding God's law? This is why we study our Bible. This is why we learn to apply the principles in the Bible to our lives. Learn to make decisions.

Early on, when John formed this church, he said, "You are to be self-governed." And this rattles so many peoples' cages! Somebody said, "Well, we are going to do away with chairs like this, and we are going to put in round tables. The minister will be down on the floor and not above the people." I said, "I think you have the wrong concept. The minister is going to be here so he can see the people, and see their reactions, and so that they can see him."

What John meant was that the ministry will teach as God inspires them, and the people will learn to govern themselves accordingly. I had one man leave the church because he said, "I want to be told exactly what to do." And the reason he did was that if something went wrong he wanted to be able to blame the ministry.

God expects us to take His words and to put them to practice in our lives and to learn. We are going to make mistakes; you can count on that. But you are going to learn to do things correctly. That is going to help you to be a king and a priest.

Turn over to Psalm 119 please. Let us learn a little bit more about the law here. This is really a wonderful psalm to pray with.

Psalm 119:97-104 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. [Because he is learning the ways of God.]

What he is saying here is that he has an intense love for God's law. By its teachings he understands his responsibilities in this life. He is wiser than his enemies—not because of natural ability, but because God is the perfect Instructor. God, the perfect Instructor, and His laws teach me. He has more understanding than his teachers and the ancients, because they understood just the things of men. But we, brethren, have been called to understand the things of God.

Because of God's Word he walked in the path and was blessed by it. Because of God's Word he avoided the ways of the world. Because of God's law he had worked to build godly character. A lot of pain can be avoided by obeying God's Word.

Interestingly, right above verse 105, my Bible has the word "NUN." That means candle.

Psalm 119:105-106 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. [When you are walking through this dark world, it is good to see where you are going.] I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments.

This is what God wants from us, brethren. God's law produces peace. That is what you are going to want in your kingdom.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

God expects us to understand the laws.

II Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Here are Adam Clarke's comments on this:

Endeavor so to cultivate and improve your heart and mind that you will not be a reproach to Him who has commissioned you [in this case to be kings and priests] learning to rightly divide the truth, learning to cut straight, rightly and skillfully teaching the word of truth, being able to properly adapt God's words to the circumstances and the needs of the people.

I hope that puts some weight on you. It puts some weight on me. This is expected of us. So learn to adapt God's words to the needs of the people of the true government.

Matthew 13:52 Then He [Jesus Christ] said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."

There was a lady in the house across the street from where I was being raised in Oakland, California. She had a large pantry. I never got to go into the pantry, but I used to look in there. On the shelves were all kinds of good things. I mean she had canned and bottled things, and she put her cakes in there along with her big containers of cookies. She would go into the pantry and bring out those good things to me once in a while. For some reason when I read this scripture, I think of that pantry. You may have something else that it reminds you of, but I think of that pantry.

What it is saying here then is that every man who is acquainted with the Word of God should bring it forth at the correct time. Bring it out like a householder bringing out of his treasury, or place of deposit, what has been laid up there for when it was needed. As this applies to us, brethren, it means that we are to build up a storehouse of knowledge of God. In that storehouse we are to have new things and old things.

As we are in need of these things, in our responsibility as kings and priests, we are to bring them out to serve others. We are to have our life's experiences. We are to have these experiences of study, and experiences of making mistakes. We are to have the experience of looking back over our lives and saying, "I wish I'd done it differently." Some of you may have wondered, "Have I gone through what I've gone through, because I'm going to have to deal with somebody else that's gone through the same thing? Will I need to be able to encourage them?" The answer is, "Sure. Of course." You are going to say, "I've been there, and you can overcome it."

This is a nice scripture. This is Saul explaining what happened to him.

Acts 26:14-18 And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise, and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

What he is saying here is that our job will be to instruct the people by opening their eyes, and to remove them from the captive power of Satan's vast influence. Why? So that they might repent and be encouraged to trust God, that they might be joint heirs with Jesus Christ just like you and I. That is what your job is going to be. You have a big job description.

Is this not what will be expected of the kings and priests that rule? Just exactly what will be expected? The people will expect us to have answers, and we are going to have to have them. Thus we see, brethren, the first quality we are going to have to work on is getting the mind of God through study and through applying His principles in our lives. We must be prepared to teach and rule rightly those people that will be our responsibility to teach.

Now the second thing that God is going to have to find in us is the nature of God. Let us discuss that next. The king sets the standard for the realm just as the pastor sets the standard for the church. The people look at how he lives, what he does, and they respond to that. Many times, in fact most of the time, they will imitate the ministers. Well, so it is with the king or a priest. As the king conducts himself, the people will conduct themselves.

What is the first and most important characteristic of God that we must develop? What characteristic can we develop that will make those we are responsible for respond to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, and to us?

I John 4:19 We love Him, because He first loved us.

Albert Barnes has two explanations. He said, "The fact that He first loved us is the ground or reason why we love Him." That was one explanation. The second one was that, "As a matter of fact we have been brought to love Him by consequence or because of the love which He has manifested or made evident toward us. Though the real ground for our love may be the excellency of His own character." He said that when we see God's character, His patience, His love for us, we want to respond to it.

Now the word used for love means the setting of the will to love others. This is no small thing. We think, well, I like this person or I do not like this person. God liked you when you were not worth liking. And He liked me when I was a sinner. When John told us the other day God knew you long before He called you, I sort of shuddered. I wished God had not known me long before He called me. I think that may be the same with a lot of you.

So the word for love here means a setting of the will to love others, to do good to them, to lead them, to bring them along. It also has a sense of loving the leadership over you, (i.e. God the Father and Jesus Christ and those over us in the Kingdom of God.) It is a setting of the will to love. It further

expresses good will and kindness toward others. It can also be shown in correction and discipline, because that is going to bring good to others. This attitude is reflected in Ephesians 2, verses 4 through 7.

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses [you see, you are going to have to love the people you are ruling the same way, because they are going to be dead in sins too. He made us alive.], alive together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

You are going to have to love the people the very same way. In their sins and their mistakes, you are going to have to will yourself to love them and do good for them that they might be saved.

Here we see God's great love in action and the purpose behind that love. This is the same love and the purpose that we should have as well as kings and priests. We must even learn to love our enemies. Go to Matthew 5. I think you all know this one. In this bit of scripture we learn that in loving our enemies we come to be perfect like God our Father.

Matthew 5:43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you [Why?], that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? [Now here it comes in verse 48!] Therefore you shall perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

You see He loves everybody. He does not love their deeds, does not approve of them. Do not misunderstand. But He loves *them*. This does not mean that we are going to have to love with approval what the people do, what the individual is in their present state or condition. More fitting, this means that we love them as God loved us when we were sinning.

Just as God views us as we will be some day—as He views us now as becoming kings and priests—we will have to view them as they will be someday. That is going to be your job. You have got to have the big picture. You have got to see things as they will become, not as they are at the moment. As we work to return this kind of love, it simply means that we will not return evil for evil, that we will not work to ruin another's reputation. We will, in fact, work to set a proper example of dealing with everyone, that we might glorify God.

This works in the home too with fathers and their children, with mothers and their children, with husbands and wives. You will yourself to love one another, to exhibit patience, kindness, forgiveness, and faithfulness—all of these things. Because that is your training ground. You husbands that are married to the wives, and with children, that is your mini kingdom. And when you have something wrong in the kingdom it should come back to the king to settle the problem. It may

mean that the king has to humble himself to serve his family. You wives, you have your responsibility as well. And you children also are all to learn in this situation. That is why God gave it to you.

Romans 12 please. Here are more examples of love.

Romans 12:17-21 Repay to no one evil for evil. [Right off the bat you have got a challenge, because that is not how this world operates.] Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. [You have got to deal with that person honestly, even if he treats you wrongly. You treat him respectfully and those around you will note the godly character and the love for that person that you exhibited.] If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. [Yield when you can yield. Do all the things that are required. Certainly not doing anything against God's laws, but do all you can to live peacefully.] Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," saith the Lord. [You know that is not how this world operates. It is get even, shoot 'em, just simply finish him off.] Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." [Then comes the commandment for us all to obey.] Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. [That is your responsibility now in this life, and certainly in the kingdom of God.]

This outgoing love is what we will need to be kings and priests. It *must* be developed now! You cannot say, "Well, I'll catch it when I'm in the Kingdom of God." It does not work that way. As we love our husbands, our wives, and our children, this is what we have to do. It is going to be hard sometimes, because you are going to be short tempered or be in a problem. But be patient and love your families. Set that example.

Under that envelope of outgoing love and consideration for others are additional characteristics that we must develop as well. And this is a biggie! *Forgiveness*. One of our chief qualities that we will all need in the Kingdom of God as kings and priests is that of forgiveness. We live in a world where the get even way is the way of accomplishing everything. That cannot be with us. We must take on God's nature now if we are to have it then!

Go to Ephesians 4 please. Now these are commands to us. This is not for somebody else. This is not for our neighbor or the person sitting next to us. This is not for the wife and not the husband. It is not for the husband and not the wife. It is not for the children and not the parents.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. [He says to get it out of your nature. That does not mean that you are not going to have righteous anger sometimes where things have to be taken care of. But do not let this become part of you.] And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

The next time we start to think that we are hot stuff, that we can get angry and throw our temper on to somebody, stop and think. If you have to walk outside and count to 375 (or whatever the number is), consider what God has done for you. Consider the forgiveness that He has given you.

President Clinton has his stuff blasted all over the internet, and so forth. How would you like your stuff there? I would not; I would go crawl into a cave and pull the roof down. You see God has kept

that a secret, and He has forgotten it. Which is a real law in the family. I know that when we used to correct the children, they would get 3 swats—no more. If they stomped their feet and showed anger, that was 3 more. But then I would always hold them afterward and say, "Look, I love you, and you have to learn that breaking the law brings penalties. But I want you to know that when the penalty has been administered that it's forgotten. God forgets. It will never be thrown up again." And it wasn't. Our kids were always raised this way.

It was very touching when years later one of my sons came to me and said, "Dad, I really appreciate how you raised us. It was good." That was rewarding, because at the time you are going through it, when you are administering the penalty, no one says "Dad, I really appreciate the... Anyway!"

So there is a hollow forgiveness. That is just represented by words. Then there is a forgiveness from the heart. Now I am going to give you an assignment here. It is just one chapter in the Bible. I am asking you to *read carefully* Matthew 18—all of it—carefully. God says there, at the end, that if you do not forgive from the heart, He will not forgive you. Do not forget that God is the one who looks on your heart now. There is the hollow kind, and there is the from the heart kind. It is the latter kind that God *insists* we have. We all have faults. God expects you to develop a tender heart of compassion and kindness toward the faults of others. Why? Because of God the Father's forgiving you. On virtue of what Jesus Christ did for you. He took your debt away from you. He took your sins and died for you.

Many of us do not remember, at least many of the younger people among us do not, that there were many concentration camps during World War II. They do not remember the horrible atrocities that were performed in those camps. Experiments were made on human beings. They would put twelve ova in a woman to see what happened to her when she got pregnant, or as she grew and she exploded. They would skin people alive and then make lampshades out of their skin. Families would watch their loved ones taken and slaughtered. Surgeries were done without anesthesia and things like this.

Now when the time comes for forgiveness, the guards from Auschwitz, and Dachau, and Buchenwald will repent. They will see what it was like. They will see what they have done. They will come before God and repent, but how about the families that endured these atrocities? How could you forgive from the heart if you saw your wife skinned alive or something like that?

How can we teach others to forgive from the heart if we do not right now? If we are going to be able to teach forgiveness to those who suffered, we have to learn it here and now. This means for us to learn to forgive completely—from the heart. We cannot hold a grudge and carry it with us. You see, brethren, this is our time to go to school. This is our time to earn the reward. We are in school; the reward will come later. God expects a great deal of you and He expects a great deal of me.

The next thing we are going to have to have is *patience*. It is another characteristic that a king is going to have to have. You cannot have a short fuse.

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

This is what God wants. As a king you are going to have to want the same thing. It is going to require patience. It may come as a surprise to you, but some of us are a real trial. I have been a real trial to some! Here we see the attitude of God. To delay His punishment does not mean that He will not

punish, but it shows that He has patience. He does not want any to miss out on the future that is in store for them. That should be our goal as well.

Now what is the fruit of patience? Look at Romans 2, verses 1 through 4.

Romans 2:1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

I have done this. I have judged others, and then I have caught myself doing the same thing. It really hurt me when I have found that I do the same things that other people do. I say, "Look at that person doing that." Then about a month later, a year later, two years later, what am I doing? I just did the same thing!

Romans 2:2-3 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? [Not a chance!] Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God [and His patience] leads you to repentance?

If God got each one of us when we first sinned in our calling, we would not be here today. We would be ashes, or smithereens. We would be little piles of dust. No, God was patient with each one of you. He has been very patient with me. So you see, you are going to be kings and priests. You better have patience.

Those who fear God must not fight with others over doctrine. That is the next verse I want to come to. II Timothy 2, please, verses 24 through 26.

II Timothy 2:24-26 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth [Why?], and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

This is why we are to be patient. We are not to fight over doctrine. We can contend. We can teach. We can employ kindness. We can design to promote understanding. God's servants should be meek and not quarrelsome. The phrase means patient under evil or injuries, or trials or problems. We should approach those who are in error with meekness, and with love and understanding and patience. We should instruct them, not ridiculing them publicly or privately. Be patient and loving toward them. If they are slow to understand, we are not to become short or impatient. We are to extend as much time as possible helping them to understand. And again, why? That they might recover.

How do we put this into practice today?

Colossians 3:11-12 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all in all. [Because of this he says] Therefore, as the elect of God [which you are], holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.

Those are the instructions of God. This is what we are to put on with each other, with husband, with wife, with children, with friend, with neighbor, with members of the opposite sex. This is what we are to put on with strangers out in the world.

Colossians 3:13-14 Bearing [being patient with one another] with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a quarrel against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

In other words, forbearing one another, not rankling to argue, when something might promote a quarrel. We are not to hold our actions against one another. Always be ready to do good when the opportunity might arise. Be willing to forgive when forgiveness is asked. After the issue is resolved, act as if it never had happened. That is forgiving from the heart. Why? Because that is how Jesus Christ treated us. He forgot our mistakes, and we are to do the same thing.

Then he goes on to say here:

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts [and I have said this before that this is taken from the Olympic games. There was a man in charge of all the games. This is the same sense here. Let *peace* be in charge of your games, in a sense, to rule your heart.], to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful [for each other, be you thankful].

Well, brethren, if we can put this into actual practice, we are going to learn to love and to forgive and to have patience, because it is all right there.

Now the last thing I put down here is *self-control*. There are more certainly, but I am going to read you something that you have not heard in a while. Can you imagine what God would be like, or kings would be like, if they did not have self control? This pertains to godly character, by Mr. Armstrong:

Godly character is the attainment of the ability in a separate independent entity with free moral agency to be able to determine right from wrong, a true value from the false, truth from error, the right way from the wrong, and then to make the right choice or decision, even against self-desire, impulse, or temptation, plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to do the right.

This is the hard part for us.

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

He said it is time for us to do things God's way, to focus our mind on God. We need to listen to what God has to say, and to put our things off to one side—the earthly way. We need to do it *God's way*.

Colossians 3:3-7 For died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience [He said this is why the wrath comes. You do not want these.],

in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

In other words put on the new man who is created after God in righteousness and holiness. Be the new man or woman who is building godly character and has been given the knowledge of God. He said make those changes.

I Peter 4:1-2 Therefore since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. [That is, for us.]

I Peter 2:9-12 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God; who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

They are going to be called, and they are going to see you. And they are going to glorify you.

We need to have self-control in what we allow ourselves to watch and read, in how much we eat and drink, self-control in what we allow our minds to dwell on, self-control in how we take care of the body God has given us. We must have self-control so that we do not lie and gossip and stretch the truth. We need self-control over selfishness and the desires of our minds. And in a sense we need self-control to come out of the ways of the world. The building of godly character is *most difficult* and it requires discipline and effort. I Corinthians 9 is where Paul says, I run the race and I have to discipline myself that I might win the crown. If I do not then I will be lost.

Now the apostle Paul disciplined himself very carefully. But even so, there was a struggle going on in him. I am going to read Roman 7, verses 14 through 25, out of the New English Bible. This was given by Paul after some twenty-five years in the ministry. I will tell John Ritenbaugh sometimes that I am fighting something. He will say, "I'm glad that you don't have my sins." And I think, "What sins could he have?" But you see after twenty-five years, Paul had the same problem.

Romans 7:14-25 (NEB) We know that the law is spiritual, but I am not. I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin. I do not even acknowledge my own actions, as my own, for what I do is not what I want, but what I detest. But if what I do is against my will, it means that I agree with the law and hold it to be admirable. But the things are. It is no longer me that performs this action, but the sin that lodges in me. For I know that nothing good lodges in me, in my unspiritual nature. I mean for though the will to do good is there, the deed is not. The good which I want to do, I fail to do. But what I do is the wrong, which is against my will. And if what I do is against my will, then clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but sin that is lodging in me. I discovered this principle then, that when I want to do right only wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self, I

delight in the law of God. But I perceive that in my bodily members a different law is fighting against the law that my reason approves making me prisoner unto the law that is in my members, the law of sin. Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death? [And then he says] God alone will do this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God. Then it were that I myself might be subject to God's law as a rational being. Yet in my unspiritual nature I am still a slave to sin.

Now Bullinger in the *Companion Bible* wrote this. "This is the experience of everyone who is subject to the grace of God and has received the gift of the new nature as a sign of God's justification. It is not the experience of one man in two successive stages, but the co-existence of the two experiences in the one person [or the one man at the same time]."

We are in a war. Our nature does not go away. God has put it this way so we will have to make choices and to overcome. As becoming kings and priests, we are going to have to do this. This calling by God is to raise us from nothing, to become kings and priests. It is truly difficult, because our human nature keeps warring against us. Though we are saved by grace, we have a responsibility to do our level best to overcome, to obey God, to resist our human nature, and to overcome Satan. In all this we must have faith and trust in God that He will give us the victory, brethren. God's plan is sure for us.

Ephesians 1:13-14 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 [the down payment or deposit] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Paul thanks God for His purpose He set forth for us to be saved. And he thanks Him that we are part of the plan that He set up—His eternal plan. That Spirit that He has given to us is the down payment that is going to blossom and will help to convert us into a spirit being.

I Corinthians 1:4-9 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

We are confirmed. Philippians please.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

So even though you have troubles and trials, that will be performed in you.

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence [I am going to paraphrase this], exhibit and carry out what you already possess, your salvation. [You already possess

your salvation. You have been called by God. *Exhibit it!*] with fear and trembling. For it is God who [paraphrasing again] energizes you, that encourages you to have a desire to do of His good pleasure.

"You already have your salvation," God said. So live that way. You should live God's way now. Many of God's attributes we already possess. So grow and grow and grow attaining more of His attributes. Now there are many qualities that we all need to perfect in ourselves at this time. Certainly honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness, loyalty, energy, and zeal for God's way of life are among these.

Brethren, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the World Tomorrow, a time in the near future when we will be changed to spirit—from physical into the sons of God. In time we will have become co-saviors with Jesus Christ. Our positions as kings and priests will be commensurate with our abilities that we develop now.

Something else will take place then too. We will no longer be known by our past trade, plumber or electrician, or as an invalid, or somebody that does not have a degree, or whatever. We will be given a new name. Turn over to Revelation 3 please. This is encouraging. I do not know that I fully understand the new name exactly, but these letters are addressed to all the churches.

Revelation 3:12 "I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of the heaven from My God. And I will write upon him My new name."

We are going to get a new name. I am firmly convinced of that. But though we will all share in God's name, we will have a special name as well.

Revelation 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches [plural]. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no one knows except he who receives it.

This is sort of interesting. There are three symbols listed here. The first one is manna showing the faithfulness of God in His care for His people. That is what that pictures, manna coming every day to take care of His people. The second one is a white stone, a tessera. Now this has several meanings. It was an invitation stone. A tessera conviviales was a ticket to a banquet or a feast. There was a tessera that was inscribed with various items of gold that the Caesars would throw out during the games. He would throw these out to the crowd and the people would pick them up. An engraving on each gave so many pounds of gold or a servant, etc. The bearer could take the stone and redeem it. Then there was the stone, the tessera frumentariae, which had to do strictly with fruit, with garden things.

But the one that caught my mind was the tessera hospitales, which was given as a badge of friendship and alliance, upon which was engraved a contract of friendship between two parties. This stone was very valuable. This stone was cut in half and each of the parties got half of the stone. This stone was kept for generations. It showed that there was peace and harmony and love between the two families. It was considered to be extremely valuable. I could not help but think that that is what God is going to give us when He gives us the white stone. It will be a bond. It will be a contract of peace and of love, expressing generosity and caring and concern for one another.

Now the new name. We give nicknames to our kids and those we love. A little boy that is a bundle of energy we will call Tigger. We might call somebody Cheerful or Smiles. I always call my granddaughter Prairie Flower or Princess. I have no idea why. But a new name is going to be given to us. It will be a name that will reflect what you are, and you can be sure that it will be a name that will assure you that you have really pleased God in your performance and in your overcoming. It will be a name that will be of tremendous encouragement to you forever. This is what is in store for you.

God has placed all of us in the church to be taught how to rule. God has not placed us here just to be saved. He has placed us here for a larger purpose. We will be the ones who will implement the knowledge of God and the love of God and the patience of God to the people. We will demonstrate the forgiveness of God and the self-control to the ones coming out of the Tribulation. We will be the ones to instruct all those growing up during the Millennium. It is God's people who have been called to be firstfruits who will set the character and the standards of God throughout the entire world. This character will permeate every mind to produce peace and happiness and wonderful productivity.

Now each one of us prays to God, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." It is you and it is I, it is we that are going to ensure that God's will is done. I think we pray it, but we do not consider that. Brethren, after all the years that we have spent in the church and as we see the conclusion of time rushing upon us, God does not expect us to let down. We are to be looking forward to our being made kings and priests that we might be rejoicing as co-saviors with Jesus Christ in saving the world. Because of this, let us not allow ourselves to become sidetracked. Really work to develop into the true characteristics of God that we might serve.

What should we be doing? Prepare for the future *now*!