

## WELCOME ADDRESS

(Words of welcome at Little Northwest Fellowship Sunday, October 4, 1981, in Bellingham, by Ted Smith. We are sending this out particularly for the benefit of isolated brethren who do not have opportunities to attend conventions.)

My Ecclesia has given me the pleasure and privilege and honor of welcoming you to our all-day gathering this year. Our Ecclesia looks forward each year to having you all meet here in Bellingham so we can feast together in spiritual matters.

I also welcome you in the spirit of 2 Cor. 6:18 which reads, “And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” As you live your life here on earth and walk around and mingle with other people, do you think of yourself as a son or a daughter of the Lord Almighty? This is a very powerful thought and Scripturally true.

We have been begotten by God by his word of truth and we are now literally sons and daughters of God, and Jesus our Redeemer is our Elder Brother. As I was reading in the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises booklet a short time ago I ran across a statement by the Pastor that fairly astounded me when I realized the full force of its lofty and sacred meaning. This is on page 77, near the bottom of the page. It reads, “I will not heed what man may say of me or do to me.” (Now notice!) “So long as I have the Almighty Creator for my Father and the Redeemer for my elder Brother I shall be content, relying on their ‘exceeding great and precious promises’.” “The Almighty Creator for my Father, and the Redeemer my elder Brother!”

We have natural fathers according to the flesh, and brothers according to the flesh; but just think—now we have another Father, on a higher plane, our Creator, and this is not just something nice to say, but an actual fact. And we have another brother, on the same plane of being as our Creator, our Redeemer! This is astounding when you grasp the full meaning. So in faith, we look up to our Father on the Divine plane of being; and we look up to our Redeemer as our Elder Brother, far above any brother we might have here on earth as a human being. This relationship changes our entire outlook on life. In fact, we are living a different life than we did before we consecrated ourselves to walk in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

But there is a lot more to our new life, our new relationship. I call your attention to page 94 of the same booklet, top paragraph. We read that “The overcomers are not to be recognized merely as a class—the Bride class—but each will have the personal favor of the Lord. Of this no one will know save himself and the King. There is an individual and personal friendship between the Lord and the overcomers, who may be said to

receive the mark of identification—the antitypical white stone—now, in this life. This mark is the sealing of the Holy Spirit by which the Lord identifies the overcomers.”

What a thought is here—“an individual and personal friendship between the Lord and the overcomers!” And on page 67, bottom we read, “God has made provision for every creature, even the sparrow. But for all who have come into this loyal attitude of mind, He has love” (Now listen to this!) “sympathy, and more, esteem!” Do we read this aright? Yes, it says “Esteem.” If this is so, then we surely want to have more and more of this kind of love from our Heavenly Father! so we can have more and more of His “esteem.” It is so well said that “It is not possible for the human mind to grasp the riches of Divine grace and love and power. We cannot comprehend them, we can merely apprehend them.” (71-1) Yes, we find these rich thoughts in the Word of God; we “apprehend” these things because they are written in the Word of God, but to really comprehend them, this is not possible because we are here on earth and our minds are so finite.

In Psalm 91:1 we read, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” This secret place is the place of intimate communion and fellowship with God, through the blessed privilege of prayer and through faith in His precious Word and His promised providential care. And do we not earnestly pray that this intimate communion and fellowship with God may become more and more a living bright reality? We want our faith in this to mean more to us than the things of this life that we can see with our human eyes.

Our Heavenly Father, because we ARE his children, has favored us with an understanding of His plan, a plan that is complete in every way and designed to bless all the children of Adam with perfect restitution on this earth; and a plan that has singled out a special elect class to shower upon them blessings on the Divine Plane of being, so far above restitution.

And as our Heavenly Father views us with a perfect heart—a perfect purpose and intention and fully trusting in the Redeemer as our Advocate, God recognizes in us that which is worth of His love.

John 10:3 reads, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” So our Elder Brother emphasizes His peculiar and personal interest in each one of us. He calls Himself our Shepherd. This means a very special supervision of the affairs and interest of each one of us as a true disciple. Whatever may come to us is not a matter of chance or luck.

We as children of God have been called out from the world, and have had set before us the loftiest ambition. We are invited to become joint-heirs with Jesus our Lord, our Elder Brother. This is an ambition which is intended to inspire in us the development of all the

higher qualities of mind and character, in order to prepare ourselves for the society, friendship and fellowship of our Heavenly Father and our Elder Brother.

Peter expresses a very powerful exhortation in 1 Pet. 4:12, 13, “Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” And John tells us in 1 John 5:4 that the victory that overcometh the world, is our faith. So our faith must become strong and lay hold upon the power of God and find “grace to help in every time of need.”

Peter tells us in 2 Pet. 1:4, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that be these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.” I find a comment of the Pastor very fascinating on Reprint page 3059, par. 4, “Oh, how wonderful that the great Creator should condescend not only to redeem sinners but to urge, to entice them to receive His bounties and blessings!” “ENTICE US!” What does this word “entice” mean? The American College Dictionary gives the meaning as “exciting hope or desire.” And in Volume III page 220, par. 2 we find another interesting comment: “The exceeding great and precious promises are unfolded to us gradually, as we prove faithful and go on, in order that by these—by the strength and courage which they infuse—we may be enabled so to run as to obtain the prize.”