Sermon transcript

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Topic: 1 Thessalonians 5:4–28: "A call to vigilance and soberness in anticipation of the LORD's return!"

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You know, the Psalms are so wonderful. There isn't a single situation that people might find themselves in that hasn't been described somewhere in them. And then there are the Proverbs, each one unique, where wisdom for life is given to us to take with us on our journey.

From Psalm 27 I would like to read verse 4. Psalm 27 verse 4.

[4] ***One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.***

Brother Branham also expressed this very clearly in the sermon The Church Order. In it he said:

Fellowship amongst ourselves can take place in our homes, and fellowship with God takes place in the house of God.

And I think we can say it here: if there is something to discuss, we could do so in the entrance hall, and here we could then devote ourselves to worship.

From Proverbs, as I have already mentioned it, I would also like to read a passage, and then we will move on to our Word reflection. Feel at home in the presence of God, and may the Word of the Lord speak to us in every way. From Proverbs 15 I have something to read from the last verses, and also from the first verses of chapter 16. Proverbs 15 verse 24:

[24] ***The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.***

[25] ***The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.***

[26] ***The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.***

[27] ***He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.***

And now comes the verse.

[28] ***The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.***

And then perhaps verse 30.

[30] ***The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.***

I don't read Proverbs all that often, as I'm more at home with the prophetic Word. But sayings like these do us all good. I wish I could be a little kinder too. We may entrust ourselves entirely to God with all that we are and have, and with what God will yet make of us. And then I also liked verse 7.

[7] ***When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.***

May it truly please the Lord in this regard too, that we all experience more and more how not just a few Scriptures, but as many Scriptures as possible, might become reality in our personal lives and in our lives of faith, that we may truly become a Word bride, a Word bride in whom God's Word is fulfilled.

You know, people generally expect me to say something about the latest developments. After all, something new happens every day, developments are proceeding so rapidly that one simply has to say: Lord, it is at the door, it is not merely near, but it is at the door. What certainly moved and struck us all in recent weeks was what was happening in Paris, that Europe, the Union, is a done deal, and on the whole, there was really only one obstacle, and that was the Iron Lady. And this obstacle is no longer necessary, it is in the way, it is holding things up, she had to go, so that nothing can hold things up any longer, and this whole European train can run its course, and so that Bible prophecy may indeed be fulfilled before our very eyes.

It made me think of two Scriptures in the book of Daniel, when back then Mr. Khrushchev and Eisenhower met in New York, and Khrushchev, being a little agitated, took off his shoe and stamped it backwards on the lectern, and afterwards Brother Branham preached a sermon referring to the prophet Daniel and speaking of the iron and the clay, which, though they unite, do not mix. I read this Word. I know that for some the prophetic Word is a little difficult, and I ask myself now and then whether it makes any sense at all to speak about it. On the other hand, oh, somebody said "of course", but I also want us all to be able to follow along somehow, so that we are not just groping in the dark, but that we have God's holy Word before us and see it fulfilled. Here in the prophet Daniel, in chapter 2, we have the following description regarding the final parts of the statue that Daniel saw. Daniel chapter 2, Daniel chapter 2, verses 32 to 34:

[32] ***This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,***

[33] ***his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.***

Now I shall read you the explanation from the same chapter, namely verses 41 and 42.

[41] ***And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.***

[42] ***And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.***

Yes, I could actually read on, for these are all very important words, especially for our times. Totally different systems are uniting, they must join forces, they must, because there is no other way. I already said it here last time, according to Bible prophecy, there will be only one world power, and that is the revival of the Roman Empire, as it is now underlined by the Roman treaties. And I must say, it did affect me a little when I stopped over in Rome on my way to Palermo and again on the return journey. The clergy are, after all, traveling in droves to every country, all with their collars turned up, and they are spreading out across the whole world, and that does indeed remind me of what the Pope said during his last visit to Portugal. It was the Roman Catholic faith that once shaped Europe, and it is now once again the Roman Catholic faith that is shaping the new Europe, and everyone agrees, everyone nods. But that is how it is now, we shall not go into these matters in greater detail. I ask only that we always pay attention to this, for it is by this that we recognize how late it is on the world clock.

The joy that God has indeed sent us a prophet in this generation is great, even if we cannot say this with a completely beaming face, but we bear witness to it truthfully. We would not have known all these connections ourselves, would not have seen them, would never have pieced them together, had God not granted us the privilege of hearing one of his greatest servants and prophets.

Since we are already talking about this, I'm reminded of my visit to Ljubljana. This nice young man gave me a book about the Antichrist. It had been written by someone who I believe was missing his right arm and his right foot. But be that as it may, in any case he said to me: "I have to be away for an hour, you read it, and when I come back, tell me what's wrong with it." And indeed, it didn't take long at all, I didn't need a whole hour to figure it all out. And do you know what happened? He was very eager, and when I said this and that, and this and that, and so on, he stood up, he was sitting, and came towards me, I had to stand up too, and he clasped his hands tightly around me and said: "God has sent you to our house." And then he said, "As I was reading, I sensed that something was amiss, and that is why I wanted to hear it from your own mouth." Oh yes, there are people who are ready to listen, and I shall tell you why: because they have been destined by God to hear the truth. And that is why they long for it. Just one more verse from Daniel 2,

and then I feel today that we must draw nearer to the Lord, and that we must read Scriptures that concern our lives, our fellowship with God, indeed, our spiritual life. Just one more Scripture from Daniel 2 verse 44. Daniel 2:44:

[44] ***And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.***

In the time of these kingdoms, as we are now experiencing them, God will establish his kingdom. We have long prayed for this, "***Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,***" and so on. [Mat 6:10] Now it is all within reach.

May God have mercy on us all, be gracious to us with all His mercy and lead and bring us into a deeper fellowship with Himself and also with one another.

I would like to read from Hebrews 4 and then a few more scriptures.

Hebrews 4.

Here we are reminded of the word that was also often heard from Brother Branham's lips. I would like to read it. Hebrews chapter 4, verses 11 to 13:

[11] ***Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.***

[12] ***For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.***

[13] ***Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.***

It is simply a matter of the effect of the Word of God. God stands behind his Word with all his might, with all his power. How often have we said, "***He spoke and it came to be, he commanded and it stood firm.***" [Psa 33:9]

But we too must personally experience the effect of this Word of God, this Gospel, which is the power of God. [1 Cor 9:18] As noted earlier, even the greatest and best knowledge will not save us. There must be a life from God, and spiritual growth, a genuine renewal, so that God can continue his work.

Yet we remain entirely natural human beings. Has that been understood? Entirely natural human beings. And I do not know whether you too will be angry with me if I make a remark now. But there is to be a wedding in Zurich this December. And I reckon the brother is, I would say, 65, and the sister I put at 60. And when I heard that, I rejoiced deeply with them. It simply shows that even believers can still think and act normally, if that is how it is meant to be. Not everyone has the same path

laid out for them, but whoever walks such a path, let them walk with God. Have we understood that? One must not reproach the other. For your way is not my way, and the way of a brother and a sister is after all their way, and not our way. So always leave everyone to God at all times.

Just as Paul says, "***Let it be done in the Lord.***" [1 Cor 7:39] And the two of them are happy as if they were now 18 and 20. And we wish that for them with all our hearts.

Let us return to our text here.

"***It pierces through, it cuts through,***" but not the mind and the reasoning of practical life. What does it cut through? Spirit and soul, marrow and bone. As I have often said, believers are actually the most sensible people on earth. There can be no one more sensible than those who have been equipped with divine wisdom through Word and spirit.

And I ask you, is there any group on earth, any human race, any people or any religion that can point to a book such as the one left to us for our entire life of faith and also for our earthly life? We are a people favored by God, if we have become the people of God.

Let us move on to the Epistle to Titus, Titus chapter 1.

I have noted down two or three passages that have become very significant and important to me personally, in the hope that the Lord will also speak to us through these scriptures.

In Titus chapter 1, a well-known scripture, I shall read from verse 2.

[2] ***In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;***

[3] ***But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.***

Actually, I was really thinking of verse 1, forgive me:

[1] ***Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness...***

So it is also about our standing the test in the life of faith, quite practically, each one wherever God has placed him.

From 1 Timothy 4, I would like to read verse 6, 1 Timothy 4, verse 6.

1 Timothy 4, verse 6:

[6] ***If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and***

of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

There is a plumb line, and I myself have mostly only seen it in construction. When building, there is a plumb line. The bricklayer, all the workers, everything has to be right. There is a plumb line. The building must be straight. Everything must be where it belongs.

Here, we are talking about a guiding principle. We are aligned according to the Word of God. We fit ourselves into God's plan, say yes to every Word he has spoken, so as to become one with the Word.

From 2 Thessalonians 2, I'm deliberately reading a few scriptures. And you will see that one is more powerful than the other, and all are glorious.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13. Previously, there's talk of the coming of the Lord and of the day of the Lord, of the apostasy. Various things are written about here. And then, in verse 13 it says:

[13] ***But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.***

And the truth is and remains God's Word. We are not a pious club. We wish to be the church of Jesus Christ. And as we can read in 1 Timothy 3:15, this church is "***the foundation and pillar of the truth***".

That is, permeated by the Word of truth, which has been revealed to us and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, there is a passage that contains a warning, specifically for the unbelievers. That day is also drawing near, the day on which the Lord will be glorified in his own, but will bring punishment upon those who have not believed in him. I read here in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 5:

[5] ***Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer;***

[6] ***Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;***

[7] ***And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,***

[8] ***In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:***

[9] ***Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;***

[10] ***When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe because our testimony among you was believed in***

that day.

From a doctrinal perspective, this is a truly powerful passage, a key passage. To remind us that there is not just a second coming of the Lord where we are caught up to meet him in the air, and then taken with him into glory to celebrate the marriage supper as the bride with the bridegroom. But there is also a coming of the Lord in wrath, in fire, to punish the rebellious and the ungodly, and to be glorified here on this earth among his own, and to be admired.

We know, of course, that the Millennium will take place here on earth. And the Lord will settle accounts with the powers that will march against Israel, and he will do the same with his enemies. But he will be glorified among his own.

I now often read in the Zurich translation as well. I do have 15 Bible translations at home. And it is quite marvelous how the translators have become more and more consistent. It is simply marvelous how the Lord has bestowed his grace in this regard as well. So here we read:

[10] ***When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.***

Not only by the bride, but the bride, the 144,000, by all. By all who have come to believe.

First, it is about the chosen, about the elect, who are destined to behold the glory of God, to share in the first resurrection, and to celebrate the wedding feast as the bride with the bridegroom.

Although it must also be said that all the elect will be present from both the Old and New Testament. For so it is written, on that day we shall take part in the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with all the saints. [Mat 8:11] And according to Matthew 27 from verse 51, many of the saints have risen with Christ. Not all, many, namely, the many who belong to the first resurrection. The others must wait until the second resurrection comes.

But now that we have just read and considered this passage, it is very important to listen carefully at all times. Imagine if someone were to preach now: "When the Lord Jesus returns to take us home, he will come with the angels of his power, and then he will come in in flaming fire, taking vengeance…"

What sort of message would that be? That simply won't do. And that is why the emphasis is placed time and again, just as Paul addressed it to Timothy: "***who rightly divides the Word of truth***". [2 Tim 2:15]

Every Word simply must be placed in the context to which it belongs. And then it all fits together; then things fall into place in a truly wonderful way.

[10] ***When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.***

Then the number will be complete from the nations, from the people of Israel. Then the called and the chosen, then the wise and the foolish virgins, then all that has been reconciled to God through Calvary will appear before the Lord. As for the individual details, the word 'classified' may not be quite right, but where each one finds their place, God knows best of all.

It is certainly a beautiful thing if we could belong to the firstfruits. Who would like to be there? Who would like to be among the firstfruits with the first wave to be taken up from this earth into glory?

Oh yes, and I believe it, and I believe it with good reason, because we do not merely believe in salvation in a general sense, which indeed many believe in, that which took place on the cross of Calvary. But we also believe the promises that God has given us in his Word, and that is why our faith is a living faith united with God, which draws us into the fulfillment itself. Is that clear enough? Not just salvation, for that we thank God, but that is only the beginning. And then we simply follow the Lord step-by-step, each in their own order.

Perhaps I shall also read the passage on this, for Paul has indeed written on every subject. For that too, we are very grateful to God. 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. Here, at least, the three things, as they have been categorized, are laid out before us. 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 22 to 24.

[22] ***For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.***

[23] ***But every man in his own order…***

I did not write this myself; it is found in the Word of God in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 23:

[23] ***…Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.***

[24] ***Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father…***

And so on.

So God has given us a very clear and concise outline in his Word.

Now, to us personally: we want God to have his way. I need this more than ever before. And I believe that everyone of us who wishes to stand his ground before God and is honest will feel that we must draw nearer to God, receive more from him, and that he can reveal himself to us more fully.

I would like to read on this from 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5. Here, we are addressed in a truly wonderful way, and indeed with great emphasis. 1 Thessalonians 5, just the last verses: 25 to 28.

[25] ***Brethren, pray for us.***

[26] ***Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.***

[27] ***I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.***

[28] ***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.***

Particularly this emphasis: "***I charge you by the Lord...***"

No man shall swear, neither by God, for he says: "***heaven is my throne***", nor by the earth, for he says: "***the earth is the footstool of my feet***", nor by the altar. [Matthew 5:34-36]

But God, God can. And concerning God, it is also written: "***since he could not swear by no one else, he swore by himself***" [Heb 6:13], as we have reconsidered here, to give weight to the matter he has made known, that it is irreversible and eternally decreed by God.

Now, here we are urged by a man of God, individually at that time and collectively all of us:

[27] ***I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.***

What preceded this statement? The exposition here in the epistles to the Thessalonians, and in every single epistle, there is always mention of the Lord's return, and again and again of the coming wrath, of the Word, which we have received, not as a human word but as the Word of God.

You know the letters, whether you read Romans, the letters to the Corinthians, to the Ephesians. All the letters have a certain tone, a certain character, certain themes are addressed, and here we are indeed dealing with a theme of the Lord's return, with the things we are now awaiting.

I shall read a last verse of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1. Here, in verse 10 it is written:

[10] ***And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.***

The scripture we read earlier already speaks of wrath. But here it is stated at the outset that Lord Jesus is coming to save us from the coming wrath, that is, to take us home before the judgments of wrath break out and blazing fire is revealed. Then, in the final part of the second chapter, which actually ties in with what our brother Corrado has already read, it says that the Lord will "***crush Satan under our feet.***" [Rom 16:20]

It cannot be otherwise. For the earth is indeed the footstool of the Lord, and it is written in the epistle to the Corinthians: "***He must reign in the midst of his enemies, until all his enemies are made his footstool.***" [1 Cor 15:25]

He is and remains the victor of Golgotha. Everything else must and will submit to him and be subject to him. But we see that Satan can still stand in the way from

time to time, even if only temporarily.

In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 17:

[17] ***But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.***

[18] ***Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.***

You can read on… Well, I read to the end:

[19] ***For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?***

At his coming. So this is about the return of Jesus Christ, and we see that even the apostle Paul was hindered; he could not do quite as he wished. And yet, God is with him, and God will also achieve his purpose with all of us.

As for the other chapters, particularly chapter 4, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, where we have a direct description of the Lord's return. From verse 13 the Apostle begins and he continues until the end of the same chapter. And he then says: "***And so shall we ever be with the Lord.***" [1 The 4:17]

Before that, it says that we shall be caught up. "***Wherefore comfort one another with these words.***" [1 The 4:18]

And then, something very important begins in connection with the Day of the Lord, before which the prophet Elijah was to come to turn the hearts of God's children back to their origin, the fathers in Christ. Chapter 5 speaks clearly of this, right from the start. And this is followed by personal exhortations to us as believers. And let us briefly consider these personal exhortations before we highlight the conclusion.

If we read on to verse 4, the text has, of course, always been familiar:

[4] ***But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.***

[5] ***Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.***

Then come the exhortations:

[6] ***Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.***

[7] ***For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.***

[8] ***But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.***

[9] ***For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,***

[10] ***Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.***

[11] ***Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.***

So it really is about everything, absolutely everything. Not just the teaching about the Lord's return, that those who have fallen asleep in Christ will rise first, and those who are alive in Christ will be transformed and caught up. All that is wonderful, but it is about more than that. It is about remaining watchful. It is about a task God has set us, which is connected with the edification of the body, so that we may carry it out.

I had a phone call this morning. A brother was preaching somewhere. I've seen him once or twice, but don't know him well otherwise. And then the voice on the other end of the line said: 'He has left us all devastated.' And that really touched my heart.

I thought to myself: When you read God's Word, it is written quite clearly that God has appointed the ministries for the edification of the church, not for destruction, but for the promotion and edification of the church. And if someone is sent by God, then there must be edification in the Word, in faith, in everything. If there is no spiritual edification associated with a sermon, well, where does the sermon come from then? If it comes from the Word of God, then God is speaking to us, and then these are not empty words. Then there is the power of God in the Word of God to give us what he has promised and prepared and intended for us.

This thought is indeed very important. God builds up. He only destroys the works of Satan. Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan. [1 Jn 3:8]

And all this was accomplished on Golgotha. It only remains for the individual to experience its fulfillment.

But when it comes to the church, it is truly a matter of edification, including for the individual. Let me tell you this quite plainly. There are people with whom we must have just as much patience as God has with us. Have you been listening carefully? We want God to be patient with us. And we know that he is. For if God had not been patient with us and borne with us in tender patience, where would we be today?

Since it happened in some far away country, I might as well say it. I know a brother, I'll just call him brother, I can't help it, may God help him and be merciful to him. In any case, I was once on a stopover at some point to speak to him because he was close to my heart. And I knew that he had fallen into bad company. And I think

the stuff he is smoking is called hashish. He doesn't do it in my presence. He would never do that because he values me.

But when I spoke to him back then, and simply laid everything out to him, telling him, "Listen, I love you with divine love." Then he wanted to explain to me that God lets everything grow. And how could I possibly despise what God lets grow in the open fields and so on. You know the arguments these people put forward.

And then came the reply. God lets many things grow, but for very different purposes. If poisonous mushrooms grow in the forest, surely they aren't meant to end up in my frying pan or in my stomach, do you understand? So there are many things, and when you have the grace not to look down on such a person from on high, but simply to stand on the same level as them and say: "God was gracious to me in the things I had to cope with." "The same God is patient with you and is gracious to you in the things you have to cope with."

He too embraced me. He said: "Everyone else has condemned me and passed judgment on me." I said: "Listen, in a state like that, and then to pass judgment?" "Here the judgment must be set aside. Here grace and deliverance must be proclaimed." And as far as I know, the Lord will either have already revealed his victory or will carry it out and reveal it very soon.

There are simply people who are possessed by another power and cannot help themselves. They would like to, but they cannot. And if they cannot, should we still condemn them? No. May God grant us a powerful proclamation so that ***"the captives may be set free,"*** as it is written in the prophet Isaiah. [Is 61:1]

And so the Lord will indeed have his way with his people.

It was different with the Pentecostal lady who came to brother Branham, spike-heeled and dancing, you all know the sermon. And brother Branham said to her:

Sister, not like that. You are entering the Lord's path, but He will not let you through like that.

And she of course said, "I'll get through it." And lo and behold, she fell over and plunged from the path straight into the abyss.

One must always distinguish what it is and what it is all about. Let us return to this Word here. It is simply a matter of seeking and finding a deeper fellowship with God.

And if we must go into prayer, and without it, it won't work anyway. But prayers that do express the cry of our soul, and can then also admonish and edify one another, all the more so as we see that this day of the return of Jesus Christ is drawing near.

When it says here: ***"Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."*** [1 Thes 5:11]

It goes on further in this letter here. You can read it through at home. It says here:

[12] ***And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;***

It goes on:

[14] ***Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.***

[15] ***See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.***

So here we have a whole series of things linked together.

If we are already speaking of the Lord's return, and waiting for it, surely we ought to, that we might lend a helping hand, that we might see growth and progress in our life of faith.

There may also be those who are discouraged. And a discouraged person needs encouragement. But encouragement in the right tone, in the right way.

God will make us capable. I have no doubt about that. He has at his disposal all the things we need to lead a life pleasing to him here on earth and to serve him and one another.

Then it also says:

[16] ***Rejoice evermore.***

It is not always easy for us. There is not much to rejoice about. But nevertheless, the Word must remain true: ***"Rejoice always."*** [1 Thes 5:16]

And be honest.

When we become completely still, in the face of many difficulties and trials, it is still a heavenly peace that permeates our soul. And something tells us: ***"I am with you, always, even to the end of the world."*** [Mt 28:20]

Then we can add, "All will be well." He makes all things well. Even when we have hours and days when we are at a loss, when we become still before the Lord, a gentle voice speaks within us, assuring us that he will make all things well.

So:

[16] ***Rejoice always.***

[17] ***Pray without ceasing.***

[18] ***In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ.***

In all circumstances. There is not a single exception here. In all circumstances, however difficult they may be. May God grant me grace in this too. For only when we do what is written here, will we become overcomers.

Have we understood that? Only in this way will we become overcomers. And how do we overcome? Through the blood of the Lamb, and through the word of God, which has become our testimony. [Rev 12:11]

And we all know that the Lord intends to make a multitude of overcomers out of the firstfruits, until it can truly be said: ***"These have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony."*** [Rev 12:11]

It goes on:

[17] ***Pray without ceasing.***

[18] ***In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.***

[19] ***Quench not the Spirit.***

[20] ***Despise not prophesyings.***

[21] ***Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.***

[22] ***Abstain from all appearance of evil.***

And then comes the exhortation, with the words:

[23] ***And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Now comes the climax.

[24] ***Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.***

"***Who also will do it.***"

And now we can understand why the apostle writes:

[27] ***I charge you before the Lord, let this letter be read to all the brothers.*** [1 Thes 5:27]

To all the brothers throughout Europe, in every country of the world, across the entire globe.

And may this Word of God, which has been revealed to us fresh from the throne, in this generation, through a called mouth, may it be heeded. And may the Bible be read as a new book, not according to the letter, but truly in the light of the divine revelation, which has been bestowed upon us by grace.

We too wish to ensure that truly all Scriptures, especially those which are so crucial now, as we draw near to the Lord's return, are not merely read, but believed and obeyed, so that we may become doers of the Word. [Jam 1:22] In the certainty that ***"faithful is he who has called you."*** [1 Thes 5:24] Yes, who has chosen us, who has drawn us out, who has shown us mercy, who has revealed himself to us. He

is faithful, and he will also make us faithful, and bring the work he has begun to completion, unto the day of the return of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I myself would rejoice if I were to see the Lord's mighty hand stretched out very soon, even here, in this place, in this very spot. God is mighty. Yes, God is almighty. And he will bless his own, that they may become a blessing to others. And as we have often said, ***"he will finish the work he has begun."*** [Phil 1:6]

In the days of those kingdoms, as we have read in the prophet Daniel, the God of heaven will establish his kingdom, which will be eternal, and all other kingdoms will be shattered and come to an end. [Dn 2:44]

The Lord will reign over the whole earth, and will find admiration, honor, and glorification in all the redeemed, both Jews and gentiles. By grace we too may be present then. The firstfruits have the advantage of being present at the wedding feast and in the millennium. These will always be there. May God grant this to me, to you. May he grant it to us all by his grace.

And together we believe that by his grace, we may be part of it. To him, our Lord, be praise and honor, glory and worship, forever and ever. Amen.

Let us stand and give glory to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, beloved Lord, who are we, that we should be allowed to come before you at all? O God, you holy God.

Like Isaiah, we cry out: ***"I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."*** [Is 6:5]

Beloved Lord, cleanse us yourself, sanctify us yourself, work in us yourself, through the power of your blood, your Word, and your Spirit.

Beloved Lord, together we give you special thanks, that we may be counted among those whom you have called to your side, to reveal to us the mysteries of the kingdom of God, to show us the connections, to put things in their proper order. Beloved Lord, place us now, O God.

May your ways now become our ways, your thoughts, our thoughts. May there be harmony, beloved Lord. We ask you now, bring us into harmony with you and your Word.

Help us, O Lord, and be gracious to us. Let us not continue in this way any longer. Have mercy on us. Visit us in your mercy, O God. Begin to work in a new and free way, O Lord.

Take away all this depression, take away all this distress, all this groaning, all this lamenting. Just as in Egypt long ago, Lord, so now we feel that the groaning is increasing, rather than abating, O Lord. Grant us true deliverance, that your people may go forth to serve you, to praise your victory, and proclaim: ***"The right hand***

of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord upholds the victory." [Ps 118:15–16]

Lord, in our hearts we know that all enemies have already been made your footstool.

You, victor of Golgotha, you, Lamb of God, to you we give thanks, you we worship. You were also worthy to take the book, to break the seals, and to reveal.

You did make it known to our beloved brother Branham back in March 1963. Beloved Lord, you are the God of the Old and New Testament. You speak, you work, you save, you heal, you bless, and reveal yourself to your people. We commit ourselves to you. May all that pertains to your return be read aloud throughout the world. And also in preparation for your coming, O Lord.

May the epistles of the apostles, which now appear in prophetic light, be read in this divine clarity in all the churches. That the body of the Lord may be built up and joined together, and that you may soon return to take us to yourself. We give you heartfelt thanks for what you have already done. And we thank you in advance for the even greater things you will do, to the glory and praise of your name. Hallelujah.

Receive all those who have dedicated their lives to you, including those who have been rebaptized, O Lord. Be with them in a very special way, stand by them, strengthen them, give them brothers and sisters who are close to them, Lord, who can help them in their early days of faith. Unite us so closely with one another, O Lord, that we may serve as you would have us. Once again, let thanks and worship be offered to you for everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.