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PASTOR RUSSELL

Philadelphia, Nov. 22.—Pastor Russell, at Frankford Theatre, had for his text the words, "In everything give thanks."—1 Thessalonians 5:18. Reviewing briefly the condition of the world, the speaker declared that it must be a difficult matter for the majority of people to determine correctly the nature of the thanks they would offer to God. Three hundred and fifty millions of humanity, our blood relatives, are at war, seeking to destroy each other. Ninety million Americans, deeply interested in them, are invited by our Honorable President and the Governors of our several states to render thanks to the Almighty. Truly, we have many causes for thanksgiving to our Creator; life itself is a blessing, a boon; our nation in many respects is the most favored on the face of the earth, enriched by God's bounty above all others, not the least of our blessings being our civil and religious liberties.

Surely no one of even average heart and head has cause for other than great thankfulness to our Creator. "Our lines have fallen to us in pleasant places." Those who feel no gratitude are surely soured by discontent, ignorance, selfishness. How appropriate, then, that we should all bow heart and head before the Giver of every good and perfect gift. To whatever extent this course be followed heartily, without hypocrisy undoubtedly a blessing will result, individually and nationally. The custom is a beautiful one.

There is a difference between thanksgiving and prayer. None have the right or the privilege of approaching the Throne of Heavenly Grace except those who have come into covenant relationship with God. The Jews came into covenant relationship with God through their Law Covenant by Divine arrangement through Moses. The followers of Jesus, who accept the Divine arrangement of the Gospel Age, are privileged thus to come into relationship with the Creator through Him. He is our Advocate, who has opened up for us a new and living way, through the sacrifice of His flesh. All whom the Father has accepted through Him—all whom the Father has begotten by His Holy Spirit—are Scripturally termed sons of God, children of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord.—1 John 3:1; Romans 8:17.

These are invited to come to their Father and to address Him thus: "Our Father who art in Heaven," and to ask for the blessings which God has provided for His children, according to His Divine purposes and arrangements. But none others are permitted to come to this Throne of Grace, because not in covenant relationship with the Savior, because in God's arrangement "There is none other name given in Heaven or amongst men, whereby we may be saved" from our sins, or be brought into relationship with God.

Thus we see that only a limited number may enjoy the privileges of prayer or expect answers to their prayers. But, thank God, others may worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. Many have this privilege, and the exercise of it is sure to bring a blessing. Whoever has a thankful heart, which takes delight in offering worship to the Giver of every good gift, will surely receive a reflex blessing. His love of righteousness and truth, holiness and goodness, mercy and justice, will thereby be strengthened; and so also will be the probability of his some day reaching the point where he will see the wisdom and the desirability of giving his heart—his little all—to the Lord in consecration—to be a faithful footstep follower of the Redeemer.

Giving Thanks For the War.
Very evidently the majority of mankind have an insufficiency of knowledge of God, of the Bible, and of the Divine Plan therein set forth, to thank God for the present state of war. But to the Church, whose eyes of understanding have been opened and who are able to see the lengths and the depths, of God's Love in the Message of the Bible, St. Paul writes: "In everything give thanks!"

Ripe Christians have learned to give thanks to God for the adversities of life in their own experiences, convinced that under God's supervision the direst of calamities may be overruled for good to His people and for glory to His name. But only the advanced, the

developed, Christian is able to give thanks under circumstances of severe trials and testings. Only those who have great faith, built upon clear knowledge of the Divine promises, can realize thoroughly that all things are working together for their good.

Similarly, in respect to the great European war now in progress, its casualties, desolations and wounds, only the well-instructed of God's people may understand the Divine plans and arrangements so thoroughly as to be able to give thanks in respect to the war—and able to exercise confident faith that the outcome of it will mean blessings of instruction and preparation for future blessings.

If the Scriptures did not foretell this time of world-wide "distress of nations," we might not know that God had foreseen it and had made provision for its results before permitting it. But the same Bible that foretells the war tells of its results, saying, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9.) If, then, the war is teaching the world lessons along the lines of righteousness and justice, it will be doing permanent good. Moreover, the same Bible tells that the war is merely the outgrowth of human selfishness, ignorance, superstition and false doctrine, and assures us that although it will lead on to revolution, anarchy and the utter wreck of the present order of things—the present civilization—nevertheless, God is prepared for the emergency. "Man's extremity will be God's opportunity."

Great Cause For Rejoicing.
The hour having come for Messiah to take the reins of government, He will stand forth in Power and Majesty at the proper moment, and exclaim to the raging elements of the restless human sea, "Peace! Be still!" And there will be a great calm. The lesson learned in the Trouble will be a lasting one; and the blessed opportunities of Messiah's Kingdom, which will be built upon the ashes of present institutions, will bring everlasting life and everlasting joy to all the willing and obedient.

Those who see the war from this viewpoint may indeed in everything give thanks; rejoicing that the reign of Sin and Death will soon be ended; rejoicing that God's Kingdom will soon come, and His will be done on earth, even as in Heaven; rejoicing that soon the knowledge of the true character of God will be universal; rejoicing that then, in the light of that knowledge, "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God!" rejoicing still further, that any who under all those favorable conditions will refuse to make a full surrender to the Lord, will be mercifully cut off from life in the Second Death!

The Hope of the Resurrection.
The expansion of the sorrows of the world is given in the Bible, which tells us that sin lies at the door, and that the mental, moral and physical blemishes which cause humanity such distress are incidental to the penalty pronounced against sin; namely, death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." When Father Adam was on trial representatively for his race, he sinned and came under the penalty for sin—"Dying, thou shalt die." Therefore all his children share by heredity his imperfections, and are likewise imperfect—sinners, as St. Paul explains (Romans 5:12). Thus, during sixty centuries, approximately twenty thousand millions of Adam's children have been "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and have entered the world condemned and dying, mentally, morally and physically.

Divine sympathy exercised toward this race of sinners provided a Savior, "who for the joy set before Him" sacrificed His life for the world. (John 3:16; Hebrews 12:2.) "Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9.) Then, instead of setting up the promised Kingdom to bless the world, instead of saving the world, the Savior did something else; and that which He has been doing from the time of His resurrection until now is, as the Apostle explains, a Mystery (Ephesians 3:3-8; Colossians 1:26, 27). "The Mystery of God" the world does not understand; for He prefers to keep the matter from them. But "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

This Mystery is that God has purposed that the blessing of the world should be accomplished by our Savior in association with a select class gathered out of the world and especially prepared in the School of Christ during the Gospel Age. During the centuries required for the finding of this anlitly class for whom the Lord has been searching with the magnet of Truth, various false theories have sprung up and found acceptance in the world. One of these is that God does not love the world and has never purposed its salvation; but that, on the contrary, He has predestinated all except the saints to suffer eternal torture, because He wished to have it so.

Another of these false theories is that whilst God wished to save the world, He is unable to do so, because handicapped by human self-will and by Satan's aggressiveness. This theory declares that God loves the world, including the heathen millions; that He longs to have the Gospel taken to them, but cannot do so except through human agency; and that He is baffled and disappointed because those who profess to be His people fail to raise sufficient funds.

To rational minds these theories are no longer satisfactory; hence many are turned to infidelity. But leaving these errors of the Dark Ages and going back to the Scriptures, we find their teachings consistent; namely, that as soon as the Mystery of God, the

Church, is finished, the Divine blessing will proceed through The Christ—Jesus the Head, and the Church the Body—to the world. As it is written, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Mystery of God is that the spiritual Seed of Abraham is not the Lord Jesus only, but also His members—the Church.—Galatians 3:8, 16, 29.

During Messiah's Reign of Righteousness, all nations will be instructed, enlightened, blessed. The merit of Christ will then be applied on behalf of the billions who have gone down into the prison-house of death—Sheol, Hades, the grave. The Church will constitute the First Resurrection. All sharing in it will attain life on the spirit plane. Later, during the Millennium, the world will return from the tomb, "every man in his own order." The process of resurrection will continue with them, in order that the willing and obedient may rise gradually towards perfection on the human plane and finally attain it. Meantime the earth will be rejuvenated and become the promised Paradise restored.

"Give Thanks, For He Is Good."
Looking down into the future, the Psalmist exclaims, in view of the Kingdom blessings promised the world, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good! for His mercy endureth forever!" It is the mercy of God toward us—toward all who need His mercy and who desire it—that constitutes the ground for thanksgiving. It is true that praise must come from thankful hearts; and that, to be properly thankful, one must see more than is now visible to those who have not the eye of faith and the Divine revelation of things to come. But these very opportunities the Lord's consecrated ones possess. As it is written, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."

Not only so, but to the extent that any sees and hears of the grace of God he has responsibility. To possess the knowledge of God and to disdain it is to receive the grace of God in vain.

God's people not only give thanks for future blessings received now by faith, but additionally they appreciate blessings granted them in the present life, and give thanks for these. The first of these is the knowledge of the goodness of God in releasing us by faith from sin and its penalty, so that without waiting for actualities we can now rejoice in the mercy which has justified us freely through the blood of Christ. The realization both of the rolling away of our sins and of our forgiveness by the Father calls for gratitude. All other blessings rest upon this one, and all thanksgiving should properly include thanks for our justification by faith.

After our justification we were inducted into a still further grace, or privilege—that of becoming members of the Body of Christ. Through acceptance of this privilege we gain the opportunity of a change of nature—from human to Divine. (2 Peter 1:4.) Our human nature, justified, cleansed, made acceptable to God as a sacrifice through the merit of Christ, will be replaced by a spirit nature and glory, honor and immortality, joint-heirship with our Lord and Head, if we faithfully make our sacrifice. (Romans 12:1.) What cause we have for thanksgiving! What shall we render unto Him for His benefits toward us?

The heart that has come into faith-union and communion with the Lord learns something more every day respecting the Heavenly Father's loving care for His children; and each fresh item of knowledge is a new well-spring of pleasure. "He satisfieth the longing soul." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." "Surely goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life." These are the experiences of those ripe Christians called upon by the Apostle to give thanks unto God in every matter and to know that this is the will of God in respect to all who are members of the Body of Christ.

Thanks Through Tears.
Let us not overlook the fact that our text indicates that we are to give thanks for our sorrows, our trials, our disappointments, as well as for our joys and our pleasures; for the word everything includes all things. Nor is this the only Scripture to this effect. The Apostle elsewhere urges the members of Christ to rejoice in tribulation—not because tribulation is a joy-producer, but because tribulation works out additional patience, and patience brings additional experience, which in turn brings larger hope, until we are not ashamed of our tribulations, because thereby the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.—Rom 5:3; 8:35.

The basis of all rejoicing as respects both the future and the present is faith: First, that there is a God; second, that He has a noble character; third, that His Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power are perfect and are thoroughly coordinated; fourth, that all these attributes are enlisted in the salvation of the world; fifth, that this salvation began to be worked out by our Lord at His First Advent; sixth, that it is still working out in the selection of His Church; seventh, that shortly it will begin to take practical shape in the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom; eighth, that through this Kingdom a blessing shall extend to every creature of our race.

Then let every man to the extent of his enlightenment appreciate and confess the Almighty God and give thanks unto His name; for He is good, and His mercy endureth forever. Let those who have tasted of His grace go on, that they may grow in grace, in knowledge, in faith and in character-likeness to our God. Let His saints, who are addressed in our text, more and more appreciate their wonderful privilege, their high calling of God in Christ Jesus—to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.

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