

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Grieving the Spirit.

Text, "Grieve Not the Holy Spirit of God, by Which You Were Sealed Unto the Day of Deliverance" (Ephesians iv. 30).

Sunday, Oct. 24.—Pastor Russell of the Brooklyn Tabernacle preached to-day from the text, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit..."

Most evidently our text is not addressed to the heathen, who know not God, nor to the masses of Christendom even, but merely to those who come to an intimate acquaintance with the Lord and who have received his Holy Spirit as a seal, mark, evidence, proof, that they by and by will attain the fruition of their hopes—the completion of their redemption, their absolute deliverance from sin and death conditions. Most assuredly no one could grieve the Holy Spirit who had not received it!

The expression, Holy Spirit of God, is here used exactly in the same sense as if we were speaking to a dear earthly friend, whose sympathy, fellowship, favor we had learned to esteem very highly. Of such we might say in very similar language, if you do so and so, it would assuredly wound and grieve the spirit of your dearest friend. The intimation would be that you would no longer have his esteem and favor as before; that the reprehended conduct would cause more or less of a breach between you and your friend. It would not mean that his acquaintance would necessarily be cut forever, and that he would become your enemy, instead of your friend. It would mean, rather, that having been your friend, he would esteem you no longer worthy of the same degree of fellowship and confidence as before. He would no longer treat you as a dear and intimate friend, and communicate to you his plans and arrangements along various lines. He might still speak as he passed by, and treat you in every way kindly, yet there would be a difference, a coolness, a separation, a cloud, between you. If you esteemed the love of your friend, his fellowship, his interest in all of your affairs, you would assuredly be continually on guard to do nothing that might wound, offend, grieve him and alienate his sympathy and fellowship—especially if he were on a higher plane of wealth or honor or intelligence than yourself, and one, therefore, whose patronage, advice and counsel you needed and desired.

This, we take it, is the thought behind the Apostle's word "grieve" in our text. It is closely allied with the thought of offending our best friend, our Creator, our Heavenly Father. We are not to get the thought that the great Creator of the Universe could be actually caused sorrow, grief, repining pain, by any conduct of ours. He is too great and we are too insignificant. Yet our Heavenly Father takes note of us as a world of mankind. He has provided for our relief from sin and its penalty, death. He is specially interested in those who have responded to his gracious proffer. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that reverence him" (Psalm ciii. 13). His pity extended beyond this—even to love, when we heartily accepted his favor and made full consecration of our little all to him. It was then that he was pleased to seal us, to give us the mark or stamp of sonship, to evidence to us that we have been begotten again to a New Nature, to immortality, to glory with himself—if so be that we continue faithful to our vow of consecration.

The Lord's Jewels. As a father he watches over the interests of this consecrated class. Although, as the Scriptures say, they are "few," he estimates them very highly and, amongst other precious names, gives to these sons of God the title of "jewels." The experiences of the present life are intended to polish these jewels—to prepare them for a heavenly setting in the Resurrection Morning. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (Malachi iii. 17).

As the lapidary first washes the diamond which has been picked from the muddy clay; as he then critically examines it to note its very best possibilities; as he then gives direction to the workman respecting its cutting and subsequently respecting its polishing, we have the Divine illustration of how God's providence through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Power of God, overrules and guides in all the experiences of this consecrated "jewel" class. It is required of them that they exercise faith and learn to rejoice in tribulations, as well as in more pleasurable experiences, knowing that they are in God's hand, and that, if they are submissive to him, he will "work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" through the disappointments, the frictions, the sorrows, the tears, the anguish even, of earthly experiences—if these be endured for righteousness' sake.

Coming down to human comprehension, the Lord represents himself as pleased or displeased, rejoiced or grieved, after the manner of the most noble of the human family. Because of his generosity, his benevolence, his desire to do good unto all, and especially to the household of faith, and particularly to the fully consecrated, our Creator takes pleasure in the working out of a great Plan of Salvation for humanity

For six thousand years our loving Creator has permitted Adam's disobedience to bring upon his family a terrible curse upon our hearts, sealing us, marking us, continually deepening the impression, eventually transforming us, until, by the final change of the First Resurrection, the sealing processes shall have been accomplished. Then the glorious promises of God's Word having been fully realized, we shall be like our Lord on the spirit plane and sharers of his glory. Then we shall be granted the privileges of association with him in his Millennial Kingdom work for the uplifting, the restitution, the blessing, of Israel and all the families of the earth. But let us not forget that no one is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, except he has turned from sin and accepted our Lord Jesus as his Redeemer and who has, additionally, consecrated unto death all his human rights and interests of

pathizes with the "groaning creation" and has promised assistance—deliverance. But his wisdom determines that the lesson of the sinfulness of sin and the bitterness of its fruit must first be thoroughly learned. Then the deliverance to righteousness and life may be the better appreciated and all danger of a reversion to sin be avoided, and an eternity of righteousness and blessing result. Preparation for this great program has not been swift, nor is haste necessary. The lesson of sin and its bitter fruitage has come to the world during six thousand years, though no single member of the race needed or received so prolonged a lesson. The first step of recovery was accomplished by our Redeemer's sacrifice of himself. The second step has been in process since Pentecost—the calling and accepting of the antitypical Levites, specially amongst these of the antitypical priesthood, who now joyfully suffer with the great High Priest. They lay down their lives in his service, under the promise that in the First Resurrection they shall be with their Redeemer and share his glory and, as a "royal priesthood" under him, rule, instruct, and every way assist in uplifting the "groaning creation" during the Millennial Kingdom of the great Mediator, whose members they will be. This step in the Divine Plan is spoken of in the Scriptures as "The Mystery of God," that the Church now being selected are "members" of the Christ. As soon as this "mystery hidden from ages" shall be completed and the Church be glorified, with her Lord, then our prayer and the prayer of our Redeemer will begin to have fulfillment—"Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

Not all who have named the name of Christ; not all who have made full consecration of themselves even will attain to the glorious "things which God hath in reservation for them that love him." Only such of the consecrated as learn in the School of Christ the great lesson of supreme love to God and heart obedience to his will (outward obedience also to the extent of ability) only these will be accounted worthy to share in the Kingdom. It is those that are mentioned in our text as sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise and waiting for the resurrection morning, the deliverance day, the day of attainment to the glorious things which God has in reservation for the faithful. As a loving parent watches the progress of his child in school, so the Heavenly Father is interested in our progress, and desirous that we shall make our calling and our election sure to the heavenly glories. Hence he pictures himself as pleased with our progress and as grieved when we fall to learn the necessary lessons. He has promised us a place with our Lord in his Millennial Kingdom Throne, but the promise is a conditional one. Our Redeemer expresses it thus: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne." Thus we get a glimpse of God's special interest in each of his consecrated, spirit-begotten children. They have his love and share

and smile in proportion as they walk in the Redeemer's footsteps. A failure to walk in this way grieves the Lord's spirit or figuratively brings his frown instead of his smile and tends to separate us from his love.

The child of God should seek to ever live in the sunshine of the Heavenly Father's favor. Whatever clouds arise between such and their very best earthly friends will be light afflictions indeed, if they still abide in fellowship with the Heavenly Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit—the spirit of love, the spirit of Truth, the spirit of obedience, the spirit of self-sacrifice. Indeed, if earthly friendships and earthly loves be entirely severed through faithfulness to the Lord, the loyal one may reach the place where he can "rejoice in tribulation also."

Sealed by the Holy Spirit.

A seal is an authoritative mark. With a signature a seal implies that the contract of the document is no longer open, no longer a mere proposal, but an accomplished, finished agreement or bargain. In older times, seals were usually impressed in wax while it was yet soft; the seal itself represented a coat of arms or something representing the personality of the one who used it. The pressure upon the soft wax was gradually increased and then held firmly until the wax had cooled, hardened, and permitted the removal of the seal, without injury to the impress which then was clearly revealed. This is the mental picture which our text brings before our minds. God our Creator, our Father, impresses upon our willing hearts by his Holy Spirit his own character likeness, which is specially exemplified for us in the words and doings of our Redeemer and the apostles who walk in his steps of devotion to God and to righteousness and in self-sacrifice in the interest of others.

What a beautiful picture our text then gives us of the Holy Spirit's opera-

tion upon our hearts, sealing us, marking us, continually deepening the impression, eventually transforming us, until, by the final change of the First Resurrection, the sealing processes shall have been accomplished. Then the glorious promises of God's Word having been fully realized, we shall be like our Lord on the spirit plane and sharers of his glory. Then we shall be granted the privileges of association with him in his Millennial Kingdom work for the uplifting, the restitution, the blessing, of Israel and all the families of the earth. But let us not forget that no one is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, except he has turned from sin and accepted our Lord Jesus as his Redeemer and who has, additionally, consecrated unto death all his human rights and interests of

The Sealing Operation.

God's Holy Spirit, in effecting this sealing of our hearts, in making this impress of the Divine character upon us as New Creatures, uses various means. One of these is the Word of God, sometimes called "the sword of the Spirit." Its instructions, encouragements, warnings and promises constitute a power of God upon the hearts of those who love righteousness and hate iniquity and who are striving to serve the Lord with willing and self-sacrificing hearts. The Word of God may reach others and influence them more or less this way or that, but only upon this one special class does it exercise this sealing power. Another agency for the impressing of the Divine will, "the mind of Christ," the Holy Spirit, upon our hearts is God's Providence. These, however, can be rightly understood only by those enlightened by the Word, the Bible, and can be rightly applied only by the meek, the humble, the trustful, who have made the consecration and are seeking to make their calling and election sure.

The Holy Spirit uses these different means of developing in the consecrated ones the mind of Christ, the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit; and the sealing thus effected marks each individual as one of the Lord's "jewels," one of the Lord's "members." In preparation for a share with the Lord in the heavenly Kingdom. There is a blessing experienced in conjunction with the sealing itself—a joy, a peace, a rest of heart, which the world can neither give nor take away. However, these blessings of the present time are merely a foretaste or "earnest" of the great inheritance which is to be theirs with the completion of their experiences in the School of Christ. In the end of this age all of these faithful ones, "not many," "a little flock," will reach the end of the journey and, by the First Resurrection, be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," into the glorious likeness of the Redeemer. That wonderful moment will be in the early dawn of the Millennial Day, which is the Day of Redemption, the Day of Deliverance.

Deliverance For the World. But while the Church will be the first to be blessed in that deliverance day, the Scriptures assure us that others also will be delivered—"the groaning creation." But the Church will be first every way, and then through it as the Body of Christ, the blessings of restitution opportunities will be extended to all others. That will be earth's great Deliverance Day or, as shown in the Jewish types, it will be the antitypical Jubilee Year, in which the world will be released from its bondage to sin and death. As St. James declares (i. 18) the Church is "a kind of first-fruits unto God of his creatures." But the first-fruits will have a great pre-eminence, in that the First Resurrection will bring them spiritual perfection, as well as a share in the Millennial Kingdom. There will be an instantaneous change, while the opportunities of the world will be that of gradual uplifting from sin and death

and smile in proportion as they walk in the Redeemer's footsteps. A failure to walk in this way grieves the Lord's spirit or figuratively brings his frown instead of his smile and tends to separate us from his love. The child of God should seek to ever live in the sunshine of the Heavenly Father's favor. Whatever clouds arise between such and their very best earthly friends will be light afflictions indeed, if they still abide in fellowship with the Heavenly Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit—the spirit of love, the spirit of Truth, the spirit of obedience, the spirit of self-sacrifice. Indeed, if earthly friendships and earthly loves be entirely severed through faithfulness to the Lord, the loyal one may reach the place where he can "rejoice in tribulation also."

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