

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

PRESENT YOUR BODIES.

"What Shall I Render Unto the Lord My God For All His Benefits Towards Me? I Will Take the Cup of Salvation and Call Upon the Name of the Lord. I Will Pay My Vows Unto the Lord" (Psalms cxvi, 12).

Chicago, Jan. 2.—Pastor Russell of Brooklyn Tabernacle, New York, preached here twice today to large audiences. The Auditorium of world-wide celebrity for its size and excellent acoustics, afforded the immense audience a superior opportunity to hear Pastor Russell's discourse in the afternoon. We report his evening discourse based on the foregoing texts. He said:—

Once made and accepted by the Lord through the impartation of the holy Spirit, it cannot be annulled. But why should we wish to annul the Vow? Why should anyone who puts his hand to the plow look back? To use the Apostle's illustration, why should the sower that was washed return to wallowing in the mire? Why should we, after having renounced the world and received the begetting of the holy Spirit, and after having tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the Age to come, lose the precious taste and appreciation of these, and return in craving to the beggarly elements of the world? Surely there are no good reasons for so doing. Surely the joys of the present life, as well as the hopes of the Kingdom to come, all should encourage us to fully "set our affections on things above and not on the things beneath."

The world, the flesh and the Adversary—all exercise influences contrary to our Vow or Resolution to the Lord to be dead to the world and to self that we may be alive with Christ and share his glory—suffer with him, that we may reign with him. The poet has expressed the proper thought here, saying:—

"My soul, be on thy guard, Ten thousand foes arise; The hosts of sin are pressing hard To draw thee from the prize."

Much of our success in keeping our Vow of Consecration depends upon two things:

(1) The clearness of our grasp of the situation when we made our Vow and the thoroughness of our intention; the amount or weight thereof; the will power exerted for righteousness.

(2) An additional feature of great weight in the matter is the degree of our knowledge. It is in line with this thought that the Scriptures declare, "My people perish for lack of knowledge." God has given us his Word and informed us that it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof and for correction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." He has advised us to search the Scriptures and to forget not the assembling of ourselves together. And where his advice is followed and the Scriptures are searched daily, not in a formal manner, but with a desire to know and to do the Lord's will and to be guided in his way, a strengthening of the will is effected. Correspondingly, there is a weakening of the evil influences which oppose us as New Creatures and our Vow. The Word of God is so arranged as to provide "meat in due season" for all of his faithful people, whether old or young, in every time. As "babes in Christ," as young men and as full-grown sons of God, it is for each of us a storehouse of Grace and Truth, to make us strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Only by appropriating this spiritual food can we have strength to fulfil our Vow, to finish our course with joy and to attain the Kingdom. Item by item, as our minds are able to grasp its unfolding prospects of glory, honor and immortality, we are thereby strengthened by the Lord's might in the inner man.

In proportion as we realize the facts of the case we may appreciate what a great bargain the Lord has offered us. We surrender in consecration our earthly rights, privileges and pleasures, and receive in return more happy spiritual blessings in the present life and the inheritance of the unspeakable blessings and glories of the future. It should, therefore, become much more easy to pay our Vows with a willing heart, as we grow in grace and in knowledge of the Lord and his Word. Indeed, as the Apostle suggests, it is possible for us to reach the place where we can "rejoice in tribulation also"—knowing that thereby our future blessing is increased.

"What Shall I Render?"

As the consecrated believer considers what God has already done, and what he proposes yet to do for his faithful, gratitude wells up in his heart and his inquiry is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" The more he considers the matter, the more he realizes that his talents and opportunities are necessarily small, insignificant. It is from this standpoint that the poet wrote, "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise."

It is well indeed to show our appreciation of God's grace by songs of thankfulness and praise, but we are to remember that not merely poetic cadences are our acceptable songs, but that from the proper standpoint life itself is the proper hymn of praise to be continually rendered to the King of kings. "Singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord" will imply that our works will be in harmony—a song of life" (Ephesians v, 19).

Taking the Cup. The Psalmist's answer, prophetically represents the attitude of heart of all the faithful. Each is expected to say, "I will take the Cup of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm cxvi, 13). The cup of salvation at the present time is the "Cup" which our Lord proffered to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood of the New Covenant shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it" (Mat-

thew xxvi, 27, 28). It is a "Cup" of suffering, self-denial, self-sacrifice, as respects the earthly things which we give up, surrender, that we may attain the heavenly things as joint-heirs with our Redeemer. There might be danger, however, of some getting the wrong thought on this subject. There is a peculiar pleasure in drinking of the Lord's "cup" of self-sacrifice, which those who have never partaken of can not hope to understand. It is the pleasure of fellowship in his sufferings, as St. Paul explains. And a part of the pleasure connected with that "cup" is the associated hope of drinking with our Lord of his other cup of joy and glory and blessing in the Kingdom, as he promised.

The necessity of partaking of this "Cup" of the Lord is shown by the Savior's words to two of his disciples who inquired, saying, "Lord, grant that we may sit with thee, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand in the Kingdom." Our Lord's reply was that they little realized what this high privilege of sitting in the Millennial Throne with him would cost. He inquired, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" (Matthew xx, 22)—the cup of suffering, ignominy, dishonor, death?—"and to be baptized with?"—not the baptism into water, but into that which is symbolized by the water—a baptism into his death. The apostles indicated their willingness. And we can do no more. If left to ourselves, undoubtedly the contract would be more than we would be sufficient for. Our sufficiency is of God's providence—our great Redeemer is our High Priest and Advocate, able to succor us in every time of need, and able to provide ways of escape from trials too hard for us; able to strengthen us when weak; able to give us the "meat in due season;" able to make us strong in his might; able to bring to our attention the great and precious promises of God's Word. Yea, says St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me" (Philippians iv, 13).

"In the Presence of All the People."

In the context the prophet declares, "I will pay my Vows unto the Lord in the presence of all the people." Publicly, openly, I will espouse the Lord's Cause. I will remember his words, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels" (Mark viii, 38). I will be faithful in the performance of my Covenant to such a degree that my loyalty shall be known to all the brethren as well as to the Lord, who reads the heart. Yea, and the worldly should know of the faithfulness of God's people, even though, not appreciating the matter, they should despise them and count them fools for Christ's sake.

Vows of this kind are not for the worldly, even though they be morally disposed. They are yet in their sins, if they reject the offer of Divine forgiveness upon Divine terms of consecration. Such may not think to take Vows of consecration to the Lord until first they have renounced wilful sin and accepted redemption through faith in the precious blood. Until then they remain amongst the wicked. "Unto the wicked God said, What hast thou to do to take my words into thy mouth [as a Vow] seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee" (Psalm i, 17). All who do not wish Divine instruction, all who spurn the Lord's Word, are in this sense wicked—in a wrong condition of heart. We are glad that there is no truth in the theory that they are liable to eternal torture, but, oh, how much they are missing, nevertheless, of the joys of the Lord in this present time and of the glories and eternal blessings of the future!

In closing, dear friends, let me suggest to you a little Vow unto the Lord—not as instead of your Consecration Vow, which is all comprehensive, but as supplemental thereto—as specifying certain matters, which are indeed part and parcel of your Consecration Vow. The thought is that by this Vow these particular features of your obligation will be daily more prominently before your mind. It is my belief that the taking of it earnestly and soberly, and the keeping of it, would be one of the wisest New Year's Resolutions that God's people could make—most helpful to them in the peculiar time in which we are living.

A Vow Unto the Lord.

- 1. Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. May Thy rule come into my heart more and more, and Thy will be done in my mortal body. Relying on the assistance of Thy promised grace to help in every time of need, through Jesus Christ our Lord, I register this Vow.
2. Daily will I remember at the Throne of Heavenly Grace the general interests of the harvest work, and particularly the share which I myself am privileged to enjoy in that work, and the dear co-laborers at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, and everywhere.
3. I vow to still more carefully, if possible, scrutinize my thoughts and words and doings, to the intent that I may be the better enabled to serve Thee and Thy dear flock.
4. I vow to Thee that I will be on the alert to resist everything akin to Spiritualism and Occultism, and that, remembering that there are but two masters, I shall resist these snares in all reasonable ways, as being of the Adversary.
5. I further vow that, with the exceptions below, I will at all times, and in all places, conduct myself toward those of the opposite sex in private exactly as I would do with them in public—in the presence of a congregation of the Lord's people.
6. And, so far as reasonably possible, I will avoid being in the same room with any of the opposite sex alone, unless the door to the room stand wide open.
7. Exceptions in the case of Brethren—wife, children, mother, and natural sisters; in the case of Sisters—husbands, children, father, and natural brothers.
Should any of those who take this Vow unto the Lord desire to inform me of the fact, I shall be very pleased to hear from them at my Brooklyn address.

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"I Will Pay My Vows." Let no one lightly undertake a Vow unto the Lord. It carries with it weighty responsibilities. It would be better every way that none should take the Vow without first understanding the matter and entering fully into the spirit of the resolution he makes