

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US

Text, "What Doth Thy God Require of Thee, but to Do Justly, and to Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly With Thy God?" (Micah vi, 6.)

government shall be perfected, and all others shall be destroyed in the Second Death. Thus, eventually, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God. Then every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, shall be heard saying, Blessing, and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever (Revelation v. 13).

You Are Bought With a Price.
Possibly God could have arranged some other way of dealing with sin and sinners which would not have required the death of Jesus as the ransom price, the purchase price, the redemption price for sinners. But the fact that this method was adopted by our great Creator assures us that no other method would have been so wise, so just, so beneficial. No other method would have so fully demonstrated God's Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power.

In brief, then, God's arrangement is that all of his human creatures shall have opportunity of full return to harmony with himself, provided they wish to do so, provided their hearts, their wills, are fully responsive to the letter and spirit of his Law—the requirements set forth in our text. God has provided in Jesus for the satisfaction of Divine Justice as respects all of the condemned race who desire to return to his favor.

We agree with all the orthodox creeds of Christendom that only repentance from sin and an endeavor to put it away from our thoughts and words and deeds, combined with faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice and a full consecration of heart and life to do the Father's will—nothing short of this attainment will gain the salvation which God is now holding out to mankind. To such the Apostle explains that the righteousness, the full demands of the Law of God, his full requirement, "is fulfilled in us who are walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans viii, 4). From the moment of our consecration and begetting of the holy Spirit God deals with this class as with sons. He trains them in the School of Christ, disciplining, chastening, proving them, testing the sincerity of their consecration Vows and the loyalty of their hearts. To those who prove faithful the great reward is promised—glory, honor, immortality, joint-heirship with the Lord Jesus Christ in his Millennial Kingdom and its work of blessing all the families of the earth (Galatians iii, 29; Revelation iii, 21).

Our disagreement with all the orthodox creeds is in respect to what shall be done with the unsalvaged—with those who do not present themselves to God and who are not begotten again of the holy Spirit. Our creeds of the dark ages misrepresented the teachings of the Bible in respect to these and told us that they are all to be consigned for hundreds or thousands of years to Purgatory or for all eternity in hell torment. Not such is the teaching of God's Word, but the very reverse, as we have previously shown. The Scriptures do not declare, in thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be damned; but the reverse of this—that they shall all be blessed. All the sin-blind eyes shall be opened. All the deaf ears of ignorance shall be unstopped. For the best thousands years of Christ's reign the world's uplifting or resurrection will proceed, while the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth. The angels on the plains of Bethlehem did not declare to the shepherds, Fear greatly! for behold, we bring you bad tidings of great misery which shall be unto all people. Their message was the reverse of this: "Fear not; behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people" (Luke ii, 10). God who had a "due time" for calling natural Israel and who had also a "due time" for calling spiritual Israel, has a "due time" for making known the riches of his grace to the non-elect world of mankind. And the "elect" of spiritual Israel and of natural Israel are to be the channels of this Divine grace and mercy, which, during the Millennial Age, will flow as a river of salvation, to which all mankind will be invited to come and drink freely.

Love Mercy and Walk Humbly.
It may astonish some that God requires even more than Justice, which is his legal standard. In his permission of sin and its wage of death he has shown the sinner his own mercy or love. And it is for the sinner's benefit and for the good of all, that God requires that all who will have the full benefit of his mercy shall be required to cultivate this mercy quality in their own hearts. As the sinner attempts to conform his life to the perfect standard and finds himself unable to keep God's Law and obliged to come for mercy to the Throne of Grace, he is informed that he can have that mercy only upon condition that he will exercise similar mercy toward those who trespass against him, his ideals and interests.

Humility is a quality very necessary to every creature. Pride is a foe which besets not merely the weak and imperfect, but which overcame the great angel of light, Lucifer, and transformed him from a faithful servant of Jehovah into Satan, the Adversary of God. We are glad, therefore, that Divine Wisdom requires humility as one of the conditions of our acceptance with him. This requirement assures us of the security of the Divine Empire against all treason in the future; for none will be admitted to the eternal life conditions either now or in the Millennial Age, except the humble. Let us hearken then to the lesson of our text and conclude with the words of the Apostle, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter v, 6).

The Gift of God is Eternal Life.
In our moment of perplexity we hear God's message "speaking peace through Jesus Christ our Lord." The message of peace is that what we could not do for ourselves in the way of lifting ourselves up to Divine approval God has provided shall be done for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our failure to keep the Law marks us as unworthy of eternal life, and worthy of the wages of sin—not eternal torment, but death. God in mercy concluded to offer us eternal life as a gift—because of our not actually meriting it under his legal requirements. Thus we read, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans vi, 23). What we could not obtain legally under the Divine requirements God proffers to us as a gift. But the gift is a conditional one as expressed in the words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Only those who accept Jesus Christ as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" may have God's gift of eternal life. Hence it will be seen that it is wholly a mistake to suppose that the heathen at home or abroad can get eternal life, the gift of God, in ignorance of Christ. All the Scriptures confirm this and declare not only that we cannot save ourselves by obedience to the terms of God's Law, but that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"—through faith in his name—through faith in his blood (Acts iv, 12).

But how is this done justly? and why does God so limit his gift of eternal life?
God's Law represents himself and cannot change. He cannot require less than perfection. To do so would be to fill the Universe to all eternity with depraved and imperfect beings. God has a higher plan than this and declares, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways" (Isaiah lv, 9). He explains that his ultimate purpose is that there shall be no imperfect creature in all his Universe. All whose hearts are loyal to him and the principles of his

Norfolk, Va., Feb. 13.—Are the words of our text true? Is it possible that the true religion of the Bible demands nothing more of us than is expressed in this text? What about the Jewish Law? What about its sin-offering, its burnt-offering, its thank-offerings? What about the ten commandments? What about the digest of those commandments approved by our Lord Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? What about Church attendance? What about our responsibilities to our families? To the church? To the poor? What about study of the Bible to know God's will? What about our responsibility for the heathen? What about baptism and the Lord's supper?

Indirectly, dear brethren, all the matters included in our questions and many more are included incidentally in the provisions of our text. Sometimes a whole sermon is preached in a few words. No one will dispute the reasonableness of the Divine requirement as stated in our text. Our Creator could not justly or with self-respect ask less than this of his creatures who would enjoy his favor. The interests of all demand that these principles should be required of every creature permitted the enjoyment of Divine favor to the extent of eternal life. Whoever fails to come up to these conditions would thus evidence his unworthiness of life eternal; his prolonged existence would merely be a prospering of sin and a menace to the happiness and righteousness of others.

But now let us see the scope of this Divine requirement, whose justice we have already acknowledged. We note the natural division of our text into three parts:

- (1) Doing justly;
- (2) Loving mercy;
- (3) Walking humbly.

The requirement of justice in all our dealings with our fellows, commends itself to every rational mind. It includes the whole Law of God. A brief statement of that Law which had our Lord's approval reads, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy mind, all thy being and all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two propositions hang all the Law and the Prophets. It is but just that we should recognize our Creator as first; that we should glorify the One who gave us our being and all the blessings that come therewith; that we should be obedient to his righteous requirements that make for our own happiness and that of others. It is also but right that we should recognize the rights of others, as we would have them recognize our rights. The Golden Rule is the barest of justice. Not a half's breadth less would come within the requirements of our text. Do justly. Come, then, let us reason together. How many of us do justly in all of life's affairs—in our relationship to our God and to our neighbor?

Begin at home. Let each one criticize his words and his deeds toward his parents; toward his children; toward his brothers; toward his sisters; toward his wife; toward his neighbors. Do we in all of our relationships of life treat these who are so near and so dear to us according to the standard of justice, according to the Golden Rule? Do we do toward them as we would have them do toward us? If not, after making a beginning with the Lord, striving to render to him our homage and obedience, let us closely scrutinize every word, every act of the home life and see to what extent these can be improved upon and made more nearly just. The majority of people, we feel sure, will be surprised to know how unjust they have been toward those who are of the very nearest and dearest of fleshly relationships.

Follow the matter up and consider the justice or injustice of your words and deeds in daily life with your neighbors and daily associates. Do you invariably speak to them in the same words and with the same tone and gesture that you would approve if they were in your place and you in theirs? In matters of business do you drive a closer bargain with them than you would think just for them to make with you? Or, on the other hand, do you ask of them higher prices for the services or materials you furnish them than you would consider just and right if you were the purchaser and they the vendors? Do you watch your chickens that they do not commit depredations upon your neighbor's garden as carefully as you would wish your neighbor to watch his chickens as respects your garden, if you had one? Do you blow no more tobacco smoke in the face of your neighbor than you would like to have him blow in your face? Are you as careful about wiping your feet when entering his house as you would like him to be when entering your house? Do you treat all men, women, children and animals as kindly, as gently, as properly every way as you think would be just and right if you were in their place and they in yours? Do you speak as kind-

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