

# Pastor Russell's Sermon

## THE CREATOR MISUNDERSTOOD

His Real Character Hidden by Modern Creeds.

## FOUNTAIN OF LOVE DIVINE.

Pastor Russell Says That the Climax of God's Character is the Quality of Love—Only the Age of Faith May Behold the Glory of the Father—Mistakes of the Past and How We Are Mastering Them.



London Tabernacle, Nov. 12th.—Pastor Russell, addressing large audiences today, declared, "Divine Love is the greatest thing in the Universe," and by the close of his discourse his large audience seemed fully in agreement with his presentation. His text was, "That in the Ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His loving-kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 1, 7) He said in part:—

Following in the footsteps of our fathers, who handed down to us our present day creeds, we have misunderstood our gracious Creator. We studied astronomy and declared the Creator Almighty; we studied geology and confirmed the decision. We studied zoology and anthropology and declared that the Creator was All-Wise, as we came to appreciate Him. We noted the adaptation of our various organs to our use and comfort—the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the circulatory system, the nervous system, and the power of the will over these.

We said to ourselves, truly man is fearfully and wonderfully made, truly his Maker is a God infinite in wisdom and skill. We examined the subject of man's mental sense, and although we found it inspired we have been astonished to note how even the most selfish and depraved have an instinct of justice, a sense of right, whether they follow it or not.

"Love Divine All Love Excelling." Then we said, Whence came this noble principle of Justice as the backbone or moral quality in our race? The only reply was that in this particular God originally created man in His own moral likeness, and that a measure of this moral quality has persisted notwithstanding the fall through disobedience into death and its consequent demoralization through sin and weakness.

Looking further we perceived that the noblest specimens of our race possess still other qualities closely associated with Justice, but outranking it. The noble quality which overtops all the rest we term Love. It is Love which makes the heart tender, sympathetic, helpful and happy; it is Love that makes home, whether exercised in a palace or a hovel. It is Love which beckons up Justice and insists that so ill shall be worked toward a neighbor. It is Love that is on the alert to assist by word or act all of those needing aid. It is Love that inspires us to the boldest acts of heroism. It is Love that prompts the giving of time and strength, of means and even life itself on behalf of its object.

All freely admit that Love is the greatest, the most blessed quality possessed by humanity, and that without it even paradise could not bring happiness. We ask, Whence came this quality of Love, and from what fountain can we receive the fresh supplies so much needed by so many of our race? The answer is that the great Creator Himself is the Fountain. "God is love." This All-Wise and All-Powerful and All-Just One is pre-eminently the "God of all grace." "The Father of mercies." "The Fountain of blessing."

"Love Divine, all love excelling, Joy of heaven, to earth come down, Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, All Thy earthly mercies crown." "Show Me Thy Glory." The ancients had the correct thought, that they had caught but a glimpse of the Divine character and its glory; hence their prayer, "Show me Thy glory." These same should be our sentiment, in the clear light now shining upon God's Word we perceive that it will require the entire outworking of the Divine Plan of the Ages to illustrate or make known to humanity the real character of the Heavenly Father. Only the very few can by faith accept the Divine promises and trust in their ultimate fulfillment and see far down into the future the full shining forth of God's character, perfect in His Wisdom, Justice, Power and Love.

We may not judge the infinite love in all respects by human comparison, but we may know that our difficulty in the matter is that the human comparisons can only imperfectly represent the infinite. We see the excavation or perhaps the foundation walls, or perhaps the first story of a structure; but if we were to judge wholly by these imperfect parts it would be manifestly unfair and we should be deceiving ourselves. The only way to judge of the builder's capacity and intentions would be to see the architect

ural drawing and to study the details—and then we may but very imperfectly appreciate the whole. Is it not thus in respect to the great Maker's present work and ultimate designs? The poet has well said:—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace, Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

"His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower."

If we stand beside a great sculptor with his freshly chosen block of marble, we may at first feel shocked to note the apparent roughness and carelessness with which he smites off large pieces of the stone, as though bent on its destruction. But let patience have her perfect work, and gradually we will see that the sculptor has not been careless or indifferent in respect to a single blow.

All the while that he seemed so reckless he was working according to the ideal before his own mind. With his mind's eye he saw his ideal in the stone, and blow after blow, chip after chip merely revealed to our eyes what he had purposed in himself from the beginning of his work. Not until his work was finished could we comprehend fully the ideal. Is not this principle still more true of our Creator? He tells us that He is "working all things according to the counsel of His own will," which He purposed in Himself "before the world was." (Ephesians 1, 11; II, 10, 11.)

The great Master Workman of the Universe will eventually show both to angels and men all the various attributes of His perfection—His Wisdom, Justice, Power and Love. Meantime, "None of the wicked shall understand," but in the End of this Age the wise will increasingly understand His purposes, hidden from all except His saints, of whom it is written, "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him." "He will show you things that were to come."—Psalm xxv, 14; John xvi, 13.

Now Apply the Principle. Let us apply this principle to the work of our great Creator. Let us see how far it has already progressed. In what state of development is the Divine Plan today? What will be required to complete it and to manifest Divine Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power? Only by a careful examination of the Great Architect's revealed plan can we judge at all of the degree to which His purposes have already attained perfection.

The wreck and blight of human interests resulting from Father Adam's disobedience progressed for twenty-five hundred years before the first step was taken in the Divine Program on man's behalf. That first step was merely the making of a rough outline drawing with various crude illustrations which merely hinted at one or another of the Creator's glorious purposes. This rough outlining was done during the sixteen hundred years we call the Jewish Age.

Israel as a nation pictured all the world of mankind who will ultimately come into fellowship with God. Their one tribe of Levi typified the Household of Faith, "the Church of the First-born" of this Gospel Age, through whom all blessings will come to the remainder. The select Levites, the priests, typified the Royal Priesthood of the better Mediator. The sacrifices by which that Covenant was established, and that people brought into harmony with God, typified the better sacrifices of Christ, which began with our Lord and have continued in His faithful followers who present their bodiless living sacrifices, wholly and acceptable to God through Him. (Romans xii, 1)

Israel's Jubilee year typified the great Times of Jubilation soon to come, "the blessing of all the families of the earth"—the "Times of Restitution of all things," to be inaugurated at the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom. Manifestly only those who could understand those roughly sketched drawings could comprehend to any degree the great Divine Plan of the Ages.

With this Gospel Age God began a great work which is yet far from finished and which as yet does not show forth fully to mankind in general His Justice, Wisdom, Power or Love. The work of this Age, according to the Scriptures, is the selection of both the Church, which is "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife," and "the virgins, her companions, who follow her." (Psalm xlv, 8, 9.)

The Bible declares that Jesus, the Redeemer, having finished His sacrifice, passed into glory, beyond the veil—to the right hand of Divine Majesty. It declares also that when this Age shall be completed all the faithful followers of Jesus will pass to Him beyond the veil and share His glory and His Kingdom and immortality on the heavenly plane. But how few there are who see this much of the Divine Plan; and if they cannot see this much how could they be expected to see still further into the future developments of the Divine Program?

As the sentence of death came as the result of one transgression, but involved the race, so one sacrifice for sin, by the "man Christ Jesus," was sufficient to be a Ransom-Price for the sins of the whole world—a man's life for a man's life. Thus as condemnation came through one man unto death, so justification is provided through this other man unto everlasting life.—Romans v, 16, 18.

your God shall call; "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which sent Me draw him." And this calling and drawing, though in one sense free, is in another sense restricted to those who are in the heart condition of being drawn and of hearing the call. All others remain blinded to the Divine invitation by the god of this world. (I Corinthians iv, 4.)

Evidently those now being drawn and "called" are not the whole world, but a select class. Those who prove themselves faithful to the end are styled "the very elect." These are the Royal Priesthood who, as priestly Kings, will be associated with Messiah in His glorious, world-wide Empire which "shall rule from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth," for the binding of Satan, the overthrow of sin, and the uplifting of sinners. But we are to clearly distinguish between the present work of selecting the Royal Priests, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, and the work for the world, which these will accomplish after their glorification on the spirit plane.

We must thus distinguish, because looking upon the revealed plans of the great Architect of the Universe, we perceive that thus He has arranged—the Church, as the Bride of Christ, is to constitute "a New Creation," "partakers of the divine nature—like unto her Lord. These on the plane of glory will have a station "far above principalities and powers and every name that is named."—Eph. i, 21; Rev. iii, 21. Whoever can see this to be the Divine Plan must with the eye of faith look down to the future and behold the Church—"changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Here is love, wondrous love, in lifting up members of the sinner race to glory, honor and immortality. Who can comprehend such love as this which the Father has bestowed upon Jesus and the "little flock" of His followers who walk in His steps?

Human Restitution in the Future. The earthly sculptor seemed wasteful to prodigality when he broke off one portion of his stone and dealt merely with it, but when subsequently he explained that he intended to deal also with the large remainder of the stone, and to make thereof a wonderful group, we began to understand him better. So the Almighty is now showing to His people that the Church now being selected is merely "a first-fruit of His creatures" and that after their perfection in glory, His great work for the masses of mankind will begin.

The fact that only a few of earth's families were recognized of God for twenty-five hundred years, and that only one nation was recognized for the following sixteen hundred years, and that only a small proportion have had any recognition during this Gospel Age, seems strange to us until we learn that God has not intended to put the world on trial for life or death everlasting, until first He shall have selected the "Church of the First-born," whose names are written in heaven." These now are required to prove and perfect their loyalty by walking by faith and not by sight. Soon, we trust, the Church will be completed and the New Dispensation, already dawning, will be fully inaugurated. "He that shall come will come and will not tarry." Soon our prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," will be answered. Then for a thousand years the conquering of the world will progress until God's will shall be done as thoroughly on earth as now in heaven.

We'll may the glorified saints sing, "Who shall not come and worship before Thee, O Lord, when Thy righteous dealings are made manifest?" Then the clouds of ignorance, superstition, doctrines of devils, fire and torture, horrors which have blinded the eyes of our understanding and driven so many of the best specimens of humanity away from God and from His Book, will flee away.

While now only those who have the hearing ear can hear, and these are few, the saints, the Scriptures declare that the full knowledge of God shall fill the earth "in due time." We must have patience for God's time, as well as for God's blessing.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err And scan His work in vain; God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain."

Consider the Text. Throughout the discourse we have been working our way toward the glorious fulness of God's love declared in our text. We have traced the Divine Program in full harmony with the Apostle's statement—into the "Ages to come." Not until those Ages shall have come will the Divine Plan have been fully shown forth nor the riches of Divine Love. In the thousand years' reign of Messiah's glorious Empire, collaborating with Him in the overthrow of Sin and Death—in the release of humanity from these powers of evil, by restoring them to human perfection, the Bride of Jesus (the Church) will have a glorious share. Glory, honor and immortality will be her portion. The Great Architect has not further revealed His plans in respect to the work of Christ and His Bride during the eternity beyond His Messianic reign. We merely know that when He shall have finished that work He will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. (I Cor. xv, 24.) But then, in the "Ages to come," God will show forth the exceeding riches of His grace and His loving-kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Oh! how much is meant by those words, "exceeding riches of His grace"! Mind, heart nor tongue can measure the depths of those words, when we remember the infinite greatness of the Father's mercy which guarantees His promise. Can any one imagine anything more mighty, more influential in all the Universe than Love Divine?

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