

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by
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Paradise Regained.

The Tree of Life
In the Paradise of
God.

Syracuse, N. Y., Aug. 22.—Pastor Russell, of Brooklyn Tabernacle, preached here twice today to large and attentive audiences. One of the discourses was from the text, "Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke xliii, 43).

Paradise is another name for the Garden of Eden, the abode of bliss. It was lost through the sin of our first parents, but the gracious promise of our great Creator is that this condition of earthly bliss shall be re-established—not merely in a little corner of the earth, but that the whole earth shall become the Paradise of God. Heaven is God's throne and the earth is his footstool, and he assures us, "I will make the place of my feet glorious"—"in due time." How this will be accomplished is the Gospel message.

The Divine promise to Father Abraham, that all the families of the earth should yet be blessed through his Seed, includes the thought of man's full restoration to Divine favor—as before he sinned and before he fell; before Paradise was lost; before man came under the curse or sentence of death. The Jews hoped that Messiah would come and constitute their nation the earthly Kingdom of God and re-establish Paradise with Palestine as its center. They expected that under his wise administration, using their nation as his instruments, the Divine Law would extend to all and, by bringing all people into harmony with God, would gradually bring back all to the Paradise state.

The Garden of the Lord.

It was in full harmony with this expectation that the dying thief asked the Lord to remember him when he would come into his Kingdom, the Kingdom whose dominion would establish righteousness in the earth, and thus convert the world, under Divine favor, into the Paradise of God. Our Lord's answer was that verily, truly, his request would be granted—the thief would yet be with him in Paradise. Paradise has not yet been established, because God's Kingdom has not yet come to earth and it delays until a certain work for the Church shall be accomplished.

It is not the Divine intention to make of the nation of Israel God's Kingdom in the highest sense of that word, though it will be actively identified with the heavenly Kingdom as its earthly representative. God is selecting during this Gospel Age a new nation, Spiritual Israel, from every nation, people, kindred and tongue. At our Lord's First Advent and subsequently he gathered from Israel such as were saintly and ready for the Kingdom; and since then he has been taking out from other nations enough to complete the foreordained number of the "elect" Church. These will constitute the Kingdom *per se*, and it cannot be set up or established in power until this election or selection shall have been completed and the "elect" "changed" or glorified on the spiritual plane by the power of the First Resurrection.

Paradise, or the Garden of the Lord, not only represents that earthly condition which will be restored for the benefit and blessing of the natural man, as the reward of his obedience to the rules of Emmanuel's Kingdom during the Millennial Age, but it also applies in a figurative sense to the glorious and heavenly position which God has in reservation for the Church. Thus we read in the Book of Revelation that the Lord has promised to the overcomers of the Church that "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation ii, 7).

The World's Regeneration.

This is a grandly beautiful and symbolic message and promise assuring us of the happiness and heavenly bliss in eternal life conditions of all who are faithful followers of Christ in the present age—walking in Jesus' footsteps in the "narrow way." The Book of Revelation pictures the history of this Gospel Age down to the Millennial Age and shows us Paradise re-established with the Heavenly City, the glorified Church, as its center of capital. The River of Life is pictured as flowing from under the Throne. On either bank of its crystal waters of Truth and grace grow the trees of Life, after the manner of Eden of old. The future state will all be Paradise. The completeness of blessedness will first be manifested in the Church on the spiritual plane, and, secondly, it will be manifested in the Ancient Worthies on the earthly plane—perfected Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the holy prophets, the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom. Gradually the paradisaical condition shall fill the whole earth. The wilderness shall blossom as the rose and the solitary places shall be glad and streams shall break forth in the deserts, as we read in Isaiah xxxv. The morally lame shall learn to walk in the paths of righteousness. Yea, they shall leap for joy, as they come to a knowledge of the grace and goodness of God. The world's eyes of understanding shall be opened and their

deaf ears shall be unstopped, that they may hear and see the goodness and mercy, the justice and the love of our God. The willing and obedient shall eat of the good of the land, but the evil doers shall be cut off in the Second Death. Gradually the boundaries will be spread abroad until, in the end of the Millennium, they shall include the whole earth. Gradually the numbers enjoying Paradise shall increase until, in the end of the Millennium, the entire race of Adam shall experience this blessed privilege of God's love and mercy through Christ.

St. Paul, like John the Revelator, was caught also to Paradise in vision and saw the glorious things of the future age, which he was not permitted to explain to us, because the due time had not yet come. Neither was John the Revelator permitted to reveal fully the particulars of the Paradise condition. He could merely give us a few symbolical hints or suggestions respecting the glories of Paradise restored.

Redemption Through Christ.

We have already noticed that Paradise was lost by sin through disobedience of the heavenly command. Life and Eden bliss and Divine favor and fellowship were all lost to Adam and to us, his children, under the death sentence. There was no hope for any of us any more than for the brute beast, for while the latter was born to die, man, created with possibilities of life eternal, was sentenced to the loss of all. Indeed, under the demoralizing influences of sin and death we find many of the human family really more degraded than the brute creation and apparently less worthy of Divine favor. But God, rich in mercy, in the great love with which he loves us, provided for mankind a recovery from the sentence of sin and death, while he has made no provision for future life for the brute creation.

God's provision for man's recovery from the sentence of death is the story of the "Cross of Christ." Because a man had sinned the redeemer must be a man. Because the penalty was human death, the perfect man must die for the sinner's release from death sentence—to uplift the willing out of sin and death conditions up, up, up to fellowship with God and eternal life. Because the race of Adam inherited naturally his mental, moral and physical defects, therefore none of his posterity was worthy of eternal life. But, in the Divine arrangement, as Adam had involved all of his children and their Paradise home in the wreck of sin and death, so a redemption has been effected through Christ.

The great Work of Messiah will therefore be the restoration of the world to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary. The work of restoration, St. Peter tells us, has been spoken of by the "mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began" and will be accomplished by Messiah at his Second Coming (Acts iii, 21). But the Divine Plan changes not. Sin is still objectionable to God, will always be so. And the Divine sentence is that no sinner may have eternal life; hence the offer of Divine Grace is merely that all who will may have Divine assistance, resurrection, restoration, uplifting out of sin and death conditions to perfect conditions. But these things will be accomplished only in those who are willing and obedient. Only such shall eat of the good of the land—the fruits of Paradise (Acts iii, 23).

Furthermore it is the Divine arrangement, and a just one, that any good and noble deed of the present life works a measure of character development which will be assistful in the future life, enabling the faithful the sooner to mount up in the full perfection of earthly life. Correspondingly every wilful sin, every violation of conscience and principle, works a defilement and impairment of manhood, which, likewise, will have its effect in the future life in the difficulty of rising out of degradation to the heights of Divine perfection and approval and everlasting life. If all mankind could appreciate these facts what an influence it would have in restraining, governing and developing self control and true manhood!

The Divine Program.

Does some one inquire as to why he who redeemed Adam, his Eden home, and all his race, and who proposes a restoration of all—why he has not begun this restitution work during the eighteen hundred years since the sacrifice of himself? The Scriptures answer that another feature of the Divine program is being carried out. The Lord is gathering the "elect" Church from Israel and all the nations to be Messiah's assistants in his Kingdom and the gracious work of uplift—resurrection—restoration. This "elect" Church class first selected is in the Scriptures called "A first-fruits of God unto his creatures" (James i, 18). The world of restored humanity will be the after-fruits.

The Scriptures exhort such as in the present time are blessed with the hearing ear to give heed to the special invitation of the elect. They exhort such as have the eye of faith to aspire to the crown of glory and joint-heirship that is now being tendered to a

very select class. He that hath an ear let him hear. He that hath an eye let him see. So many of us as have been blessed of the Lord with the ear of faith, the eye of faith, let us rejoice therein with the blessed opportunity. Let us seek indeed to make our calling and election sure to this heavenly estate of glory, honor and immortality and joint-heirship with our Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Christ's Atonement.

Both the thieves crucified with our Lord lost their right to the original Eden or Paradise of God through father Adam's disobedience, as did we all. Both of those thieves were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity, in sin did their mothers conceive them," as with us all. Both of those thieves were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as were we all; for "Christ Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." "He is the propitiation for our sins [the Church's sins], and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Thus, as we have seen, the Redeemer has made provision for both of those thieves, as well as for all of us—all of Adam's race—to be recovered from the sin and death conditions of the fall and to be restored to Paradise. The Church now called during this Gospel Age may reach the spiritual Paradise or highest condition of holiness and happiness. The two thieves and the remainder of mankind will have their opportunity during the Millennium. Their opportunity will be for a return to earthly life and perfection and happiness and an earthly Eden-world wide. How much grander a work! This result from our Lord's death than we had previously supposed!

Let none suppose, however, that those two thieves will enter Paradise on the same footing. While both were guilty of robbery, they evidently were dissimilar in the condition of their hearts. The one was hardened, as evidenced by the fact that he could speak thus rudely to the Redeemer, whose face bespoke gentleness, purity and innocence of crime. Such cruelty implied a deep degradation of mind—implied that he was sin-hardened. And yet we must remember that others of the multitude standing by used similarly cruel language. And we must remember that there are many thieves who are not caught and many, perhaps, as morally wrong, as evilly intentioned, who, for fear of the consequences, never committed the wrongs. We can even suppose that some of the scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of Divinity of those days were in God's sight much worse than the impenitent thief—murderers at heart and in deed. Yet of the latter St. Peter declares, "I wot, brethren, that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," when you crucified the Lord of glory.

An Earthly Paradise.

Ignorance and superstition and inherited depravity all bore down upon the impenitent thief to a degree which we are not capable of properly estimating. The Lord will judge him—both thieves—all mankind! The penitent thief will unquestionably have a two-fold blessing. First he will be blessed because of his penitent attitude of mind; secondly, because of his faithfulness in expressing that penitence and mercy to our Lord in his distress. Our Lord declared that even a cup of cold water given to the least of his disciples will have its reward. Surely it will be in harmony, then, that the penitent thief will have a reward for his defence of the Master.

That reward will consist, first of all, in the blessing to his own heart through the action therein of the merciful sentiment. A reward will come to him in proportion to the exigencies of the occasion and the greatness of the One whom he loved. If the one who favors a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward and the one who favors a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, surely the one who favored the Redeemer would receive a special reward, such as the Redeemer itself is expected to grant.

The penitent thief manifested not only sympathy but honesty and it is entirely in keeping with the general teachings of our Lord's Word that the honest-hearted and the merciful have special blessings. Those blessings cannot reach them in the grave and it is not always that they reach them in the present life. Virtue is not always its own reward. Our Lord declares the Truth on the subject, assuring us that such shall be "recompensed in the resurrection of the just." That is to say, when the just, the justified, the Church, shall be resurrected in the First Resurrection and when then the heavenly Kingdom shall be established amongst men and the general awakening of the world from the sleep of death shall gradually follow—then every good and every evil word, every good and every evil act, will be recompensed—in Paradise. Let us be glad and rejoice that the Divine arrangement is an earthly Paradise, possible to every member of the race, and a heavenly Paradise, possible to every member of the spirit-begotten Church, and that the alternative of Paradise is not eternal torment, but everlasting destruction—the Second Death.

Just Waiting.

An old gentleman, rather portly and clad in a somewhat youthful suit of light gray flannel, sat on a bench in the park. "What's the matter, sonny?" he asked a small urchin who lay on the grass just across the walk and stared intently. "Why don't you go and play?" "Don't wanter," the boy replied. "But it is not natural," the old gentleman insisted, "for a boy to be so quiet. Why don't you run about?" "Oh, I'm just waitin'," the little fellow answered.—"I'm just waitin' till you get up. A man painted that bench about fifteen minutes ago."—Pittsburg News.

Trade Follows Good Roads.

Heavy loads of farm produce are held up by bad roads, and the better route is chosen for them, sometimes, even when the market is not as much to the liking of the farmer as the one offered by a city or town situated on poorer highways. The important fact about this is that the farmers usually do their trading in the same place where they market their crops, and their trade is valuable to the merchants of any city.—Schnectady Gazette.

Buying the First Bond.

In the lives of most people there are a few moments that are not only big with importance, but remain long in the memory. One of these moments may be the first sight of the ocean; another, when great snowcapped mountains first come into view. Still another, though, perhaps not quite so romantic, is that time when the average man or woman draws his or her savings out of a bank and buys the first bond.—Moody's Magazine.

Much Due to Appearance.

The supremacy of the Greeks as a nation was attributable to their commanding physique. Aeschylus had a body which was the pride of his countrymen, and his prowess gave such confidence at the battle of Salamis that there never was any doubt of the issue. The imposing presence of many other great commanders so inspired their men that all fear took wings and victory became assured.

How Elephants Sleep.

In captivity elephants stand up when they sleep, but in the jungle, in their own land, they lie down. The reason given for the difference between the elephant in captivity and in freedom is that the animal never acquires complete confidence in his keeper and always longs for liberty.—Watchword.

Strong Man's Creed.

I do the best I know. The very best I can; and I mean to keep right on doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.—Abraham Lincoln.

Japanese Ivy.

The Japanese ivy will cling to the smoothest surface, unlike its cousin, the Virginia creeper, which needs a rough surface to cling to. Many an old farm building would be made beautiful were a vine or two of it planted to its walls.

Genius Well Defined.

Genius is talent set on fire by courage. Fidelity is simply daring to be true in small things as well as great. Courage is the standing army of the soul which keeps it from conquest, pillage and slavery.—Henry van Dyke.

Well, is it?

The earth removed to make a post hole isn't sufficient in quantity to fill it again, even with the addition of the post, which takes up much space. The farm hand doesn't know why this is so, but it is.—New York Press.

Daily Thought.

That which music expresses is eternal and ideal. It does not give voice to the passion, the love, the longing of this or the other individual, under these or other circumstances; but to passion, love, longing itself.—Wagner.

Uncle Eben States a Fact.

"You can't allus judge a man by his manifestations," said Uncle Eben. "Some folks dat sings hymns depends mo' on a good voice dan on a good conscience."

Height of Amiability.

"They say Thelma's husband is a very amiable man?" "Amiable? I should say so. I have known that man to laugh at a joke when he was taking down the stovepipe."

Occasionally.

End-seat hogs, like other animals, vary in size and huskiness; hence it happens that a smaller one will occasionally move over.—Indianapolis News.

Ants as Good as Compass.

In Australia there are ants which build their nests along a north and south line so accurately that a traveler may direct his course by their aid.

We All Know the Kind.

Some fellows imagine they are such hot stuff that all their friends should suffer from heat prostration upon their approach.—Philadelphia Record.

Only Chance.

The young man leads his bride to the altar, but that's as far as he goes in the leading business.—The Meddler.

Keen.

Self-importance is generally most keenly felt just after one has pounded one's thumb.

Britain's Wealth of Minerals.

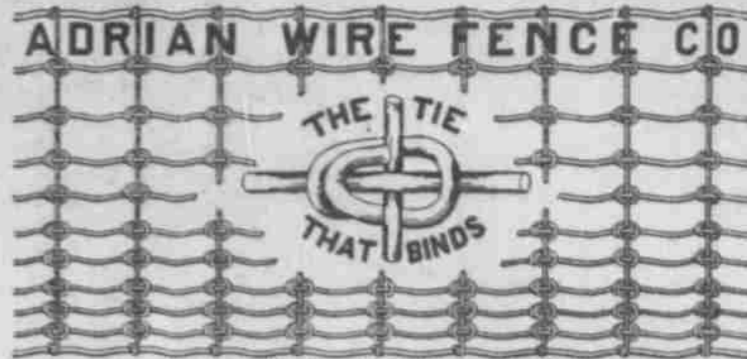
The annual mineral yield of the British empire exceeds 1,000 million dollars in value.

Therefore "Do Unto Others."

As we act toward others, so we may expect others to act toward us.—Byrus.

Beware of Rust.

Bright minds come through frequent use of the mental machinery.



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