

Pastor Russell's Sermon

MAN'S FALL FROM DIVINE FAVOR

His Condemnation by God as Told by the Bible.

PASTOR RUSSELL IN PARIS.

The Bible Teaches That Man Did Not Fall From a Heavenly Condition to an Earthly Condition, but From Perfection to Imperfection—The Penalty of Sin—Jesus' Death on Calvary the Ransom-Price For Father Adam.



PASTOR RUSSELL

ture, similarly said to me, Truly man in his original perfection must have been created in the image of his Creator. My visits to Rome impressed upon me the fact that although the work of death has progressed in our race, nevertheless, in a measure the decay of the masses has by Divine providence found compensation; for although we have no Michael Angelos today we have legions who are inspired by his example, and who have copied him with wonderful success, so that today our treasures of art are not only multitudinous but grand beyond those of any previous day.

The great St. Peter's at Rome is itself a treasury of art such as never before was known in the world, besides which all the great capitals of Europe abound with art galleries which illustrate the power of the human mind and the skill of the human hand in the appreciation and execution of the beautiful. And in this connection I must not forget the similar treasures of my home land, America.

But, my dear friends, you and I are living in a specially utilitarian Age, and I for one am glad of it. The skill of humanity has during the last century been turned into a new channel, which is making for us a new world. Instead of the narrow streets and lanes of a century ago, we have broad asphalt avenues and boulevards; instead of ordinary houses of a century ago, our cities are replete with handsome and commodious residences that in comparison are palaces. Beautiful, graceful bridges span our great rivers and serve to consolidate our interests. Wonderful tunnels pierce our mountains and facilitate the movement of luxurious railway coaches. Palatial steamers with regularity connect port to port.

Often of late I have found myself admiring some of our grand hotels and palatial capitols and engineering feats of bridge work and tunnels, saying to myself the while, What is man? And then I reflect, if man in his fallen condition has learned gradually to accomplish so much, what may we reasonably expect would have been the ultimate capacity of perfect man had sin not entered into the world, and had the experience of centuries been accumulated in many brains! By now how wonderful a being Father Adam might have been!

Then my mind reverted to the great Creator and the Message He has given us in His wonderful Book, the Bible. I remembered the inspired Message of consolation, that God looked down in pity on us as a race in our fallen condition and that He planned even before our fall for our recovery as a race from the curse, from sin, from death. I hearkened to St. Peter's words of encouragement respecting the glorious blessings to be ushered in by the great Redeemer when at His second advent He shall take unto Himself His great power and begin His Messianic reign for the blessing, recovery and uplift of our race. I will remind you of His words, although you are familiar with them. He said, "Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain until the Times of Restitution of all things which God hath promised by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began."—Acts iii, 19-21.

Oh, God is better than all our fears! During the Dark Ages a terrible nightmare became associated with the glorious Gospel of God's love and mercy revealed by Jesus and the Apostles. Under that nightmare we lost sight of all the glorious promises of the Bible and lost our confidence in God because of the terrible propositions declared to us to be His intentions toward our race. True, all acknowledged the hope that a salutary few would attain an eternal weight of glory on the heavenly plane, but all the remainder except the saintly ones, the Elect, were consigned either to a terrible purgatorial fire or to an eternal holocaust of torture. What blasphemies against our God, the God of Grace, we thus unwittingly, and awfully entertained!

The effect of these teachings in all parts of the world, in every religion, has been to convert man's natural quality of reverence for his Creator into a terrible fear, and this fear has more and more separated us from God and the Bible.

Mankind and the Church.
We are now coming to understand more fully the Bible doctrine of election and we see it to be not unjust and cruel as it once appeared, but beautiful and blessed, for both elect and non-elect. The Divine Plan was, and still is, a universal Plan—a Plan granting universal opportunity to Adam and to all his race for a recovery from the penalty of sin—for a recovery from sin and death to all that Father Adam had in the beginning and which he lost through disobedience, and which Jesus redeemed for him and his race at Calvary, and which all the willing and obedient may have back again at the hands of the Redeemer, if they will, during the period of His Messianic reign.

This is the Restitution which St. Peter tells us God spoke "through the mouth of all the holy Prophets since the world began." And the blessing will not be merely restitutionary, but indeed all the experiences of the present time with sin and sorrow, pain and death will be blessed, helpful lessons for the future—guards against any repetition of the scenes of disobedience against the Divine regulations made for man's comfort, happiness and everlasting joy.

The work accomplished by our Redeemer at Calvary was merely a preparatory one. His death provided the Ransom-price for Father Adam, and

hence for all Adam's race who share his condemnation. The work of Divine grace which has progressed since Jesus' death and resurrection is also a preparatory work. During this period of more than eighteen centuries God has been gathering out of the world a special class, willing to pass through specially severe trials and testings of faith and obedience, under the inspiration of certain "exceeding great and precious promises" (1 Peter i, 4)—of a share with Jesus in the divine nature and glory, honor and immortality. This selecting work began with natural Israel, and has extended now gradually the world around, gathering from every nation samples and representatives, but all saintly; all in heart, at least, copies of God's dear Son, the Redeemer. With the dawn of the Seventh Great Day—the Day of Christ—this work of electing or selecting a special class of saints to constitute His Bride and joint-heirs in the Kingdom will be complete. Then will begin the salvation of the world—the reclamation or restitution of the world from sin and death conditions, made possible by the great redemptive work of Calvary.

"Glorify in the Highest."
From what we have seen of the Divine provision for man's recovery we grasp the force of the prophetic declaration following the question of our text—"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him—the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" When we think of the greatness of our God, and the littleness of ourselves, even in our best estate, and especially when we think that we are all sinners, we are amazed that our great Creator was mindful of us—mindful of preparing a great Plan of Salvation—willing to provide for our redemption, and making preparation for the Kingdom which is to bless the race! Can we doubt that He who has so loved the world while they were yet sinners will bring His Plan to a glorious consummation? Can we doubt that He will do all that He has promised, exceedingly abundantly more than we could have asked or thought?—Ephesians iii, 20.

Do not understand me to say that the Bible teaches a universal salvation of our race to life eternal. No, that would be unreasonable. That would imply Divine coercion of the human will, and such a coercion would be contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures—that man is created in God's image and likeness. An essential feature of the Divine likeness in man is the freedom of his will; his body may be coerced or enslaved or what not, but the human will is indomitable, like that of his Creator.

It is evidently not the Divine intention to destroy the human will, but to educate it—to allow it to develop as a will, along the lines of experience, so that it may be voluntarily submitted to the Divine will because of appreciation of the wisdom of all the Divine arrangements, regulations, laws, etc. The Divine proposition, therefore, is that as all mankind shared by hereditary the sentence of death which came upon the first man Adam, so the redemption accomplished by the Second Adam shall be co-extensive with the fall, so that all Adam's race who will do so may return to God and be abundantly pardoned and finally restored to all that was lost in Adam and decreed at Calvary.

And what, you ask, will be the fate of those who willfully, deliberately, persistently, intelligently resist the Divine will and refuse the glorious opportunity of Restitution? The Bible answers that all will be on trial for life eternal or for death eternal, and that those who refuse the conditions of heart loyalty and obedience will bring upon themselves afresh the sentence of death. But this second sentence will differ from the first, not in the kind of punishment, but in the duration thereof.

The first or Adam's death God from the first foreordained should be set aside, and from the very beginning He had made preparations for the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, and to consequently make possible for our race a resurrection from the dead and a further opportunity or trial for everlasting life. Willful sinners under the light and opportunity of that day, when condemned to death, will die no more thoroughly than before, but their death will be a hope less one; no Redeemer has been appointed for them and none will be appointed; no redemption for them will be granted. As St. Peter declares, they shall perish "like natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed."—1 Peter ii, 12.

Some at least in this audience, I trust, have been mentally touched with the thought of the great grace of God operating during this Age for the selection of joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom. I trust that this high and heavenly calling to a change of nature from human to the divine, offered to the "elect," meets with a response in some hearts here present. I would encourage you, that although the night is far spent and the glorious Day of the Kingdom is nigh at hand, it is still worth while to "lay aside every weight" and every heaving sin, and make a full consecration of life and energy, wealth, reputation, little or much, to the Divine service, that thus you may walk in the footsteps of Jesus, be begotten of the Holy Spirit and attain to the Heavenly Kingdom.

This, my dear friends, is my own ambition and daily endeavor. I may not urge you to do more than the Master Himself urged, who said for us to "sit down first and count the cost." If you decide that you want the "Pearl of Great Price" now offered to humanity, it will cost you all that you have to obtain it, and then it will be the most wonderful Prize and the most wonderful bargain ever secured!

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