

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 xxi, 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 ministration, 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 into the Millennial Age and shows us Paradise re-established with the Heavenly City, the glorified Church, as its center or 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 path 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

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 shaped 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 of 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 will thus 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 bespake 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 might be expected to grant.

The penitent thief manifested not only sympathy but honesty and it is only 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.

Just Waiting.

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.—Schenectady 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 snowclad 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 imagines 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.

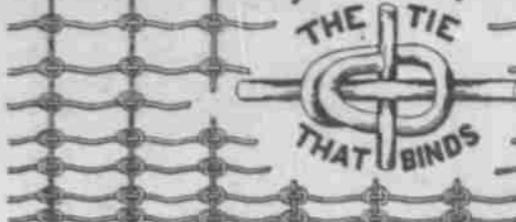
Therefore "Do Unto Others."

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

Beware of Rust.

Bright minds come through frequent use of the mental machinery.

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