

## “PRAISE”

(Discourse below by H. C. Rockwell, starting on page 260, 1913 Convention Report.)

Dear Friends, in harmony with the arrangements for worship for this day—“Praise Day”—we have chosen one of the largest and greatest texts to be found in all the Bible; it is a text that has brought perhaps more comfort, and peace, and joy to the minds and hearts of the Lord’s people, the saintly ones, in the past and also in the present experiences of the Church.

We have chosen as our text the Book of Psalms, which could appropriately be called the “Book of Praise.” It is a collection of hymns and praises addressed to the Lord, written by one of the most beloved authors of the Bible, a man greatly beloved of the Lord, a man after God’s own heart. We believe our own sentiments and experiences are more beautifully expressed in the words of the Psalmist than in any other writings. We do not expect to consider all the Psalms, for it would take up all the rest of the time of this convention and some time to follow. But I think, in our daily lives and experiences as we go on, we have reason to revert to the various expressions of the Psalmist, as expressing our sentiments to the Lord for His wonderful mercy and grace to us, His people in the past and present. We can scarcely speak of the circumstances concerning our Heavenly Father’s Plan without referring to the expressions of the Psalmist.

The very text of the year, as expressing our love and devotion, we have in the words: *“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.”* (Psalm 116:12-14.)

Now, dear friends, we want to consider some of the reasons why we should be devoted to praise unto the Lord our God this day. What special reasons have we to give thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow?

First of all, we remember that we were in the miry clay of sin, and as far as our worth of righteousness is concerned, we were not entitled to any consideration in God’s sight. But now our Heavenly Father, because of His infinite love and grace, has provided a Redeemer for us, our Lord Jesus. He redeemed us from sin and death providing the way whereby we might draw nigh, be reconciled and become His children, rejoicing in the privileges and grace bestowed upon those who are seeking to do His holy will. Think of the wonderful provisions made for us, giving the greatest gift He could bestow, His well beloved Son.

Then, having justified us to fellowship, He gave us the privilege of advancing into full relationship as His dear children, and then because of our weaknesses, as the result of

Father Adam's transgression, He has provided that our Lord Jesus should be our Advocate, that our sins and blemishes could be covered up, and we could continue to maintain this relationship, and come boldly into the Throne of Grace, and feel that our God has love for us, and is caring and providing for us. I tell you, dear friends, that many of us do not appreciate this glorious privilege of coming to the Father through the merit of our Advocate—some have become careless regarding this matter of sin.

The Lord's people have come into an appreciation of the gift of God's son and the various means of reconciliation and so they seek to know how they can praise God, and so are not careless nor negligent, but seek to maintain their standard before the Lord in full favor. At the close of the day, before retiring for the night, the Lord's people, glancing back over the experiences of the day, seek to ascertain how they had walked in accordance with the Lord's will and were pleasing to him.

You remember our dear Savior, in the closing hours of His experiences on earth, looked to His Heavenly Father and exceedingly feared that He had come short and had displeased the Heavenly Father. That was perhaps the supreme trial of our Savior—His desire to be well assured that He was pleasing to God. Our Heavenly Father sent His angel who brought the message of comfort to Him, assuring Him that He had done well.

So, if we have the disposition of our Lord Jesus Christ, walking in His footsteps, we will be glancing back, and looking over the experiences of the day, to make sure that we have not sinned in any way that would be displeasing to the Lord, and in searching out the experiences of the day we might ascertain certain places and conditions where we had come short, not having done as fully as we should. What would we do then? We would go to the Lord in a repentant frame of mind, expressing our regret, and asking for Divine grace, claiming the merits of our great Advocate, asking forgiveness for those things, and the Apostle assures us, "Faithful is He to forgive us our sins." It is because our Heavenly Father loves us that He made this arrangement for us.

Another reason for giving praise to the Lord is given by the Apostle in Hebrews 5:1, where he points out from the type a very important fact that, "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." So we, as members of the anti-typical priesthood, the royal priesthood, we who have been gathered out of darkness into His marvelous light, are ordained or anointed for the purpose of presenting gifts and sacrifices (the better sacrifices and gifts unto the Lord). What is the distinction between the sacrifices and gifts? Before we could appreciate Divine things we had to present ourselves in full consecration, making sacrifice of all earthly things, aims, desires and ambitions, that we might experience the heavenly joys. So having presented our all to God in sacrifice, it is being consumed day by day. We had no call to present ourselves to God as a gift, but as a sacrifice. Then what else? There is nothing else that we could offer to Him except

expressions of praise and thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow. So, dear friends, our Heavenly Father is pleased with these gifts, and desires that we continually draw nigh unto Him in praise and thanksgiving. What a privilege we have of bringing gifts acceptable to Him—to think that our Heavenly Father is pleased with the expressions of our lips and consider them as wonderful gifts! If we have this before our minds it would make us to always want to be found in prayer before the Lord.

All those things that make life worth living we have received of the Heavenly Father—every breath we breathe, the water we drink, etc. Is it not right, our Father having given so much to us, that we should gladly render these gifts? No wonder the Psalmist was so beloved of the Lord; because he was continually offering expressions of gratitude to the Lord.

Another reason for praise unto the Lord: “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.” Again, “The Lord hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.” Do you know that most people have the idea that religion is a very mournful thing? They have a conception that the Lord’s people should go around with a long face, that they have very little pleasure or enjoyment in life, and our friends in the nominal churches have in the front part of their churches “mourners’ benches,” that the people can mourn over the matter. Not so with us, it is the most joyful to us, because we have had so many blessings and privileges from Him.

Again, we give special praise unto the Lord, because He hath led us out of darkness into this marvelous light—“Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people.” We were formerly in this condition as related to the understanding of the Divine Plan. We did not know what was the origin of man, his purpose in life and his final destiny; we did not know what the Truth was, but now we are living in a wonderful time of illumination for the household of faith—the whole Bible is revealed to us. Of course there are parts of Revelation and Ezekiel we do not understand, but doctrinally speaking, all these have been clearly revealed and explained in these last times. There is not a single doctrine contained in the Bible but that the light from God has fully explained so that the Lord’s people can grasp and understand. Is not that a reason for praise unto God?

What has God led us out of darkness for? “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that *ye should show forth the praises* of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9.) Yes, dear friends, the more we assemble ourselves for praise unto God, the more are we fulfilling the mission for which we were ordained.

Now I want to tell you that this is one of the greatest things we can conceive of, to have an understanding of God’s Word. For ages philosophers have tried to find truth, but have

never been able. Only the Lord's people, those who have been the recipients of special Divine favors, have been privileged to know the truth. The reason some have not been able to understand is because they have not been willing to pay the cost, and so they have not been worthy of the truth. It is for only those who value the truth more than all things—more than their own lives.

Well, now, do not all understand the doctrinal teachings of the Bible? Well, dear friends, there is not a single doctrine properly understood by the unconsecrated—the most simple doctrines have been turned upside down and warped and twisted until they mean just the opposite. For instance, take the doctrine of the punishment of the wicked: The Bible declares that the dead are dead, that they know not anything, that they are in the tomb, asleep, but all Christians, outside the consecrated ones, declare that the dead are more alive than ever.

Take the doctrine of baptism: All the Christian world is confused on this proposition. They are discussing the various modes of symbolizing the real baptism. So it is with all the others.

As Brother Russell has so aptly summed up the situation: “We know that they know that we know that they do not know. And they know that we know that they know that they know we know they do not know.” They are unable to reveal the truth—it is foreign to them. So then, dear friends, when we discuss doctrines with the nominal Christians, in place of coming down to the earnest discussion of the doctrines, they switch off to something aside from the issue—the truth is too much for them.

What does the knowledge of the truth mean? It means eternal life—salvation. It is conforming our lives to this that we shall eventually attain to that high, heavenly honor that the Lord has for those who value truth more than life itself. It is worth all, and more than we possess. How thankful we are to God that He has led us out of darkness into this marvelous light.

David gives expression to this thought all through the Psalms as to how the Lord had enlightened His people; therefore, we can praise Him continually and rejoice in His loving favor—“Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.”

Another reason for meeting and praising the Lord on every occasion, the Apostle Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:4, “That we might become partakers of the Divine nature.” Many of us may have failed to comprehend the fullness of the Apostle's statement here, we failed to appreciate the Father's love as much as we ought, yet none of us could fully appreciate His love because we have finite minds. The Lord has promised the greatest thing that it is possible for Him to promise; and as we study the Scriptures and come to a knowledge

of these spiritual promises, we see that it would be impossible for Him to promise more—as we just sang, “What more can He say than to you He hath said?” What has He promised? In the present life, “His grace shall be sufficient.” “All things work together for our good.”

Then concerning the heavenly things, God has promised us through His Son, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne.” Think what that means! We will be seated at the right hand of the Master on high, in the throne of the universe. God could not hold out to us a greater or higher thing than that. Then, He will give us the Divine nature. Truly, these are exceeding great and precious promises that we need to lay hold of and give praise and thanks for to Him.

Then all these experiences in life are designed to work out for our good, and that is not a qualified statement in any sense. Dear friends, I find that in going about and meeting with the Lord’s people, some are a little wavering about this statement that *all* things are working together for their good. But if we continue to look unto the Lord, giving thanks for them, believing that they are for our character development, we will see how those things which seem adverse will be for our highest blessing. We ought to give more thanks for the trying experiences in life than for the pleasant ones, because it is through the trying experiences that the New Creature is developed, and of entering into that great future glory.

Another reason, and a most wonderful reason, is the gracious arrangement He has made for the race of mankind, that all the nations shall experience His grace. We know people at the present time out of harmony with the Divine Plan, yet we love them, just as the Lord loved the “Rich Young Ruler,” and if we thought of these as having no hope, but that they were to be eternally tormented, it would be a serious hindrance to the peace of our minds.

“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people.” “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” He is there speaking prophetically of the “times of refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord.” “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.” Why? Will not that be a joyful time of rejoicing and blessing for the whole world when the Lord comes to judge the world?

Another reason for giving praise unto the Lord, is that we are now living in the dawn of that great day—the thousand year day—in which the grace of the Lord will be manifested to the ends of the earth. Many lose sight of the fact that we are now nearly 40 years into that time of refreshing. As we look all over the face of the earth we can see how it is growing more beautiful. There is a general disposition on the part of the people to beautify their homes, and also in the country districts. Note also the marvelous cultivation of fruit, etc. Also note the wonderful inventions, which enable the people to enjoy the beauties of nature. We are far advanced into the Millennial Age. Therefore, in view of the fact that we are in this great “Praise Day” we ought to manifest our praise to Him.

Dear friends, we are not only to give praise unto God in the sight of the world of mankind as we go about proclaiming the glad tidings, but do you not know that we are manifesting forth our praise unto the heavenly beings? The Apostle in Ephesians 3:10, 11 makes reference to this thought. It seems that the heavenly host are observers of what is transpiring on earth—in other words, there is a moving picture show going on. What we, the nations of the earth, are learning by actual experience, the heavenly hosts are learning by observation. The whole Plan has been a wonderful theatrical performance. They have been learning from the Church these great truths.

Now in summing up the Lord’s grace and love, special reasons why we should render praise, we find we have seven:

1. *We have the most loving heavenly Father* of any class of people in the whole world. Most people in the world think of our heavenly Father as an avenging Deity, but we have come to recognize our Lord as the “God of all grace and love.” The Lord Jesus assures us that “the Father Himself loveth us.”
2. *We have the most gracious Saviour.* Christian people are trying to limit the work of our Lord, and think He died only for those who live in this Christian era; whereas, the Scriptures show that he died for all. What a gracious Saviour we have who loved us and bought us with His own precious blood, to redeem us from the sentence of death!
3. *We have the most glorious message that was ever proclaimed.* Yea, the angels of heaven would gladly rejoice in the privilege of sounding forth this proclamation that we are privileged to make known.
4. *This is the most stupendous movement in the world.* Are the International Bible Students doing so much? Yes, it is the most important, the greatest movement in the world. You will notice that the Bible Students are accomplishing more in the earth than all the other religious organizations together. The Lord’s people are devoting all they have, and they are the ones who are privileged to make their efforts count. Notice as you

glance back over the pages of history that it is those who were consecrated to their cause who accomplished the most. Well now, think of how many are consecrated to God, to the Truth, and are laying down their lives for the Truth—are you one, are you laying down your life for the Truth? If not, it is only a question of time when you will lose it. As a result of the combined effort of this consecrated host, the Truth is going into every nook and corner of the earth. The evidences are increasing on every side that before the harvest work is finished the whole world will have a knowledge of these things. As we are living in the Millennial Age now, would you not expect the Truth to widen out more and more until every member of the race has been enlightened? What a privilege we have of being identified with this great movement, the greatest in the whole world! You can hardly get aboard a train, boat or in a house but that you receive some of the literature. Think of how the sermons of our pastor are circulated amongst twenty million readers every week! Think of how the advertising is carried on! Those not acquainted with the work of the Society think there must be millions back of it—they do not know how we do it. If this work was to be accomplished by the nominal churches it would amount up into millions of dollars, because it would cost a great deal to hire people to do it. I remember one brother in New York, he was serving the tracts in a particular district and the houses there were up some distance from the street. He would go up the steps, leave a paper, come down, go around to the next steps, etc. He kept doing it block after block. A man across the street watched him, and finally came across the street and said: “There is no need of doing that; you can put them in an ash-barrel or in the river and the people who hired you will think you did the work.” So you see, if they were hired to do the work, they would not do it so well or so thoroughly, and would charge a fancy price for it. Thus you see where consecration comes in. We appreciate this wonderful privilege of making known the grace of God, and we are gladly making sacrifice and devoting our energies and talents and strength to the work. Are we each one of those who is doing what he can? We can all say that we are not doing what we ought to do, but by God’s grace I will be meek and be one who will be accounted worthy to enter into the presence of the Almighty. We are living in a most wonderful day of enlightenment—it is a great privilege to be living now.

5. *We have the most wise and faithful servant in the world*, one of the noblest men that ever lived—a devoted servant of the Lord. Surely he has been faithful to the work that has been allotted to him to do. Glance backward over the years of his service! I remember looking back in some of the old Towers of 1893-94 and noticed that the report of the funds for the year amounted to about \$3,000 for two years, and about the same amount had been expended in the work. Our dear Pastor, the faithful servant, used that very wisely (he is the wisest man on earth; you don’t know a being on earth as wise as he is), he used them wisely to the praise of the Lord. His maxim seems to be, “This one thing I do”—proclaim the glad tidings, so that year by year the work has enlarged and today it is covering the whole world. Are we not proud and happy to have him as our servant? As our Pastor? If we are not, we are not in the right condition of heart and mind

before God. He has laid down his life year by year for our sakes, for the sake of the Truth, and he is surely worthy of our honor and respect. How glad we are to cooperate.

6. *Harmony among the brethren.* Don't you think there is quite a little dissention amongst the Lord's people? I have not found it so. In some places there are some misunderstandings, but I find the Lord's people are gathering together more and more; there is a spirit that is increasing that they will stand shoulder to shoulder as good soldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the 133rd Psalm we read of how beautiful it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity, and I trust this convention will be a means to knit us more closely together, so that as we return home we will encourage this spirit more and more in the others. I like to mention the spirit of the Apostle Paul: You remember that the brethren at Corinth permitted a spirit of opposition to develop in their hearts toward the Apostle Paul, saying he is not an Apostle, etc. One thing led to another and finally they got down to mean personalities, saying he is mean and contemptible in speech and bodily presence. You know that if the old man had been in evidence it might have been interesting for some of those at Corinth. What did the Apostle do? He wrote, I will gladly spend and be spent in your behalf, even though the more abundantly I love you I am loved less in return. Do you think many have that disposition? That is just the disposition we ought to have; it is the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Truth, the spirit of Love. Many have strong weaknesses, yet well developed in the faith—those are just the ones who have need of our assistance. When we return to our classes and know some one who has done something contrary to the spirit of the Lord, don't discourage him, but by the grace of God try to lift him up and encourage him to advance in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior. Brotherly love is very precious in the sight of the Lord, and our Savior mentioned this, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, in that ye love the brethren." Surely we have a most wise and loving Pastor.

7. *We have the most joyous and loving class of people* to be associated with on the face of the globe, and it is a wonderful privilege to be with such. Let us remember these seven things and endeavor to keep them in mind. These seven reasons for praising the Lord should, as we leave this convention encourage us to sound forth the grace of our God.

In Revelation we read that only 144,000 of the Lord's sanctified or gathered out people could sing that glorious song. Some have read this portion of Revelation and wondered about the Great Company, whether they could not sing that song, and whether they were not acquainted with these truths. But they will not be able to sing that song in the way we will. We will sing it now, they by and by. It is a glorious melody unto the Lord.

I understand this to mean that the Lord having created this world, formed it not in vain, but to be inhabited, implies that all of the other heavenly bodies in space, 125,000,000

suns, their planets will be inhabited by and by, and that only this 144,000 will enjoy the privilege of sounding forth the praises of Jehovah's wisdom, justice, love and power during those countless ages of eternity.