

## BELIEVING

The item below is a discourse on the topic of BELIEVING by Pastor Russell given in Hackley Hall, Santa Cruz, Calif. June 24, 1911, reported in the 1911 Convention Report, starting on page 86.)

The text that is in my mind for this occasion is found in the prophecy of Isaiah; “Lord, who hath believed our report, and unto whom is the arm of Jehovah revealed?”

We might apply this text in some degree to the meeting this afternoon. We delivered a report. The word “report” in this text signifies message—proclamation. For who hath believed the message—proclamation of truth? Who has discerned the arm, the power of the Lord, as revealed in the Gospel, and God’s great provision for man’s needs? In the audience of somewhere near a thousand people, how many we wonder, had a hearing ear, that they could hear? How many understood something of the length, and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of God which passes all understanding? We might perhaps have been inclined to think, “How could anyone do otherwise than be impressed by the simplicity of God’s message” and yet we remember that the Scriptures show us, and the facts prove to us that it has been so during the 1800 years since the message of the Lord has been given, that it has been proclaimed here and there, and very few have believed the report. Look out all over the world today and see how few there are who believe the message of God in respect to his great plan. The great majority seem to be blinded by the adversary, the god of this world who blinds the minds of those who believe him not, lest the light of the goodness of God should shine into their hearts. The apostle’s words imply that the great adversary is the one who is especially interested in beclouding the mind, and that God’s truth is the special thing intended to enlighten the mind, and that not everybody is in condition of mind to be profited by this great light that would shine forth.

The question asked by the prophet implies that only a few would hear the report, would hear the message, would hear the Gospel, only a few would give heed to it. When we view the matter in the light of the 18 centuries, and then think of how little faith there is today, we can well understand God’s standpoint in speaking through the prophet and saying, “Who is it that has believed?” Practically nobody. We indeed see great churches, and sometimes fine buildings, and sometimes large congregations and yet if we would inquire for the faith once delivered to the Saints, if we inquire for an intelligent understanding of God’s great plan, how few would you find who have that understanding, who have delivered the message, who have accepted it, and who are walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

Some might say to us, “Brother Russell that is a wrong view, why everybody believes the report. Here in this city, it is named after a saint, and there are other cities along the coast

all named after saints practically, and all through the land are churches of various denominations, and they have all believed Jesus, they have all believed the report.” But we cannot so think; we must agree with the Lord’s message through the prophet to the effect that a very few have believed the message. Quite a good many have believed the mixed messages that have gone forth; the message, for instance, of our Catholic friends that if they belong to the Catholic church they will be pulled through purgatory and finally get to heaven. A considerable number believe that in some measure, but is that the message once delivered to the saints? We say not. It has little of it, but very little—not enough to call it good tidings of great joy. Then some have believed our Presbyterian friends, that God is electing some, and they hope they belong to the elected company. But is that the full measure, or is it only a little of the message? Surely the latter. It is only a little of the message and not the report of God’s grace toward all mankind, and not merely toward the church. Who hath believed the message that God sent?

Then our Baptist friends also limit the matter, saying that it is by election, and then additionally it is by the water route after you have the election—the election and the water route both. There are dear, good friends amongst the Baptists, but very few of them believe the message.

But we are not wishing to lay too much stress on these various features of the divine plan. Our thought would be that God very graciously has a message that even the poor and the ignorant in considerable degree can accept and lay hold on. Who hath believed the report—not doctrinally, as theologians, but in a general way the message that all mankind have heard—at least all of the civilized lands that had an opportunity of hearing the message—that God is willing to forgive our sins, God is willing to receive us as his children, that God has made a way and he invites us to walk in it? Now put it in the very simplest form, and how many have believed that? Oh, says someone, “Why a great many believe that.” I doubt it. Remember the Scriptures say, “With the heart man believes.” What is it to believe this message of the narrow way and the privilege of reconciliation with God, with the heart? I think that we will all agree that to believe that message with the heart would mean that it would thoroughly enter into us that we would believe it with all our minds and all our strength, to be thoroughly convinced by it, to have no doubt about it. If they believed the message of God’s love and favor, and of reconciliation to him, and of becoming joint-heirs with Christ in the heavenly kingdom, would they not forsake everything that they might take up with that message? Can you imagine anybody in the world really believing that God would sentence our race to death—not to put the worst construction on the sentence, but simply put it as the Bible does—and that he did it justly, and then that he had also made a provision in Christ, our Lord, whereby we might return to his love and favor, and that he would receive us again as children, forgive all our trespasses, all our sins that are past and bring us back right into his own favor, and be our Father and we should be his children, and he would take care of all our interests, and all things would work together for good to us, and if we had passed through certain trials we

should have his assistance, then by and by in only a little while, a few short years, he would take us to himself in the heavenly kingdom, and make us associates with our Lord Jesus Christ on the spiritual plane—who could believe this with the heart and not be exercised by it? Who could possibly say, “I do not care for that, I really believe it is so, but I do not think it worthy of any of my attention?”

I think that very few would really believe that message, even in the very simplest form in which we could put it—in the form that all people who have any knowledge whatever of the Gospel could understand it, even if they had a certain admixture of error—even allowing for all of these errors of doctrine being mixed with the matter, to just know this simple fact that God is willing to receive us back as his children, to forgive us our sins, and care for us, and bring off eventually conquerors with Jesus—whoever believes that with the heart would, I think be sure to accept the terms, because they are so very favorable. Then the fact that so very few people do give their hearts to the Lord, or give their hearts to Jesus, and do give up all the little they have, proves that only a few believe. Others may believe with the head merely, a sort of general assent—I think. that Jesus died; I believe he was a good man; or, I believe he was the Lord—or whatever it might be; but it is merely a head acceptance, and it does not enter into their hearts. With the heart man believeth unto salvation. That is the kind of believing that counts for something. When it goes down into their hearts, it goes right down into their hands also, and they want to use their hands for the Lord; it goes down into their feet, and they want to use their feet for the Lord; it goes down into their pocketbooks, and they want to use that for the Lord. And so it affects anything and everything they have; it affects all the affairs of life.

Now I am addressing those especially this evening who believe, who have made consecration, those who with the heart have believed. How precious is our possession, dear brothers and sisters? How precious is the Lord to us—to us who believe with the heart he is precious. All the teachings of the Lord’s great plan are revealed to this class. How favored we are that by God’s grace we have heard, and that our hearts have been responsive, and that we have accepted the great proposition of the Lord to become his children! Now is the acceptable time in which God is willing to accept our little offering, and to let us count it in as a part of Jesus’ sacrifice, that we may be sharers with him in the suffering of this present time in order that we may also be sharers with him in the glory that shall follow.

So I rejoice with you that we have heard the report, that we have heard the message, that to us the arm of the Lord, the power of the Lord, has been revealed—not to the world; they do not know the power of God. You and I are only learning about it; we have only begun to see the arm of the Lord. The arm, you know, in symbol stands for power. God has revealed the power. Now the world has not seen the power, nor has the world seen the arm of the Lord. You and I see that the Lord is the arm that our heavenly Father puts

down to grasp the poor human family and to lift it up. At one time we saw in a measure this matter, and saw that Jesus was the arm of Jehovah, but we thought he was only going to lift up the saintly people; and that was good; that was a glorious message; but now we have seen further, and we have believed further, and the message has gone out further, that the arm of Jehovah not merely will lift up the saintly few, but that saintly few will become a part of the arm of Jehovah, so to speak, and that arm of Jehovah shall during the thousand years of Christ's reign bless mankind and lift them up.

Now at the close of this little session of today our hearts, I trust, are going out to the Lord with gratitude for all the privileges we have enjoyed in connection with the service. Some of you have been laboring to make a success of the meeting today, and I praise God on your behalf and rejoice with you that you had such a very enjoyable experience. You worked hard I am sure to bring such results for a weekly afternoon. And those of us who will go farther on will have you kindly in our remembrance as some who have been faithful to your opportunities. As I looked at the audience today it seemed to me I saw some that looked as though they were saintly people, and who had already believed God's report respecting his Son, and now let us hope they saw and heard a little more clearly today, and that henceforth they may, by reason of what they have heard be brought into further grace and nearer to the Lord. And those of you who remain here—what an opportunity you will have to continue to witness of the Lord! And not merely witness by tongue but remember there is one way in which we are all witnesses, whether we wish to be or not, and that is by our daily life—our conduct, our work, our actions. Are we, then, living epistles of the Lord, known and read of all men? If so, as the apostle says, Let us walk circumspectly, carefully, looking around, guarding our thoughts and words and deeds, showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into this marvelous light, commending the truth to others by the consistency of our lives and our faithfulness to the principles of righteousness. This is one of the witnesses we can all surely give, and one that I trust the dear friends residing here will find it their privilege to give. And others, knowing that you are advocating these things, and having heard what a high standard we believe God has established, namely, a standard of saintship, no doubt the people of this city will look at you still more carefully with examination than ever before. They will say, "These are some of those who claim that only the saints at the present time are going to have everlasting glory, and heaven. I wonder if he is a saint; I wonder if she is a saint." And so you will be put on exhibition, so to speak; you will be under scrutiny. How carefully then will you walk before the Lord? How careful will you be to show forth the praise of the great King?

Then some of you may have other opportunities in your meetings to present the truth. How wise you should be as ambassadors for God to present it as of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what Jesus said on this subject, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." As one of our good German sisters once expressed it a very forcible way, bringing it down to some language of our day, "The Lord says we should be as wise as

snakes and harmless as pigeons.” That gives the thought, dear friends. How wisely we want to use our opportunities! We are all, I believe, learning more and more every day that wisdom is to be exercised in the presentation of the Lord’s Word. I presume that every one of us who is a child of the Lord, and somewhat experienced in the truth, and who has endeavored to present it to others, has made certain mistakes, being too harsh, perhaps, or presenting the truth in a too rigid form, not sufficiently kindly in manner, with kindly words, and with consideration for others. We are to remember that those who catch fish never do so by beating the water with the fish rod; that drives the fish away. And so if we would be wise in this, fishers of men, it behooves us to consider how carefully we are to deal with those who are giving some attention to the truth. The truth is to be the bait, and we are to dangle the truth before them so as not to do them injury, not to do them harm, but to bless them and get them into the Gospel net, and to get them into better and fuller relationship to the Lord.

So then, my parting word to the dear friends of Santa Cruz is that we pray God for a continuance of his blessing, and we rejoice with you that we have had a blessing so far, that your efforts to praise the Lord have been blessed so far, and we ask on your behalf continued and increasing wisdom to show forth his praise, and to help those with whom we come in contact.