

## FAREWELL DISCOURSE

(Discourse below by Pastor Russell, Pertle Springs, Mo. Convention, 1912, page 151.)

Now, my dear friends, we have come to the conclusion of this convention. I have not been privileged to be with you at every session but my heart has been with you from time to time, and all the reports I have received are to the effect that you have been having a good spiritual feast—just what you came here to enjoy and to help to give to others. And, indeed, I have heard some of the friends make the remark, This is our best convention, but I tell them that is so every convention, and I think the explanation must be this: That by the Lord's grace we are growing in grace and knowledge, and in His love, and, therefore, each time we come together it seems more precious, simply because our own hearts are in better condition to receive the blessing. You might be here and your heart somewhere else, and you would get no blessings at all. You might be in an evil condition of heart and be vexed and hurt by everything. I am very glad, indeed, to hear, so far as any friends could go and report, that they had not heard anything except the Lord's name was praised, and that all His people seemed to be greatly blessed in this privilege of fellowshipping together.

I cannot tell, dear friends, brethren and sisters, how long it will be before we will meet again. As you know, I am expecting to meet with some other friends in about a month in Toronto; we expect to have another convention as large as this one, and then we expect to have another in Washington, D.C., and directly following that I take the steamer for Europe, and after several stops in Great Britain, the last Sunday of July I will be in Glasgow, where we are to have a large convention, and then after visiting a few other towns, the following Sunday I will be in London, where we are to have another convention. I wish I could take you all along and have the benefit of them all. It is not selfish on my part, but I was telling some of the friends about the matter, how that they could go to all the conventions, and so cheap. I was saying that we do nearly everything in our minds anyway. As for instance, I was introduced to a dear sister who had come quite a distance to this convention, and I understand she is Polish and unable to understand a word that we said, but she wanted to participate in the spirit of the convention; and as she looked into the faces at the convention she was getting a blessing. Now, if she shuts her eyes she can imagine she is with us in Toronto, later in Washington, later in Glasgow, and later in London, what she can do the rest of us can do. Is not that so?

I think of another sister who for some reason went away every summer to visit one of her daughters for awhile, and as she came back from such a visit of several months, she said, Brother Russell, I am back again; I have had a good time, been to meetings all the time I was away. I asked her what she meant. She said, every Sunday as regular as the time came, I got a hymn book and sang my hymn. Next, she said, they are having prayer, so I

had prayer. Next she thought, now they usually sing another hymn, so I sang another hymn. Then, she thought, they have a sermon, I cannot be there to hear, so I had a sermon to read, then I prayed in the usual form, and, Brother Russell, I have been having a grand time— yes, had a spiritual fellowship with everybody, all in my mind.

Now, was not that a pretty good idea? It is so cheap, you do not have to fix up, no fixing of dresses, etc., no suit case to pack, no board bills and railroad fare, nothing of the kind, and no dusty travel. You can get all of that benefit just in your mind. I fancy most people have never learned what a great privilege a brain is. If your mind and heart are rightly in tune with God you can have a good time with God anywhere. At one time it was difficult for us to understand how we could have fellowship with our heavenly Father; we used to wonder how God would hear so far, and if He could hear if we would whisper. Now we have something that helps us, dear friends. Some of the inventions of our day, such as the telephone and the telegraph and the wireless telegraph teach us wonderful lessons. If man can have wireless communication with other men hundreds of miles away we can now see how the great God can have communication with His children. Our minds can the better grasp the facts. As we get this illustration, it helps our faith. Why, it seems almost as though we were walking by sight and not by faith. Particularly when we see the fulfillment of the Scriptures going on right around us every day, and more and more wonderful things coming, just as God said they would come, and just as we have been seeing in His word before they came. We knew about their coming, and when they do come, they become confirmations of our faith and trust in God.

I say, dear brothers and sisters, “What manner of persons *ought* we to be?” We should certainly not think of comparing ourselves with other people in the sense of comparing ourselves with worldly people, because we have so many advantages over other people. How little they really appreciate life. They hardly know why they are in the world. Just ask somebody why he is here, why God created him, and what God intends with respect to him? The chances are that he will be thoroughly surprised, never having thought of the matter as to what he is doing here or what his hopes are. That person does about the best he can if he fills his life with business or pleasure. He cannot keep his head empty without being an idiot. But I tell you, my dear brothers and sisters, this more and more impresses itself upon me, What manner of persons ought we to be—ought we to compare ourselves with others and say that we are better than they? Oh, that would be a poor plan, but some of us who have been Christians for years are not to compare ourselves with others who have been Christians for a day, week or year or month.

I remember a friend coming to me one day, saying, “Brother Russell, I have such difficulties along certain lines.” Well, I tried to give him a good advice. Oh, yes, I see that and know how it ought to be done, but do not seem to be able to do it: I make a failure of it; if I could only do it the way you do it, would be all right. I said, my dear friend, if you could do it the way I can do it, it would be a great shame to me, for I was a

Christian before you were born, and if I had not learned to do better each day I would certainly be discouraged. Oh yes, he said later, that helped me so much. I found that all God required of me was to do my best. If I had a little experience I gained more experience. He found it to be a great blessing. So we all will find a great blessing by coming into this attitude of appreciating our blessings and making certain allowances if we have certain known tendencies.

The Apostle says, speaking along this line, we should not judge one another; yea, I judge not mine own self, he said. What did he mean? Oh, he meant that he might be too lenient with himself, and again too severe, when, perhaps, he was doing the best he could; so he said, there is one that judgeth me.

So that is our thought. And since we have come to know our heavenly Father is a good and gracious, loving Father, delighting to do good, having sympathy, etc., now we can come to Him as children to a Father. And He says we must come to Him and acknowledge our faults. How precious to remember that He is able to appreciate our condition and sympathize with us, and also provide for us a Great High Priest and Advocate. So the Apostle says that if we trespass against others or against Him, let us come with boldness to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. I think there is a special reason why God has fixed this matter as He has done in respect to our coming to Him in prayer. He might have said, Now they are my children, I will not count these things against them, I will merely reckon that they did not know and were imperfect and weak, and did not do it intentionally, and I will make no record of it. That is not the way God does. But what does He do? Does He charge them up, whether intended or not? Yes. Whether deliberate or not? Yes, Whether we thought or did not think? Yes. He charges them all to us. Then what? He has made provision through Christ that these trespasses that were not intentional, not willful on our part, can be atoned for us. But why should He do that? What object could be served by doing that? Oh, it brings the matter to your attention and to my attention to know what right is. Knowing that we cannot do the right, the effect is to teach us that we are weak and imperfect and needing God's mercy. That sends us to the throne of heavenly grace, and makes the throne of grace a very precious place, my dear friends—a very blessed place—and it impresses upon us the matter, and if you have come once and have occasion to go the second time for the same weakness or blemish, you feel as though you wanted to say, Lord, this is the second time and I told you before that I would try to be more careful and here is the second time, and I am ashamed, but I felt that I must come, that I did not dare to stay away for I felt that if I did this earth-born cloud would be there and I could not realize the privilege of being a child of yours without forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Do you not see, then, dear friends, that it impresses the matter more than if you say, God knows all about it and did not count it against me. The only way you can blot that out is through the merit of Christ's precious blood. It gives us an appreciation of the merit of Christ's blood and makes it precious before us.

Then, dear brothers and sisters, we will welcome the difficulties and tests which we know must come to every Christian. They may never have them the second time, but we will hope that you will so fortify yourselves and say, there is a weakness in my nature; I see it now and I am going to barricade it by putting every resolution behind it to keep it strong, and it becomes the very strongest part of your character. You did not know it at first, but after you found it out, then you fortified that weak spot. You are making character, and even the mistakes and failures become helps. God's arrangement commends itself to us as being the very essence of wisdom for us.

Further, as you would have to do this time and again, it would have the effect upon your own heart of making you very humble. Oh yes, whatever pride was there, if you were feeling that you were much better than the average of people you would say, Oh, I have found some of my weaknesses and feel very humble before God. Good for you; you need to be humble before God, for if you were any other way than humble before God you could not abide in His love. Humility is a very prominent grace in the sight of God. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time." It comes right in as you find your weaknesses—humble yourselves and make it right with God.

Another thing it will do for you: After you have humbled yourselves several times coming to God in prayer because of your weakness—it might be an appeal for liquor, or good things of this life, or a bad temper, or impatience, or criticizing someone else, or tongue of slander—whatever it may be, and you have found yourself out, you will feel real mean and ashamed of yourself. Well, that will help you when somebody says something mean to you; it will be such a help to you. You will say to yourself, I had my little experience, I guess I had better not say anything. The gracious God has forgiven me and I will be gracious to forgive others. It will make you tender-hearted, you will not sympathize with sin because God has no sympathy for sin, but He has a great deal of sympathy for the sinner when weak and the fault is through weakness or disposition received down through all those generations of 6,000 years since the fall. We get His spirit as we thus follow the directions of His word.

But then comes in this difficulty: After you have gone to the Lord for some matter and you have had forgiveness and then you transgress again, there will be a disposition come into your mind which will say, you can't go to God with this; don't pray at all tonight. Avoid trying to meet the Lord. What would you say if you did meet Him? How could you pray? There is a dangerous spot, my dear brethren. If you pass that night without prayer, then the next morning and the next night it is easier to pass again without prayer, and say, I don't want to pray, and don't feel like praying. You do not, because you do not feel like coming into the presence of the Lord and telling Him what you need, and there is a tendency of getting further and further away from God, and that has led many people

away from God altogether. That is very much the stand of the great company class, as I understand the Bible to describe it (not attempting to judge any individual). The great company class is described in the 7th chapter of Revelation as those who have come up out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But how did their robes come to be washed, my dear brethren? Because they were spotted. Why did they not keep them unspotted from the world? Oh, they would say, nobody could do that, there is not a person surely that could go through life and keep themselves unspotted. Oh yes, my dear brother, there is. Brother Russell, do you believe in absolute perfection of the flesh? No, I never found it in the Bible or found anybody perfect in the world (Jesus excepted). How, then, keep unspotted from the world? We mean just this: The tendency is that if you got one spot on, a hasty temper, etc., unkind words which hurt somebody, you knew it was wrong at the time, but you could not help it, as it were, because of the circumstances. As it happened, it just seemed to sweep you along and you said it before you knew it. Then what? You have a spot, and the only thing to do is that you first go to the person whom you hurt or offended and make it right with him. Do your part in the way it is stated.

Oh, you say, that might be too humbling; it might be a colored brother, a child, or someone else, and it would be too humiliating. Never mind, my dear brother, you want to keep your own skirts clean, and you want to do it. If troublesome, it will be all the more helpful to you another time. Good for you, first-rate discipline; God has it in the best form possible. After doing the best you can to right the matter, then come to God with the spot, and you can get it removed. How? By the precious blood that cleanseth us from all sin. Remember that that word cleanseth does not refer to those sins which were washed away when we accepted Christ as our Saviour, but refers to a work going on day by day. Not something accomplished in the past, but going on now. So then, the blood of Christ is the blood that keeps cleansing us. Every day you get some spots, and thus every day you are in danger, and thus every day you need to go continually for that blood that will cleanse the spots away. But now, my dear brother, suppose you did not do that and you said, Now, I can't go to God for I know He will not hear me as I have this matter unsettled with my brother, neighbor or friend, therefore, I will not pray at all; I will not be a hypocrite, for I know God will not hear me unless I make it right, and I am not ready to make it right. You are in a dangerous condition and it may cost you your crown. At that very minute, that is the most important thing in the world to you. Why? Well, if you do not get over it you will never be an overcomer. That is the importance, my dear brother. I have opportunity for seeing this matter more than some of the rest of you and I see such a one making no progress along spiritual lines and he goes back and gets off into error, and since there is only one way, and that is to have short accounts every day, don't let it run even a minute, if you can avoid it. Get right with the individual, do your best; if he refuses to accept your apologies, make them ample, so that you can tell God that you have done the very best you can, and then come to Him and have faith that He can forgive the trespass, which is the same as is referred to in the Lord's Prayer. We are not

referring here to original sins; God does not forgive an original sin, because only the blood of Christ can cleanse from that. But after that is done, and you are a New Creature in Christ, you still have this mortal flesh, and you still must keep it unspotted, and you still have need of the merit of Christ being imputed to you.

But suppose you should let it stand and get more spots tomorrow, and more the next day, and by and by some one would say, There are so many spots on your robes! Oh yes, everybody has—you know everybody has. And that is too true—too true—and that is why the great company is going to be a great company. They do not keep their garments unspotted from the world. The Little Flock, the Scriptures say, are to be without spot or wrinkle. Who keeps the robes? You do. Without desire on your part for the cleansing of the robe, it will not be cleansed. We must take our steps in order to have this thing right with God, our Master and Head, our Lord. This then, my dear brothers and sisters, would be the thought I would leave with you. We do not know what trials or difficulties will beset us, but His grace is sufficient for us, but only be the way He has arranged it—only in Christ—that is eternal. Every blessing and every forgiveness of divine favor comes through Him. All things are of the Father and all things by the Son, and we by Him. That is the way we must come.

Then this keeping of our account is making character. When we rectify a wrong, we are doing something that will make us stronger; then it will help us to look around at the other points of our character, where we find we have weaknesses by nature. Fortify these points. This is the will of God and this is growing in grace and knowledge and love, growing in the spirit of the character-likeness of our Lord. This is exactly what the Apostle wants us to do. God has foreordained that you and I could not be of the Divine Nature class, the Royal Priesthood class, the Bride Class, unless we were copies of His Son. That is what it says in the 8th chapter of Romans—He foreknew all that glorious Church. All these, He says, must be conformed to the likeness of His Son. Is not that plain enough?

My dear brothers and sisters, those are the terms upon which we are to get into the great general convention that is coming by and by—the general assembly of the Church of the First-born, on the other side, beyond the second vail; that is what we are hoping for. And if we get this, whether in the Great Company or the Little Flock, if we get into the heavenly condition, it will be a glorious privilege and it will be because we are overcomers, when we have our robes thoroughly washed of all spots either by daily washing, or finally in the great tribulation, and then prove ourselves overcomers and loyal to God in the end; otherwise we will go into the second death. Let us try day by day to keep our garments unsoiled and we will be with the Saviour and share with Him the glory, honor and immortality that He has promised.

There will be the different positions, you see—the Bridegroom, the Bride, and the virgins, her companions who follow after. Will you be there? Will I be there? I hope so, my dear brothers, my dear sisters. It is for you; I cannot make your calling and election sure, and you cannot make my calling and election sure. You may have an influence upon me, and I may have an influence upon you, by what I say or do, but the matter lies in your hands for yourself and in my hands for myself.

We are not to say we have given ourselves to God and that He will carry it out. No, He only works in us to will and to do His good pleasure, while we wish to do it—it is for us to desire. You can bar the Lord's providence out of your heart and life, for God recognizes the human will.

Then, my dear brethren and sisters, I beseech you, using St. Paul's words, by the mercies of God (all the good things that He has done for us whom he has called to become joint-heirs) that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. We have already presented them in a sense of consecration. You did a presentation yesterday, and do the same today and every day, and I do mine, but we must keep the matter right up to date, keeping it presented to God, allowing it to be consumed on the fire—allowing it to be a sweet odor to God. I am sure this is your sentiment, as it is mine: May we, by the Grace of God, meet beyond the river, on the heavenly shore, at the great convention of the General Assembly of the Church of the First Born, whose names are written in heaven.

We are not going there merely because we are Bible Students, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans or Roman Catholics, but because we are what we are by the grace of God; because we have accepted God's terms, because we are members of the Church of the First Born, and, therefore, our names are written in Heaven—because we have been faithful to Him.