

GOD'S OBJECT IN CALLING THE CHURCH

(Discourse by Pastor Russell, Kansas City, Mo., 1913 Convention Report, page 14.)

I am very glad to be with you today. I recognize many of your faces; some seem to be new, and we are glad for the old faces and also for the new ones. More and more we are realizing that there is only one family of God, and that all of God's saintly ones belong to that one family.

I am reminded of the statement made respecting Gideon and his band. You remember the story of Gideon, of course, and that Gideon and his brethren were very loyal to God, and how the Lord used them in overthrowing the enemy. But the item that comes to my mind declares that Gideon, and all the members of the family of Gideon, all his brethren, had faces as though they were the sons of a King. It seems to me that is true of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater Gideon, and all His brethren, that they necessarily all have faces of a King. So I look into your faces this morning and see them happy and rejoicing, and I know the reason—"Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." "Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth." This explains to us the blessing that has come to all our hearts as we more and more come to know God and to know His wonderful plan. "Still increasing light, and still increasing joy," is what the Lord promised to those who are faithful. As we continue to walk in the narrow way, the path continues to shine more and more as we near the Eternal City.

I do not know to what extent your hearts are rejoicing in the Truth, except as I see it in your faces, and your being here implies that you have an interest in the things that belong to the glorious Kingdom of the Father. It seems to me as though the whole plan of God continues to grow brighter and clearer every day we live. Every increased ray of light seems to bring an increase of harmony, and so I am glad to meet the friends here in Kansas City—and I presume some are from surrounding places—and to know that your hearts are swelling with joy and loyalty to God.

I was thinking of the motive and object that God has in dealing with us. I am not going to say anything especially new on the subject, for I always tell you about everything I know in the Watch Tower and Scripture Studies. I can not tell you anything more than I have already—it will merely come in a little different phraseology. But I was thinking of the object of God in calling us to be His children, heirs with His Son. He is thinking that thus He might show forth His own praises—not in any selfish way, for our Heavenly Father has plenty of glory and honor entirely aside from you and me, or anything we could do for him; He has the honor of all the Angelic Hosts and He has the perfection of Himself, and there is no reason that He should need you or me to show forth His praises. But there are features of the Divine character that never were known before. God has these qualities of character, but He never had the opportunity of showing them, because

there never was an occasion. The permission of sin, and the need to do something to eradicate sin, gives an opportunity for God to develop His great plan which you and I are sharers in. Without the permission of sin everything might have been going on in glory and harmony. If Satan had had a rebellious thought God could have promptly either destroyed him or in some other way preserved the harmony of the glorious condition before Satan was permitted to bring in the trouble and sin. God did not, however, exercise His power to restrain Satan, but allowed him to take his course, because He saw the glorious end to be accomplished eventually.

And then God did not stop our first parents from committing sin, but allowed them to take their own way, because He knew how He would work it out in the end. Then He allowed the children of Adam and Eve to be born into the world in an imperfect and sinful condition—not because He could not have hindered it, but because He saw how eventually He could in that way make it all work out for still more glorious purposes than by hindering it. And it is in connection with this that you and I come in. God could have used Jesus, or could have associated with Jesus some of the Angelic Hosts, and Jesus and the angels could have blessed mankind during the thousand years. But this other feature came in. God said, I will select from amongst mankind some to be the associates with My Son and sharers with Him in the great work of blessing the world and uplifting them out of sin and degradation and death. And that is the reason this Gospel Age came in, you see. That is the reason a call went forth for a church class, for those who would separate themselves from the world, take up their cross and follow Jesus. Why follow Jesus?

Well, says one, follow Him in order to be saved.

Oh no! God has provided a salvation for the world in the next age. But this call of the Gospel Age is something unique, separate and distinct. God said, I will gather out of the world some of those who have a hearing of faith and a response of heart, and they shall be my peculiar treasure; that is, like jewels. If you had some diamonds and rubies and sapphires, etc., you would say, Would you like to see some of these peculiar treasures I have? I will show you my jewel box; these are my peculiar treasures. You have other things, of course, but these are your peculiar treasures. So the Lord says that the Church is His peculiar treasure. You remember our Manna text about two weeks ago, which said that the Church shall be a Royal Diadem in the hand of God—not a diadem that He is going to wear on His head, as though he needed any glory to be added to Him, but it is a diadem that he is going to have in His hand, and represents power you see—in His power He will show the Church forth; and by showing forth the character of the Church and what He has been able to do with the Church, it will be a glorious thing for those who will be the jewels and reflect the glory on the one who designed this great diadem and all of this great plan in which we will be associated.

So then, dear friends, God purposes that He shall have this special class, this peculiar treasure, a peculiar people, different from all the rest of the world.

Well, Brother Russell, do they look so peculiar as that?

It is not in the outward looks merely that they are going to be peculiar, and it is not by wearing some peculiar kind of clothing that they will be peculiar, nor by talking in some peculiar sort of way that they will be peculiar. They will be peculiar, as God says, “Zealous of good works.”

Well, you say, Brother Russell, that does not take in just the consecrated saints of God, because there are a whole lot of people that are zealous of good works; we have a “Good Works” Committee, and we have all kinds of institutions in our city here, and many of them do good and great works; some of them arrange for hospitals and serving in hospitals; some are building orphan asylums, etc.—all kinds of good works, and it is not merely the Church; in fact, I do not know that the consecrated have so much to do with the hospitals and asylums as some others; they seem to have something else to keep them busy.

Well, my dear brother, we are not saying those are not good works; they are very good works, indeed, building hospitals, and asylums, and schools, and colleges, and we are very glad and rejoice with the world that they have the inclination to do these things. We rejoice with the world in every thing that makes for righteousness of any kind.

But why don't you do more of it? I haven't heard of you having anything to do with the building of a college, or an orphan asylum, or a hospital.

No, my dear brother, I have not. Cities build hospitals, and counties build hospitals, and the States support many of the hospitals, and if I need them there is no doubt I would get my share. The whole people are very properly taxed for hospitals and schools, so that you and I in proportion as we have property that can be taxed pay our share toward these things.

Well, then, what kind of works are these you think the Lord's people are specially to be engaged in?

The same kind of good works the Lord Himself was engaged in. Did our Lord Jesus build any hospitals? No. And we are not saying anything against hospitals. Did He build any orphan asylums? No, and we are not saying anything against that good work. But Jesus had a still higher work. We are not throwing any cold water on any good work; we love all good work and all good workers, but, as for ourselves, we have a special call.

Who do you mean by “we”?

I mean all who hear the Lord's voice; all who become His consecrated children. He does not speak with one voice to Methodists, and with another to the Presbyterians, etc., but He has just one voice that comes to all the Lord's people and that advises us—what? That we should do good unto all men as we have opportunity, and that would include

hospitals and asylums and everything of the kind, *but especially to the Household of Faith.*

Now I see, Brother Russell; you mean it is still a higher work to serve the Household of Faith than to build hospitals, asylums, etc.

It is not I, but the Scriptures that say it is a higher work. It is the Household of Faith that Jesus served; it is the Household of Faith the apostles served. What can we do for the Household of Faith? There is a great deal to be done. In the Household of Faith we include the Presbyterians and Methodists and Catholics—all classes—and do good to them.

Well, what good can we do?

You know what you needed to have done to you, and you know what I needed to have done to me. You know what blessings came to your heart through the Truth; could you do anything better for your neighbors and friends and the Household of Faith than to tell them about the good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people? No, that is the best you could tell them. Could you tell them anything better than the message of God's grace that he has come into your heart, not only speaking peace to you, but inspiring you with this glorious hope of joint heirship with Christ. You could not tell them anything better—

“I love to tell the story,
It did so much for me,
And that is just the reason
I tell it now to thee.”

But, Brother Russell they won't all like it so well; they would rather we should build a hospital.

We cannot help that. They might think more of us if we would build a hospital than if we would do something else. They might have thought more of Jesus if he had built hospitals, and if he had gone around building hospitals, asylums for the blind, etc., I suppose He would never have been crucified at all. It was because He did not do those things, but did something else, that he was not so well pleasing to some. But the way we are to judge in the matter is that it will be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. The Father shows us His plan. Before we got the Father's plan we might be working at cross-purposes here and there and doing various things, and, as the Apostle says, Verily thinking we are doing God's service. Paul says he was going about persecuting the Church of Christ, thinking he was doing God's service. It was not because his heart was wrong, but because his head was not right. That is the way you and I were at one time. We were working at cross-purposes because we didn't know the will of God. Now, since God has graciously opened before us the Plan of the Ages, and since we have begun to see what God is doing we say, Lord, can we be co-workers with you? And the Lord says, yes, that is just what I want you to do. If you want to be coworkers with me, that is what

I am pleased to have you do. If you see what my work is, and if you want to join in with me, come right along; in proportion as I see you zealous, I will give you a little more and more part in the work I am doing.

But didn't you say God was saving the world?

Oh, no; that is just what I did not say. Some one else said that. The Bible says God will save the world; that all in their graves shall come forth that they may reach a knowledge of the Truth, because God wills to have all men recovered, saved, and to come to a knowledge of the Truth.

Well, should we not be trying to bring them to a knowledge of the Truth now?

Certainly; that is what you are trying to do—to bring everybody to a knowledge that you can.

But you can not bring very many.

No, you have not been successful in bringing very many to a knowledge of the Truth.

Well, why is it?

God says that His work now is to bring to a knowledge of the Truth those who have an ear to hear, and He says, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." He says there are not many of those now.

Well, if they have no ear to hear, who is to blame? Is God to blame?

Oh, no; God did not blind their eyes or stop their ears. The Bible tells us that the god of this world hath blinded the minds of all those who believe not.

Then why doesn't God open them?

Because it is not the time for that. The Bible tells us the time is coming when all blinded eyes will be opened and all deaf ears will be unstopped. In the meantime God is working a wonderful work. He is gathering here and there the saintly ones—those that have an ear to hear. "Blessed are your ears, for they hear." "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." But your eyes did not get open all at once; it was a gradual work. And many who have come into Christ have their eyes still partly shut, you know—just like a kitten is several days old before it can see. Its eyes are wide open and it looks like it could see something, but you will find it can not. It takes quite a little time to get the focus. So it is with us. After we became Christians we could see a little, but we didn't get the focus clearly, and we stared around and did not see much of anything. And I am sorry to say that some stay in that "kitten" condition too long. We are doing everything we can to get the focus of our understanding. I remind you of what the Apostle says, "I pray God for you"—

What! Praying for the Christian?

Yes, praying for the Christians.

Well, I supposed He would pray for the outsiders who were blind. No, St. Paul realized that many Christians were not seeing very clearly, so he says that he prayed God that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of their calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Has it not been so? Yes, St. Paul's prayer is being fulfilled in you and will be fulfilled in all of those who are earnest and honest at heart.

Now then, God has been working this way for 1,800 years and always gathering the same class of people, from various nations, peoples and tongues. The Lord knoweth them that are His and He is giving needed assistance to each one who is sincere in heart and earnestly seeking to know the Lord, feeling after him, and earnestly desiring and praying from the heart "Send out Thy light and Truth, O Lord! Let them our leaders be." All such true prayers are being answered, and such people are being led into the light and truth and being blessed of the Lord day by day.

Well now, Brother Russell, that won't do. It does not seem reasonable. If this company here gathered in Kansas City was a very high-class company—if there were some congressmen here and some judges, and some of the most noted people in the city, the rich, the wise, the learned, the professors, etc. then we might think that what you were saying was true. But you would not think that God would especially pick out a nondescript class such as we are here this morning. (Laughter.)

We can only go by the Scriptures, dear brethren. If the Bible is unreliable, then count me out of it, because I do not know anything on the subject except what the Bible says. And I do not reason outside of the Bible; I reason inside of the Bible. I believe in reasoning—"Come, let us reason together" but I am not going to go outside of what God has said to reason. God tells us what he is doing. He tells us He is gathering a special class and He is looking at the heart; others may look at the outward appearance, but He looks at the heart.

Now, Brother Russell, you are judging these other people. Do you mean to say that because there are no judges or congressmen here their hearts are not right? I am not judging their hearts a bit. I am merely quoting the Scripture. God is gathering the class whose hearts are right, for the Lord knoweth them that are His. He does not mean to do what we used to think, that everybody who was not a saint of His is going to be thrown to the devils and roast through all eternity. What a change it brings over the whole aspect of things to know that God is not premeditating evil even against those who may be His enemies through wicked works, but is premeditating good for them, is going to bless them, and is now merely calling out a class He can use in doing that work of blessing.

You remember, then, the Scripture, “Not many great.” Does that fit this company? “Not many wise.” “Not many rich.” “Not many learned.” I guess the Lord took the measure centuries ago of just what we are like. We are very thankful, nevertheless, that God would do such a thing—that He would accept what He tells us are the mean things of this world. That is the way it says—God hath chosen the mean things of this world.

Do you call us mean, Brother Russell?

No, my dear brother; that is not it. The thought behind that expression is that which the world would consider mean. And there may be some real mean Christians come into the Truth. I think there are some very mean Christians. I do not think that Christianity was the cause of their being mean, but that they were naturally mean.

Why does not Christianity appeal to the great minds of the world, and the rich and the educated?

The Bible tells us that the rich have plenty to satisfy their hearts anyway; they are not feeling any great need; therefore Jesus did not think it worth while to say, Come unto me all ye that are rich, but He said, Come unto me all ye poor and heavy laden. The Apostle does not say there were no rich, or learned, or wise that are called, but he said not many rich, not many wise, not many great, but chiefly the poor of this world.

Now it is the same way with the intellectual. They rather look down on the average human being. They say the poor people don't know any better, they are believing that story of the fall, and all of those other stories of the Bible. So in what they think is wisdom they are ignoring the Word of God and all the plan of God that is connected up with this story of Adam and Eve, and the Fall and the Redemption. Because the story of the Bible fits and dove-tails together, and whoever leaves out a part is losing his connecting link, and can not get the plan of God. Therefore the wise, according to the course of this world, can not understand the plan of God.

How about the ignoble? Surely the saints should be noble anyway.

No the Bible says, “Not many noble.” How can that be? Some people are poor and uneducated and yet may have very noble minds, and they rather feel, Well, now, I am above the average people; I know I am. These persons with that kind of feeling of self-satisfaction, say, Well, you know I am not going to get down to the same conditions those other people do and confess that I am a sinner, for I am not a sinner; I am one of the best people in the world. They feel kind o' “upie-upish,” and that no matter how poor they are, if God is going to make any show by and by He will need to have them; and whoever may be saved, they know they are naturally better and nobler than some of these, and therefore because they have this thought they are not so ready to see that every human being needs a savior.

We do not mean that you should exaggerate your sins and say, Lord, I am one of the worst sinners that ever lived. St. Paul said that, but he told the reason. He says, Because I persecuted the Church of Christ. But God was merciful to him and forgave his sin when he turned about and changed his course. So, in one of his epistles, after telling about some of the Gentiles who were murderers, and thieves, and covetous, etc., he says, Such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified. That is it! Now, that makes a great change. After you have been washed, after God has accepted you and forgiven your sins, you are no longer under that sentence of former sin. You might have some weaknesses of the flesh, and you are striving against these, but you might never be as successful as some other person that was naturally better born. But God looketh at the heart and not at the outward appearance merely. He knows to what extent you are striving against sin, seeking to put down the old man and his works. Others may not know; others might misjudge you; but the Lord knows all about it. We can come to Him acknowledging that we are sinners, and give ourselves wholly to Him, and then He will work in us. “Ye are God’s workmanship.”

Oh some one says, I thought we were working in ourselves?

Well, you have a lot to do with it; you must cooperate; God will stop at once unless you do; but God is doing a work in you and He is the one who is inciting you to do good work. The Apostle says, It is God that works in you to will and to do His good pleasure. But how? Why, He has given us exceeding great and precious promises that by these (these promises working in you, inspiring you, inciting you, and showing you the course and what the result will be) ye might become (gradually attain to) partakers of the Divine nature. The consummation is the Divine nature, and that comes to us by Divine power—changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And whether you and I will be in that glorious change and be made partakers of the Divine nature, depends on the zeal with which we love righteousness and hate iniquity and seek to do the will of God now in ourselves and toward others.

What are these good works you can do? One of the good works is that as ambassadors for God and Christ you can make known the terms and conditions of His Kingdom to whoever may have an ear to hear it. What about the Church? Well, you are to build one another up in the most holy faith, to be sympathetic and helpful, not to stumble each other, not confounding one another, but helping one another.

And so it is expressed in other language—The bride made herself ready. You have your share to do, and I as a member of the Bride Class prospectively have my share to do. No matter how mean they have been according to nature, the transforming work goes on in their hearts and they become noble characters; they may never be able to control the flesh so they will seem as noble as some of the world, but if the nobility is in the heart that is what God is looking for; and if He sees that true nobility in your heart, that loyalty to

Him, to righteousness, to truth, to the brethren, then you have the evidence that you are His, and His providences will work in you for your good.

Will these providences always make us happy? Oh, no; when the Lord works in you it will be in the same way that the lapidary works on a jewel. The lapidary will not pick up any cobble stone or ordinary quartz rocks and put them on the wheel to polish. They lie around in abundance everywhere. It is when he gets a real jewel that he puts it on. And if the cutting process goes on it is because the Lord loves you. It is because you are His jewels that He deals with you. And all the trials and difficulties He sees best to bring upon you are intended to fit and prepare you to be jewels mounted in that glorious diadem. You know an unmounted jewel would not show forth much. To begin with, we are only jewels in the rough, and we need the polishing and cutting. We need the skill of the great Master Workman in order to be properly shaped and prepared to show forth the glory—just as we would see that a diamond properly cut will radiate the glories of the sunlight in a wonderful way. So God is cutting and polishing His jewels so they will show forth His praises. It is not sufficient that they be all properly cut and polished; He lays them aside until He is ready to mount them. The mounting time is the resurrection time. They are going to be mounted in gold and gold is the symbol of the Divine nature. And all of those jewels are going to be members in the glorious diadem in the hand of our God. Is that worth while, do you think? And will God be glorified in that, do you think? Yes, He surely will be glorified in His Church. And these experiences, then, are all working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, says the Apostle. Take, then, thankfully and gladly and joyfully whatever God's providence may bring to you. God knows better than I what I need, and He has promised me His grace will be sufficient for me. I will not be tempted above that I am able to bear, but with every temptation He will provide a way of escape, and I am trusting Him for this, and I am resting in joy, and peace, and satisfaction, whatever may betide of an earthly nature.

This is the message, then, we would like to leave with you today; that we are in the Lord's hands, and He is working out this glorious Church as a Royal Diadem in the hand of our God. Who is He going to show it to? Well, He will show it to the angels, and it is going to be one of the greatest lessons the angels ever had. They never knew any sin in the sense of experiencing it themselves. They have always been holy, happy, obedient to God. The redemption manifests His love, and His being willing to accept those of mankind who are obedient to Him will always be a lesson to the angels, and they will say, "See there how God deals! We have learned lessons through seeing the dealings of God with that Church Class." They will glorify God in that day when they shall see how the Lord's blessings eventually will bring the Church to glory. The angels of God will all rejoice, even though the Church is to be on a higher plane still than the angels—far above angels and joint heirs with the Lord. The angels will rejoice because they are fully in harmony with God and will be ready to sing praises as the Scriptures represent—unto Christ every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. When the Bride shall be glorified

with the Bridegroom, all the angelic hosts shall also bow the knee, because the Church will be on the highest plane associated with the Lord, and whoever of all the angelic hosts are loyal to the Father and loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ will also be loyal to a class exalted to be the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, in that glorious kingdom.

Then the Lord is going to show this diadem to the world. Do you think the world will know who gets into that elect class? Oh, yes; the Bible clearly indicates that God intends to make known to the world just who all have made their calling and election sure. They will say, Why, I knew that man; he was not such a wonderful man, either. He lived in our town; I used to see him every day; I did not think he was such a wonderful man, and God made him all of that?

Then it will be explained to him and he will say, Oh, I understand now. I thought the man was kind o' peculiar in some ways—or woman, as the case may be—yes, she was a little peculiar.

Where does it say they are going to know about this? It says, you remember, "It shall be said of this one and of that one that he was born in Zion." Zion represents the Kingdom in glory—the Church in a glorified condition will be Zion, and we are going to be born into Zion.

Are we not born now? We have been born according to the flesh, then begotten again, but we have not been born again. This second birth, the spirit birth is the resurrection. We have the begetting of the spirit, but it has not yet been completed; when it is we will be born in Zion. Then it will be told, the record will be made, this one and that one was born in Zion. They will begin to look up and say, I wonder if I knew any of these? They will look up the list and find your name if you are one of the faithful, and they will say, Why, I knew these people; you know I thought they were honest, but I could not understand them. They will get the explanation, how these were blinded like the rest of the world, but got their eyes a little more open, and they were loyal to what God showed them, and they have been blest, and see what they have attained to! Now, there is a blessing for you, too, in this lesson, for if God would do this to these, He is willing to bless you—not the same blessing, but you will get a blessing—God has blessing for everybody that comes into harmony with Him. The same gracious Father that rewarded these and took them to the Heavenly plane is dealing with us now through them, and Messiah's glorious Kingdom, and He will give us the blessings He has promised to us, namely: Restitution to human perfection.

Thank God for such a good God and such a glorious plan!

The snapshot below was given to us through the kindness of Arthur Newell, an elder in the Chicago Ecclesia. Brother Russell and his wife about the year 1896. The Pastor was about 44 years old at that time. (See Reprint article beginning on page 3808.)

