

“KEEP THY HEART”

(Discourse below by Brother Russell to the Interested, 1909 Convention Report, Spokane, Wash. Page 77.)

Text: “*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*”

If the Divine Plan of the Ages does not satisfy our hearts’ longings, there is something wrong with our hearts. I do not think there is anything wrong with the truth, for the more I learn of the truth, the more I say, Indeed, O my soul, you have found the satisfying portion which the Lord shall supply. If you were to look for anything more, what would you find? The TRUTH says to us, “Jesus is mine, this has satisfied every longing of my nature.” I believe you have all had that longing, or else you would not be here. God has a way of allowing us to get very hungry before He gives us the truth.

My own experience was that, as a boy of sixteen, I got very hungry for the truth, but could find nothing satisfactory to me. I used to say, This that I have is not the great God that I want, full of Justice, Love, Power and Wisdom. These must be infinite qualities pertaining to Jehovah, and that is the God I am looking for.

I did not think to look into the Bible, and so looked into the various denominations. After looking into their views, and finding them all short—not a little bit short, but a good deal short, the aching void in my heart, and the growing desire for the truth became stronger and stronger, but the Lord let me alone in the desert place to find out what it was to get *real* hungry. I wandered about for more than a year, and during that time I hunted around in the heathen mythologies to see who the heathen were, they or us.

I finally said, There must be something somewhere connected with our Heavenly Father; it cannot be that God has placed us here as His creatures and not given us some knowledge of His purpose. I was hunting for God’s Bible all around the Bible, and finally said, Christianity comes nearer to the true conception of God, but none of the creeds could be seen to be the Word of God. You and I would not deal with the heathen the way the creeds say God is dealing with them, and I said, I will never worship a God who is smaller than myself, but I want one who is worthy of my heart’s worship and adoration. God brought me back to the Bible, and I got the conviction that what I wanted was in *that book* somewhere. Then I read a little further and said, Is it not strange that all these systems get their views out of the Bible! The Methodists say it is free grace and that they get it out of the Bible. The Presbyterians say that it is election and that they get it out of the Bible, and that the Methodists are mistaken. Then the Roman Catholics say, You are both wrong, we are the true Church. Then the Lutheran Church say they are the true Church. Then the Baptists say that if you are not baptized you will go to hell.

I thought, if all get their views from the Bible, what a queer book the Bible must be. So after considering the matter, I realized that in all my wanderings for over a year the Lord was showing me what I did not know and what the others did not know, and further that His plan was a hidden plan.

Coming back to the Bible I found, as the poet has expressed it, “Wonderful things in the Bible I see, Jesus loves me.” and more than that I found that Jesus loves the other man also. God’s love proceeded to all mankind, and Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; and “He was the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Now, dear friends, we are beginning to find the real Bible and the real God, and our eyes begin to be opened, not because of any superior might, but because the morning time had come, the Day Star was rising, its light was shining upon the past, and we were awake.

Now then, are you awake, and are you hungering? If you have not been hungering, then you have not the truth—you need to get hungry first. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” If you are not hungering and thirsting, while you may get a little, you will not be filled. After He gives us some food, *we must chew it*. Some people say, O well, there are six volumes; I have my children, my business, etc., and I have not the time to chew it. If they get hungry enough, they cannot be stopped by anything; everything else will seem insipid. We therefore see that hunger for righteousness, the truth, is the proper thing.

It was right for Mother Eve to want light and knowledge, but she should have said, I will have full confidence in the servant God sends, and I will believe Him who loves me so. I will be satisfied that He will do the best thing for me. While I would like the knowledge, perhaps it would not be the best thing for me, and I will let God, in His own due time, give me the blessings of knowledge, for I want it to come in the line of obedience to Him. Then she would have been right.

So it is with us, after getting the Truth the Devil comes as an angel of light, trying to make us think we will get wise if we follow him, and not be obedient to God. He transforms himself, and therefore we must be on our guard to be sure that we receive nothing but what our heavenly Father shall provide. Let us say, I want only the light and knowledge that the Lord shall give in His own appointed way and I will be pleased to have it thus.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” How about the issues of life in the case of Mother Eve? If she had kept her heart, she would have had the right to the tree of life, but failing, she came under the sentence of death. Why, Bro. Russell, do you mean to say that we are on trial for life? Yes, that is just it, and your trial

and my trial are much more important than was that of Mother Eve; because, with you and me, this is the final test, because this is our individual trial, after receiving light on the truth, and if we fail in this trial there will be no further opportunity for us. **WE ARE BEING TRIED FOR LIFE OR FOR DEATH.**

The Apostle tells us that those now who believe in the sacrifice of Christ, are justified by faith, and come out from under the condemnation which is in Adam; their sins of the past are forgiven, and they step upon the plane of justification.

If now you wish to make use of this justification, present your bodies a living sacrifice. Why? That is a “mystery,” but we will explain it: God purposes gathering out of the world a “Little Flock“ to be the joint-heirs with Christ, His Bride, the Lamb’s Wife, to be associated with Him in the Kingdom work. The question is, Can I be one of that elect class? Yes—“Now is the acceptable time.” Now is the time that God will accept us, as the Apostle tells us in Romans 12:1. It will not always be an acceptable time, for it will cease when the last member of the Bride Class has been gathered, and there will be no more sacrifice. Will not the world have an opportunity to get into this Bride Class? No, for this Gospel Age is the acceptable time, for those who will be joint sacrificers *with* Christ, and who will fill up the afflictions which remain, for His body’s sake. *We* have the privilege of suffering *with* Him *now*, and of reigning *with* Him *later*.

Is the call still open? No, for we understand that in 1881 the full number had been consecrated. How then is there room for any now? We understand the Scriptures to teach that since the general call ceased in 1881 and the full number had consecrated, had made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, that many of them did not willingly carry out their covenant of sacrifice, and have therefore dropped out of that class, not however into eternal torment, and that others have been admitted to take the place of those who have not proved themselves to be willing sacrificers, who have not been obedient. There are three signs of acceptance: (1) They must manifest the Holy Spirit, and develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit. (2) They must grow in the knowledge of the truth, and be able to see that God is opening up to their understanding these great things. (3) They must find some opportunity for service in the harvest field.

Then, dear friends, we have the evidence that they are the ones whom the Father has accepted, and they are counted in as members of the Body of Christ. It is a fact that some of those more recently coming into the truth are the more zealous amongst the brethren, and they are making rapid progress.

But suppose the last one had been selected, then what would be your duty? It would be to give your whole life to the Lord; because it is a reasonable service, it is the proper thing to do. Will I get any reward? Do it any way, for you belong to the Lord, and you should be glad to lay down your life in His service. You know that if you were to serve

some earthly great one, you would get a reward, and do you not think that the Great King would give you a suitable recompense?

We have a great advantage now, for the Lord Jesus, when He accepted us, promised to cover all our blemishes, and weaknesses, and imperfections, and He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able. We have much advantage over Mother Eve, for we have not only a knowledge of her experience but we also have a knowledge of God's purpose through His Word, and of all the faithful ones since, of our Lord, and of the Apostles, and others. It is a test of loyalty with us, and while we have temptations come to us, as they did to Mother Eve, yet we do not have to yield to them, any more than we are obliged to allow the crows to build nests in our hair just because they fly over us. *Our safety lies in keeping our hearts with all diligence.* The Apostle Peter tells us that if we should fall away, after having the blessings of the Lord, it will be impossible to renew us again to repentance.

I hope I will never know anything about it experimentally. Won't the Lord keep our hearts for us? No; because He wishes to test us. He has all power, and could make a mere machine of us, but God is not pleased to have us in that condition. "God seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." However, He will allow temptations to come to see what your heart is, how you will do under temptation. We must be loyal, obedient now, and the world of mankind must be loyal in the Millennial Age, otherwise they can never attain to eternal life. The Father will test and prove them also, and He will allow Satan to tempt them as perfect human beings, just as He allowed the serpent to tempt Mother Eve. If, at the end of the Millennial Age, they are not willing to do God's will, they will not be fit to live. God intends to test every creature. He is testing us, the Little Flock, now, and also the Great Company, for there will be none in the Great Company who are not loyal and who have not been proved as such. The difference is that the Little Flock go ahead with a vigorous determination and come off more than conquerors, while the Great Company hold back and do not willingly make the sacrifice which they agreed to do when they consecrated. We should have such a love for righteousness and truth that we will gladly lay down our lives rather than wait to have our lives taken from us, as will be the case with the Great Company. **IT IS A QUESTION OF OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE.**

How is it with us? We have put ourselves in God's hands and agreed to be obedient to Him; will we now draw back from Him and be disobedient? I hope not. We trust we are not of those who draw back into perdition, the second death, but that we are of those who believe unto the saving of the soul. That includes both the Little Flock and the Great Company. "Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Obedience enters into all the little affairs of life. In Mother Eve's case, it was just a question of whether she would or would not eat of the forbidden fruit. Whether we eat,

or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory of the Lord. We should be obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to our former desires, before we came to a knowledge of the Lord, and before we made a consecration to Him. We should submit ourselves unto the Lord and ask Him what He would have us to do. If we do that we will not be afraid to take the next step. I hope our spirit is, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart."

Now, if your heart is your garden, then what you plant will grow there if you keep the weeds away; but if you let the weeds grow, you will not be what the Lord would have. Keep your heart then, keep this garden, and make it more and more the Lord's. Then we will have the comfort of the truth and of the Lord's blessing.

"Keep thy heart with all *diligence*." Why with so much diligence? Why, dear brothers and sisters, the Adversary is going around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and if we do not keep our hearts, some ambitious desire will creep in. If you and I are to be victors, it must be by constant vigilance, which the Lord will be pleased to bless. What good company we all have, for the Saints, from God's standpoint, have nothing to be ashamed of.

Let us be faithful, for the Lord is not choosing many great, not many rich, not many learned, not many noble, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in *faith*, and He is working in us by His power and assistance. The heart that will not be influenced by God's rich promises, will not be, as the Apostle says of the faithful, "changed from glory to glory," and transformed by the renewing of their minds. Let us have the grace of God abounding in our hearts more and more, that we may be children like unto our heavenly Father, and copies of our Lord. Amen.