

## LOVE FEAST

(Conducted by the Pastor Russell at the conclusion of convention in Washington, D. C. July 7 to 14, 1912. Convention Report page 300.)

This service opened with the use of hymn No. 160, "Lord I am Thine, entirely Thine," and was followed with prayer by Bro. Burgess. Then after singing of two or three more hymns, Bro. Russell spoke as follows:

Dear Friends, the time has come for us to say goodbye as respects this convention. I have had great pleasure in connection with the convention myself, and have been deeply interested in noting the comments of others, and I was glad to note that there was a happy tone connected with the whole matter. Quite a number remarked that they felt it had been the very best convention they had attended. We have made note of the same thing repeatedly with other conventions, each one has seemed a little better than any other. When we think of it, dear friends, that should not surprise us. Some said they thought the speakers, of whom there were about fifty at the convention, had done better than the same speakers had on previous occasions. I was glad of that, but it was only what we should expect, that they should be getting some increasing ability in the Lord's service, but I think the real secret of the whole matter of the interest in these conventions is the spiritual growth which we ourselves are making. So far as I am able to see, dear friends, there is a very deep work of grace going on in the hearts of the Bible Students all over the world. This is what we should expect, for we should see a growth in grace as we grow in knowledge, and a growth in love with all this. Surely this is our object and is our reasonable expectation for ourselves and others. I believe that this is the secret of our feeling that each convention is better than the previous one, that there is a still further illumination of our minds in sympathy with the plan of our heavenly Father—seeing more and more of the lengths and depths and heights and breadths of that plan. Our hearts, therefore, are more and more glad in consequence.

I congratulate you then, dear friends, that as we close this convention it is with this happy feeling that it is good to be here. And whenever I come to the closing part of any convention one text seems to loom up before my mind, and that is found in Hebrews, the 12th chapter. The Apostle is there speaking of the General Assembly of the Church of the first-borns, whose names are written in heaven. And if we are interested in these conventions trying to have them as general as possible, and if some have come from thirty states, that is quite a general representation, but you have left some behind, who could not come, and as surely as they are brethren, they are also deeply interested in this convention also, but in this great convention for which we are hoping, nobody is to be left out. That is the best thought, that every member of the Church of the first-born will be there; it will be the General Assembly, and I am sure that is good for us. What we enjoy ourselves we do not enjoy selfishly—our joy is increased if we are able to share it with

others. So our Lord Jesus, being heir of all things by the Father's arrangement, has permitted us to come in and get a blessing so that we may tell it out to others so that they may also come in, and thus the Church of the first-born be sharers of these blessings, grace and glory.

Now I am wondering in regard to that General Assembly and Church of the first-born who will be there? I am very much interested in that question. It might seem selfish to say I am very anxious to be there myself, and yet this is not selfish, because it is the Father's good pleasure—the will of the Father—that, having set before us these great blessings, we should appreciate and desire to have them, and count all other things as loss and dross that we may win these things set before us.

You remember how Jesus treated the matter in connection with the Jews; He said that a great king made a feast and invited men of nobility, and when the time came He sent word to tell those bidden to come, that the oxen were killed and everything was ready. They made light of it, however; one went to his farm, another to his merchandise, another married a wife, and that settled that—they all had excuses. The parable goes on to say that the king who made the supper was wroth; because, after having provided everything and inviting them to his feast that they should make light of it. And so it is with you and me, we are invited to this symbolical feast of fat things; very precious things, invaluable things. We have been invited, we have accepted the invitation, our names have been enrolled and we have been given the white garment that we may enter in. Now then, the Apostle says, "Let us fear, lest these glorious promises being left to us any of us should seem to come short," that we should find the slightest indifference in our hearts, that we should not get all that God is anxious to give.

Let us put away any such thought that we would not be caring for those things, or that we would not aspire to things so high. One said to me not long ago, Bro. Russell, I do not aspire to such great things. I said, Brother, it is that or nothing, for He has not offered anything else. You must either say you do not want it or take it. There is no chance of taking anything else, no use of talking about securing restitution, for God has not offered it, but has offered the most wonderful blessing that could be imagined, and I believe that by the grace of God every one here present desires and is striving to be ready for and to attain to those glorious things which God has in reservation for them that love Him. Then He places a test upon us as to how much we love Him; do you love Me as much as your house? Do you love Me as much as you love your good name? As much as your parents or children? This is the matter for which God is testing us. Perhaps we do not realize at times why these tests come into our lives respecting parents, children, houses or lands; it is to see if we love Him or these more. That is why He is testing us. We said that we loved Him more than all things, and He said, I will see: What are you going to do with this matter or that? He says He will test you on this matter. He wants those who love Him more than all these other things put together, more than they love themselves,

so that they are willing, yea, glad, to take up their cross and follow Him, counting all else but loss and dross that they might win Christ, and be found in Him, having their names in the Lamb's book of life, and be amongst those who will be of the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

It is not the sudden tests, my dear brother; we go on day by day and He is very patient with us. He lets us handle many things for a while and perhaps then they go to pieces in our hands, and then we see something else, and He asks, Do you love Me more than those? Thus we will have a lesson from those things going to pieces, and finally we learn that there is nothing satisfactory, except that which is in accordance with the heavenly Father. Then we shall through these experiences and disappointments come to the happy condition where we will be pleased to render everything fully to the Lord.

If we have the proper conception of the time in which we are living, that we are in the dawn of the time for the blessing of the world, and the glorification of the Church of Christ, then we must realize that there is not much time for you or me to perfect ourselves; there is not much time to decide, but we should come to a decision and act, be of good courage, and have character formed. That is the kind the Lord wants, and He wants you and me. But if we do not get there after He has accepted us, it will be our fault—not His—because, faithful is He who hath called us and He will also do exceedingly abundant and more than we could ask or think. Then finally the results, therefore, are in your hands for yourself, and in my hands for myself, and no one can take the matter in hand for one another. You remember the picture given in the 12th chapter of Hebrews; the Apostle is picturing the Jews as they came out of Egypt and approached Mt. Sinai, where God made the covenant with them; they had been in bondage. Egypt typically represented the world, out of which God has delivered them, brought them through the sea and baptized them into Moses and the cloud, and then they had some experiences in the wilderness, and finally, in God's providence, they came to Mt. Sinai. God said, Stop here, I am ready to enter into covenant relationship with you, and make you My covenant people. If you get these promises made to Abraham you must become children of Mine through obedience. I will give you My law, and if you will keep that you will get all those Abrahamic blessings; they will be yours, you shall increase and you shall bless all other nations. And the people said, "All these things will we do." They tried, but failed; because they were imperfect, and because their Mediator, Moses, was an imperfect man, and not able to make full reconciliation for them—only typically, and, therefore, they were a typical people, and the arrangement could be only typical. But now, says the Apostle in Hebrews 12, "We have not come to that Mount," and then he tells about the Mount. That, He said, was covered with the clouds and thick darkness, and God spake to them out of the clouds and fire and smoke, and the whole earth trembled, and they were in fear of Moses, and they entreated that they should not hear the voice of the Almighty. So terrible was it that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." This is the description that St. Paul gives, taking it from the Old Testament.

Mt. Sinai was typical; we are coming to a better mount, Mt. Zion, the Church in glory, and the Kingdom of glory, and so the Apostle says that we have left Egypt, the world, and are approaching this Mt. Zion, where God is about to make a New Covenant with the world—this is what we have been approaching unto right along, the whole Church has been approaching it for 1800 years, and now, my dear friends, if we have the right conception of the matter, you and I have come right up to the Mount, right at the time when God is ready to establish this new dispensation that was typically represented by the Jewish arrangement.

St. Paul gives us to understand that all the different things which the Jews feared were only a picture of the Great Time of Trouble in the end of this age. We are not only come to Mt. Zion, but we realize that the trouble is very near. It may be only a very short distance. It is not, however, the trouble in which we are interested, even as the people of Israel were not interested in the demonstrations at Mt. Sinai, but in the fulfillment of the Covenant there established. And so you and I are not interested in the Time of Trouble, except that we know it is to be a sign, for the world must pass through that terrible experience before the Kingdom can be inaugurated. What we are interested in is the Church of the first-born—the General Assembly, and so if we are near the Time of Trouble, we are near the General Assembly of the whole Church of the first-born ones. I remind you, dear friends, that all those people back there were not the first born, only those of the Tribe of Levi constituted the first-born. You remember where the expression comes from: You know when they were coming out of Egypt there was the Tenth Plague, and wherever the blood of the lamb was on the door posts and lintels and the lamb inside, there the first-born were spared, passed over, and those passed over as the first-born, you remember, were exchanged for the Tribe of Levi, and they became the representatives of all those first-born of Israel, and the Tribe of Levi represented the Church of the Gospel Age, the Church of the first-born ones. All of these were passed over in advance of the world. All those who come out of the world become New Creatures in Christ Jesus, and receive the Spirit of begetting, they become the Children of God—all these are the Church of the first-born. In the type there were not only those of the Tribe of Levi, but some of them were specially called to the priesthood; so here, amongst those of the household of faith, some are specially invited to the office of members of the Royal Priesthood, the Body of Christ. So you see there are two classes, one very small and the other much larger, but all these together constitute the Church of the first-born, all these are begotten of the Holy Spirit during the Gospel Age, not merely the Little Flock.

But now we are coming down to the General Assembly of the Church of the first-born, and we are glad, not only for the saintly few, but glad for the antitypical Levites—for all of the Church of the first-born. But if we can, my dear brothers and sisters, we want to make our calling and election sure to the priestly company, for that is what God has called us to, and to which our dear Master would have us attain. This class has been in

process of selection all during the Gospel Age, coming up, up, up to Mt. Zion, coming up to this closing period, coming up to the First Resurrection, coming up to the time when we will experience our change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be forever with our Lord. Amen, so let it be.

“Watch and pray that you may be accounted worthy to escape those things that are coming upon the world, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Some are going to watch and escape, others will not be watching and will go into that tribulation that is coming upon the world. The tribulation coming upon this second class will still be a manifestation of the Lord’s interest and love, but those who watch will be still more pleasing to the Lord. The Wise Virgins who have their lamps burning and are seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and counting all else as but loss and dross, they are seeking for this blessing of the prize of joint-heirship with the Master in the Kingdom. To those He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joys of your Lord; you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many.” Then, my dear friends, will come a great trouble; we have not the particulars, but it will be a great trouble, and those not watching will pass through the great tribulation. Far better would it have been if they had watched and kept their garments unspotted from the world; for better if they had watched and trimmed their lamps and put more time in Bible study and prayer and in the service of the Lord. They would have been choosing the better part toward God. But God, in His mercy, will not let them go if they are still holding fast to the precious name; never will He desert a seeker, one who puts his trust in Him, even if it is necessary to bring such a one through the Great Tribulation; He will not leave them without the necessary discipline which will enable them to secure a place in the glorious future.

I remind you again of how these two classes are pictured in Revelation; the 144,000 are sealed in their foreheads; they are a special number. Then comes in the second class, and we read that they constitute a great multitude, out of all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. We read, also, respecting them that they will be before the throne, not on it, and that they will have palm branches, instead of crowns, and will serve the Temple class. Which do you want to be in, my dear brother and my dear sister? I know what you wish to have, you wish to have the better part which God is pleased to give to us. Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, be not double minded, and as you go from this convention do not allow the world or the flesh or the devil to sweep you into some different attitude of mind. If by God’s grace you have had a spiritual feast here, let it continue, and as you go home, spread it abroad and tell about the convention, the various truths you have heard, tell them out to others, and like the widow’s cruse of oil, they will multiply. You will increase your own store as you give it to others. So go from here, therefore, to carry and spread blessings every place you go. Let us, dear brethren, go from this convention taking with us blessings that will be far reaching—into all the 33 states here represented.

None of us can tell, my dear brethren and sisters, if we will have another convention or not. You know not whether you will be here on earth, nor I whether I will be here on earth, but I trust we will all be at the Great Convention there. I am hoping for it. If that were taken out of my life it would be a different life for me. If it were taken out of your life, what would you have left? All things of this world seem empty to us after we have tasted of the Word of God and the power of the ages to come and have been made partaker of the Holy Spirit—everything else is insipid. The poet has well arranged it:  
“Jesus is mine, Jesus has satisfied.”

But, you say, Bro. Russell, if I could go to my home and could take the blessed influences to others I am sure that would help me, but I am afraid that when I get away from here the Lord will allow some trials and difficulties to come upon me. Well, I am sure He will, I am sure He will. How could you otherwise make character, my dear brother?

So then, my dear friends, do not go away expecting that everything will be happy and that henceforth all things will work smoothly; that will not be until we get to the other convention. After that everything will be happy, no more sorrow, no more trials, all tears will be wiped away. Our great Master will say, “Enter into the joys of the Lord.” It will be all joy after that. Now is the time, however, in which he is testing us and if we could only realize it that every difficulty and trial that comes to us is supervised by our dear Master, that He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, and that He will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape and cause all things to work together for our good—if we could only keep those things before us, with what courage we could meet these things; not in our strength, but in His strength, who has made these promises and has given us these assurances. That is what the Lord wants us to be, not strong in ourselves, but in our confidence in Him that He who has begun a good work in our hearts and in our minds is able to complete it. But He wishes us to cooperate with Him and to do the best we can, for He has promised to make good every insufficiency, so that we may come off more than conquerors through Him who has bought us with His precious blood.

I have no doubt, dear friends, but that there will be many surprises for us when we get beyond the veil, when we find who will constitute the overcomers, and find some whom we surely thought would be there, will not be there; and, many whom we did not expect will be there. You and I are not to judge one another’s hearts; we are not competent, so don’t worry about the others. Remember what Jesus said to Peter, about John. The Lord said to Peter, “Feed My sheep,” then Peter said to the Lord, What about John? Jesus practically said, That is none of your business. Let us remember that there is only one Lord, and that we must be faithful to Him. Never mind if some do not come up to your ideal. Help them all you can, but don’t bore them with your ideas, for theirs may be better than yours. Each to his own responsibility—do nothing to hinder, but above all things help them, and in dealing with one another see to it that you deal in love.

Remember that every member of the Body of Jesus is precious in His sight, and if you do injury either by word or act to a single one you are displeasing the great Head of the Church, and He will have something against you from His standpoint, and you want to put away all anger, malice, strife, bitterness, evil-surmising, and to have pure love one toward another—that is, “love one another, even as he loved us.” Is not this well pleasing to the Lord? I am only reminding you of what we have seen in the study of the Word of God. I am reminding you because we may not all meet again. Just who will prove faithful only the Lord can say, but I believe it is a very important moment, and if I only had the power I would like to say some word that would make such a lasting impression it would do you good to the end of your race-course, so that you would look back to this very evening and realize the necessity of keeping your garments unspotted from the world, and that if you do get any spots on your garments that you will get those spots removed by the blood of the great Redeemer.

Also have good courage as you go, remembering that God is for us and that our Master and Head is for us, and that all the children of God are for us—everything is on our side—all things are yours if you are Christ’s, for Christ is God’s.

Dear brothers and sisters, I will leave the matter here, I am glad for this convention, and glad for this privilege of meeting you, and glad for the precious hour we have had in conclusion considering the Word of God and things pertaining to the Kingdom. I believe that God in His providence meant that we should have a blessing, and it will not be confined here, but will be extended abroad in many languages, all over amongst those with whom we have influence and love, and thus we may be brought nearer and nearer, daily striving for a share in the Kingdom.

---

The various Pilgrim brothers were then stationed at the ends of the different aisles and as the crowds passed out they shook hands with each, saying a final goodbye. At the same time many hymns were sung in conclusion.