

“OUR BODIES TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

(Discourse by the Pastor, Portland, Maine, 1915 Convention Report, Supplement, starting on page 108.)

PASTOR RUSSELL gave a very interesting address, from the text, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). He said in part:

In times past, the Israelites had a Tabernacle, built by God’s command and under His definite and specific instructions. This Tabernacle was used in connection with their worship and sacrifices. It was the center toward which all the people looked as the avenue of communication with God. God’s presence was indicated there in the Most Holy by the Shekinah glory. The Temple was erected later, after they had come into the Promised Land. It was erected under Solomon, for the same purpose, and also by God’s command. The Church of Christ is the antitype of this tabernacle and of this Temple. The Apostle Peter explains that we are now living stones of God’s great Temple, which is being prepared for construction. There is no Temple of God now, in the fullest sense, though each saint of God is spoken of as a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church is now marching from the temporary Tabernacle condition into the Temple condition. The Temple is to be the Church glorified, in its permanent condition.

God is now getting ready, then, this great Temple, through which He will teach and uplift and bless the world by and by. We are instructed as to what our business is, while in the flesh. Our first business is, as living stones, to gladly submit ourselves to the great hammering and chiseling processes of Almighty Providence, preparing, polishing, and making us ready for a place in that glorious Temple of the future.

The word “temple” is used by the Apostle in three different senses. There is the great completed Temple. Then we are now the Temple of God in the prospective sense. Wherever God’s people are met, they are counted as the Temple of God, because He is already in our hearts. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. Again, each individual saint is a temple, because each heart that is illuminated by the Lord’s presence becomes a temple, or tabernacle, of God. The Holy Spirit being in you, your body is a temple, however imperfect it may be. God is tabernacling in you. In the next age, that glorious Temple which God is now preparing will be the Temple of Glory, the great meeting place between God and men. The glory of the Lord shall soon fill this Temple; for its preparation is nearly completed.

Let us note how the Temple construction was illustrated in the type, when King Solomon built the natural Temple. The stones were all prepared in the quarry. Each stone was

chiseled and shaped, polished, and marked for the place it was to occupy, so that when all the stones were ready, the Temple was put together without the sound of a hammer or an ax. All the hammering was done at the quarry. This represents beautifully how the Lord is doing all the preparing and polishing of each of our characters here in the present life. If we are not fitted and polished here, we will not be a stone in that great Temple.

Holiness Means Wholeness, Completeness

It is God who is doing this work in His people. As the Apostle Paul says, “Ye are God’s workmanship, ye are God’s husbandry.” He is working in us through His providences in our experiences, as we come in contact with the world day by day. But this work of God is being done *through* Christ. All of these providences are so supervised of Him as to produce in us the right kind of character, if we submit heartily to the disciplinary process. What is the right disposition? It is the disposition of holiness. What is holiness? It is completeness. The thought is like that of our word “whole”. God’s people are to be complete in character, lacking nothing.

Such is not our condition when we start in the Heavenly way. No, we come to the Lord as sinners. That is the only way we can come; for we cannot cleanse ourselves. It is quite the proper thought that everyone in the world should seek to cleanse himself in word, thought and deed to the best of his ability. Everyone should make his life as clean as may be. Everyone should try to put away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. But not everyone has a disposition to do so.

Those who come to the Lord are told, You cannot be of this chosen class unless you are holy. This is the prime qualification. The Father in Heaven is holy, and He is calling upon you to be holy, if you would become His son. This is at first a reckoned holiness only, but it must by degrees become more and more actual. As His children, you must be exercised by the Spirit of God or you cannot remain in His family. Each one of us had to agree to this before we could come into His family at all. Moreover, we had not only to turn our backs upon sin, but also on many things that were not sinful. We relinquished the human nature with all its rights and privileges. It was not sin alone that we renounced.

Everything that you had of value had to be consecrated to God before you were accepted. But even all this was not enough to secure God’s favor. Why not? Because you were imperfect, and could not be accepted as a sacrifice upon the Lord’s altar. You needed the great High Priest to impute His merit, that your offering might be presented to the Father. That is the way we came. Holiness not only represents an avoidance of sin and purity of heart, but a complete giving up of our will to do the will of the Lord—to be WHOLE. And in the Gospel Age this means sacrifice, a denial of self.

The Temple of Your Body

I trust that many who hear these words have given themselves fully to God and have been accepted in the Beloved One. All such are realizing that they are God's temples. St. Paul in the same Epistle (1 Cor. 6:19), says: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" This thought should be having a greater influence upon us day by day. How clean the home should be in which God dwells! The Apostle calls attention to the fact that the Lord declares He will dwell in His people and walk in them. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be? How careful we should be as representatives, ambassadors, of God! If God were coming into your home, how clean you would want every corner of every room to be! You would say, "We cannot make it too clean!" You would scour and burnish everything to make it appear well. We would do that if even an earthly king were coming to our home. Then, if the Heavenly King is coming, and to dwell, how pure and clean should His dwelling-place be!

This is the least that we may do if we would have Him abide with us. I believe that you will wish to be cleaner in word, in thought, and in conduct by reason of thinking of yourself as God's temple, and that He is willing to take up His abode in you. If we do not seek to be cleansed, He will not remain. That is the condition upon which He enters, and upon that condition will He abide with us.

"If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy," declares our text. It does not say that he will be sent to eternal torment for all eternity. We have read those things into the Bible which were not there. "Destroy" is a plain English word. There is no excuse for any misunderstanding. The difficulty was that we had the doctrines, the creeds, of the Dark Ages in our minds, and when we read "destroy" we had a sort of transformer in our heads that made it mean "fire" and "torment," and that sort of thing. To be destroyed is sufficiently terrible as a penalty of wilful sin, and this will be the fate of the incorrigibly wicked.

What is life worth to you? Is it worth anything? Yes, it is worth everything. And the glorious life offered the Church is beyond all computation. You are coming to see more of the lengths and breadths and depths and heights of the great love and Plan of God. It is so wonderful! You rejoice to have a share in the joy which God's true people have now, and your hope I trust is strong that you will have a share with Jesus in His thousand years' reign in the Millennial Kingdom. Suppose I had the power to offer you the whole world if you would give up your hope of the Kingdom. Many of you, I know, would say, "The world I never could get much out of; it has always been a disappointment. I would not exchange my hope for all the world could offer!" That is right, brother. To be in harmony with God and to have the hope of being associated with Jesus Christ as a part of

the great Royal Priesthood, to help uplift the world out of sin and degradation, back to perfect life and perfect happiness, is truly worth more than all this present world.

Our work throughout eternity, too, will be most glorious. The work of the thousand years will be only the beginning. When the world is turned over to the Father at the end of the Millennial Age (1 Cor. 15:24-28), there will be a great future work for Christ and the Church to do. God has not told us the particulars about those “ages to come” beyond the Millennium, but He has given us the great Book of the heavens to study. There by the aid of powerful telescopes we see millions of worlds. If God “formed the earth not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited,” we may be just as sure that He formed all of these other worlds for a definite purpose. If they are to be inhabited, agencies will be needed for the ordering of these worlds for habitation, and for their later training and instruction.

When Christ and His Bride shall have brought the earth and mankind back to perfection, they will have become properly prepared for their work of the everlasting future. Is there anything in the Bible which refers to their future beyond the Millennium? Yes. The apostle, in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, vs. 7, says, “That in the ages to come, God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” So we know that a glorious eternity of happiness and blessed service awaits us in the limitless ages beyond the thousand years.

What would you take as a child of God for the Millennial Age and its blessings? You could not estimate its value. What would you take for the joys of your everlasting future in the ages to come? Nothing that could be imagined by the human mind. I am going to come nearer home. What would you take for the comfort and blessing that you have as a loyal disciple of Christ every day, right here and now? You would not take a goodly sum, and the sum will increase as you grow in knowledge of the Lord and in appreciation of Him.

The apostle says that if we defile the temple of God, He will destroy us. That would be a terrible thing, would it not? What is it to defile the temple of God? We could not defile the future Temple of Glory when completed. And no one who will be a part of it will desire to defile it. The great Temple of Glory will be secure from defilement. But you may now defile your body, which has become a temple of God. If we willingly consent to the defilement of our body, it would be indicative of a depraved and wicked condition of mind, and we would be subject to the condemnation of our text. You will be very careful how you deal with the brethren, will you not? The Apostle tells us of many being defiled by a root of bitterness springing up. What if you or I should do something that would cause a root of bitterness to spring up in other children of God?

The Bible does not say how much or how little of defiling will condemn us, but we wish to be like the man who responded to an advertisement for a driver of a family carriage. A

careful driver was wanted. Different applicants had been asked, "Are you a good driver? Do you drive carefully? How near to the edge of a precipice can you safely drive?" and each man had declared his qualifications; and one had said that he could safely drive so many inches from a precipice, and another could go even a little nearer. Finally the man in question was asked, and he replied, "I always keep as far away from a precipice as possible." The employer said, "You are the man I want."

A Closing Word of Exhortation

So with you and me as servants of God. It is not a question of how near we can come to defiling some member of the Church of Christ without actually stumbling him, or of defiling the whole Church, by starting a root of bitterness or a slander, and then seeing if we can check it before it has accomplished the undoing of the brethren. "Let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should even SEEM to come short of it." Any suggestion of coming short would be dreadful, would it not? We may be either stumbling others or encouraging them. Our attitude should ever be to do all we can to help others. It is true that some will stumble over you, no matter what you do, but that you cannot help. If you are doing all that your powers will permit to be a helper in the Body of Christ, you cannot do more.

We are to build one another up in the most holy faith, not merely in doctrinal matters, but in character, by a noble example, by love, and encouragement and helpfulness. We are to have the faith that goes with holiness. The two properly go together, when all is rightly arranged. Are you helping to build the brethren up in our most holy faith? Are you encouraging them in the good way? Are you saying and doing what will help lift the burdens of the brethren, or rather the contrary? Shall we not all be more faithful, loyal sons, knowing that we are temples of God, and that these temples must be holy?

I trust that in the near future we shall have a glorious entrance into the Heavenly Temple, when the living stones are all brought together. Is there anything more? Yes. Then the glory of the Lord shall fill the Temple. I do not know just what this will signify. It means some wonderful blessing that God will give the Church after they have passed beyond the veil and received their spirit bodies. We do not fully know what the "Marriage Supper" means. The union of the Bridegroom and the Bride will take place. Then our Bridegroom will present us to the Father, unblamable and unreprouable. Then the Great Company, those who have "come up out of the great tribulation," who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," will be brought in, and then will take place what is pictured by the Revelator as the "Marriage Supper." It will be a great festival. We know it will be grand, and we want to be there. We long to enter into the joys of our Lord.

Do what you can, dear brethren, to keep the temple of your body pure, that you may be a living stone in that great Temple of the future. Do what you can to help any one who is endeavoring to come near to the Lord. Be ruled by the Lord's Spirit. Do nothing to offend, to stumble, one of these little ones that belong to Christ, not even one who seems to be the smallest or most insignificant of them. If the Lord considers one worthy to bring into His family, and to give him the begetting of His Spirit, we should consider that one worthy of being treated as a brother or as a sister. You cannot do less without dishonoring the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May the grace of God more and more help us and keep us. We trust that in the coming days we shall have His choice blessing, and shall be indeed "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Question 37—Did Jehovah suffer because of the sacrifice made for the sins of the world? Is it possible for God to suffer?

Answer—Our different casts of mind (for no two are alike), cause us to make use of different language and give it different weight. Just what do we mean by suffering? The Scriptures certainly do speak of God as though He did suffer and as though He was sorry, yet you and I do find a difficulty in imagining how God could suffer in the ordinary way, to have pain. To have pain means to have something wrong with the organism. For instance, if you have your proper functions and someone should pinch you, you have pain because there would be a certain amount of destruction because of the pinching. If you have sorrow of heart you have pain. For instance, you say: Oh, I am so sorry, I was so pained in the matter. From that standpoint we cannot understand how God can suffer since God is immortal, unchangeable, and therefore cannot suffer in any degree. If He could have some derangement of His system, then He could suffer. Why, then does the Bible speak of His having sorrow? We answer, for two reasons. (1) He wishes us to know what is to His pleasing and what is not to His pleasing. (2) He is coming down to our comprehension so that we may understand, so that we may form some reasonable conception of what would be displeasing to Him.

The question seems to imply something respecting our Lord Jesus. Did the Father suffer a great deal when He gave His Son, as some say that the Father suffered more than the Son did? I do not think so, dear friends. Knowing the end from the beginning, I think the Father was pleased to do what He did, and He knew how every feature would result; I think the Father was pleased and happy over the sacrifice of His Son, and was willing, and had the full consent of His own will and judgment, otherwise He never would have done anything of the kind—He was not caught in a trap and had to do something, but known unto Him was the end from the beginning. Therefore in our sense of suffering, or pain, disintegration of nerve and vital powers, our Heavenly Father has no such suffering, neither could He but in the sense of having sympathy for His Son and for us, for He wishes us to know that He is not cold like a stone, having no sympathy, but that He is

sympathetic and in His heart of sympathy and love He sympathized with our Lord Jesus. We do not want to lose sight of the sympathy of the Father. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." (Question #37, page 68, 1909 Convention Report.)

Lessons in the School of Christ (gleaned from a discourse by Brother Saphore many years ago). Addition: 2 Pet. 1:5-7. Subtraction: Col. 3:8. Division: 2 Tim. 2:15. Multiplication: 2 Pet. 1:2. Do not whisper, copy or be wilful. We must have a knowledge of geography: the world that was, the world that is and the world that is to come.