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A SUNDAY SERMON BY PASTOR RUSSELL

JUSTICE THE BASIS OF TRUE CHARACTER

Failure to Recognize Justice Has Brought About the Time of Trouble.

Justice the Foundation of God's Throne—Justice the Underlying Principle of the Mosaic Law—Difference Between Justice and Love—The Christian Obligated to Keep the Golden Rule—Justice in the Home, in Business, in the Church—Appreciation of the Rights of Others—Love's Victory Over Justice Through Self-Sacrifice.



PASTOR RUSSELL

Spelling field, Mass., Aug. 1.—Pastor Russell is here in attendance upon the I. B. S. A. Convention assembled in our city to-day. He delivered a strong discourse on the Golden Rule—'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' (Matthew 7:12.)

No part of God's instructions to His Church is more important than this exhortation to justice. Everything that God does is based upon absolute justice, and He invites His people to be like Him—to cultivate and develop in our characters the great qualities which He possesses, of which He has magnified and illustrated to us. Many have thought that justice is a very ordinary matter, which practically everybody recognizes and follows. But such is not the case. Many would say, 'Do you not know that we are Christians, and that to practice justice would naturally be the duty of all Christians? Why do you not rather exhort us to cultivate love?' We reply, Justice should always take precedence; we have no right to do less than justice to any member of the human family or, for that matter, even to an animal.

The trouble with the whole world is the failure to recognize this very principle. Justice is the foundation of God's Throne. It is the basic principle upon which He would have us build character, and upon which He deals with all His creatures. It is because this principle of justice is not being recognized that the world is in trouble, and that the great tribulation is coming upon our race, the Scriptures assure us. While in mankind in general there is very little love, yet every human being should receive justice. As followers of Christ, we are to be the foremost in exercising justice towards all.

What a grand world this would be if every human being would resolve to carry out the instructions of this text! There would be no 'doing' of a neighbor before he could 'do' you; but there would be a sparing of the neighbor, a taking into account his weakness and his interests. Whoever would take advantage of another would do something contrary to the welfare of the other. As ye would, as Jesus said, that others should do to you, do ye even so to them.

Thirty-five hundred years ago God called the Israelites out of Egypt. In substance He said to them, 'Four hundred years ago I made a Covenant with Abraham that his Seed should bless the world. Are you ready to have that promise fulfilled to you?' They declared that they were ready. So He brought them to Mount Sinai, where they entered into a Covenant with Him to do whatever He directed. He gave them the Ten Commandments and said to them, 'If you wish to be the Seed of Abraham that is to bless mankind, keep these commandments.'

That Law Covenant was based upon justice, not love. It did not ask them to love their enemies. According to whether or not they would render justice would be the Divine decision as to their worthiness of being considered Abraham's Seed that would bless the world. But they were not able to render justice, to do to their neighbor as they would that he should do to them. This failure was due to their fallen condition, because sin had become ingrained in human nature. (Romans 3:20.) The grasping disposition which has ever since manifested itself amongst that people began to appear; and so, although God bore with the nation for more than sixteen hundred years, not one of them obtained the reward of everlasting life which was offered to those who would keep the Law.—Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5.

the Divine Law and did so. Then, in obedience to the Divine will, He offered up Himself in sacrificial sense. The merit of the life which He sacrificed constitutes a credit which, according to the Father's Plan, our Lord will give for Adam and his race, as their ransom-price, at the end of the Gospel Age.

As soon as our Lord shall have offered that merit to the Father, the whole world will be turned over to Him; and immediately He will begin His great work of ruling and blessing all the families of the earth. The long delay has been because of another part of the Plan. It was the Divine will that He should select a Church from the world; to share with Him the great future work of blessing humanity. Therefore He will not begin His Reign until the predestinated number of the Church class shall have been selected, tested, and changed by the power of the First Resurrection. After the Spiritual Seed of Abraham will be complete.

It is well to note that the Spiritual Seed of Abraham is not the natural kind. Even Jesus as a man could never have blessed the world. He could have set up a good human government, but could have no right to give life to the dead. Therefore He could never have rolled away the curse of death, with all its concomitant. So it was for Him to do something more than keep the Divine Law—something that justice never required, something of self-sacrifice. Keeping the Law merely authorized Jesus to live forever; and if He had set up His Kingdom without giving His life as a ransom, He could not have blessed mankind; for all are sinners under condemnation to death.

Besides keeping the Law, Jesus presented His body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and His reasonable service of sacrifices—prompted by love. It is our first duty also to keep the Law, to live up to its standard as nearly as possible! But having enlisted under the banner of Christ, it is additionally our duty to present our bodies a living sacrifice, as those who walk in His steps, faithful unto death. Thus we Christians are obligated beyond all other people. All are obligated to the Golden Rule of Justice; but we by love.

Something much more than justice. If we love, we would be absolutely just in thought, word, and deed. But this we cannot do; for none of Adam's race can keep the Divine Law. Selfishness is deeply ingrained in our natural body; and by reason of this fact we fail to reach full perfection. But when we fail, we are not condemned; for with us the conditions are not the same as with the Jews. (Romans 8:1.) The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all imperfection; the mercy of Christ covers all that we cannot do.

This does not excuse us, however, from doing our very best. If with our hearts we recognize the Golden Rule, we shall not be content even with our thoughts to it. We shall think and speak as generously of our neighbor as we would wish him to think and speak of us. We shall act as generously toward him as we would wish him to act toward us. This principle would be exercised daily toward all. No matter how imperfect we are to begin with, the work of God's grace should more and more transform us, that we may be more and more like our Lord Jesus.

As far as our hearts are concerned, we must become exact copies of God's dear Son, though not reaching His glorious standard. To that we may not attain while in the flesh, Daily we shall strive to grow in holiness for our shortcomings. But He who knoweth the heart is pleased to see us doing the best we can do, seeking to grow in grace, in knowledge, and in all the requirements of the Divine standard. This was the disposition of our Lord Jesus; and the Father loves all who manifest the same spirit. It is not enough that we recognize the downward tendencies of sin, and start out to walk in God's ways of righteousness. If we have His Spirit we shall meditate on His character and copy His attributes. Whoever seeks to do good to all will never wish to do less than justice. He would rather do more. Therefore the Apostle says, 'Love is the fulfilling of the Law.'

When our Lord gave His Church a new commandment (John 13:34), it included everything that pertained to the Law. Whoever has this love will appreciate that it was love, not justice, that led our Lord to leave the Heavenly glory and sacrifice His life on behalf of humanity. The Father did not command the Son to make this sacrifice. God does not command any one to sacrifice his personal interests on behalf of others. He had a Program to be carried out. If the Son desired to carry it out, He would receive the reward promised.

So our Lord was quite willing to endure death itself, even death on the Cross, from love for the Father. Having the Father's disposition, He sympathized with fallen humanity. God had purposed to redeem mankind and to bring all the willing and obedient back to Divine favor and blessing. Our Lord Jesus longed to do this work. This was more than justice. If we have enlisted under His banner, to share with Him in the sufferings of this present life and in the future glory, honor, and immortality, then we covenant to follow the Law of Love. 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.' Love would do more than keep the Mosaic Law. Love includes everything that is sacrifice for his neighbor, for his friends, and for his family. This is more than justice.

Many of God's people seem not to realize that justice takes precedence over love. God requires justice; and if we have agreed to give Him more than justice we are not thereby excused from rendering justice. Everywhere around us we find injustice. There are parents who do not deal justly with their children, who take advantage of their children in various ways. A parent owes it to his children not merely to bring them into the world and to get them to work for the family interests, but to provide them with a reasonable education and a religious home training.

Each should know what are his own rights in the home and should observe the rights of others. A good man's sons might run away from home, but very seldom will a rightly trained child do so. In many homes the children are not treated according to the principles of justice. Often parents fail to realize the rights of grown sons and daughters, but continue to treat them as children. Parents should cultivate that broad sympathy which enables them to help their children to decide all their affairs. As a child matures, there should be an independence of thought. Suddenly it breaks over the boundary; and if the child has been properly trained while the body has been growing, the youth is bound to think and act for himself, but will always seek the guidance of the parents.

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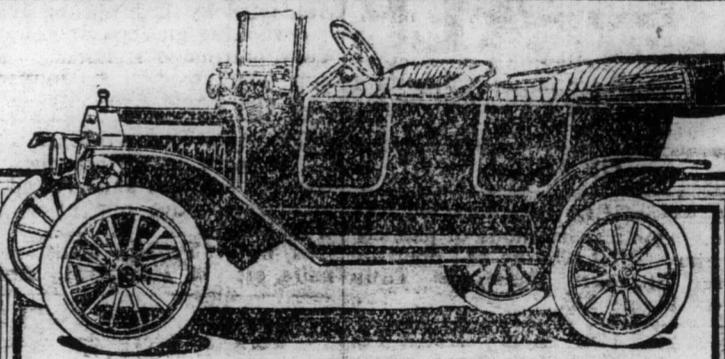
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