

## MY FATHER'S HOUSE

(Discourse by Pilgrim Brother M. L. Herr, given 7:30 P.M. Wednesday, Sept. 1, 1909, Convention in Saratoga, N.Y. Starts on page 182 of Convention Report.)

Text: "*In my Father's house are many mansions ... I go to prepare a place for you.*"  
John 14:2.

Emphasis is thus directed to the word PLACE which gives it special importance. We are reminded of Him who had no *place* to lay His head; who, indeed, is the very One who prepares the *place* for us. Do we grasp the wonderful truth here disclosed: they for whom a heavenly *place* is prepared are they who have lost a *place* amongst men. There are two uses of words, one literal and the other figurative. The literal house is a building. The figurative house is a home—a family. God has in his great house many houses or "mansions" after the pattern given us by the Apostle. (1 Cor. 12:12) One body—many members; the many, ONE.

In the Father's house are at least two families—the human family and the spiritual family. In the spiritual house we read of angels, cherubim and seraphim. The house, family or *place* specially "prepared" is the very highest order in the spiritual house: THE DIVINE FAMILY. While this family was the very last to come into existence, we are told that it existed in the divine mind as an ideal "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), *the pattern from which all the other families were formed.*

From the great divine plan we learn that it was the Father's purpose that while the other families consist of individuals who never before existed in any other family, *every member of this new divine family previously had an experience and an existence as a member of the human family.* By faith we who had lost our family rights in Adam have them credited to us because we accept of the divine provision by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. We are first counted as members of the new human family. Then it was that the call came to us as in Psa. 45:10, 11. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

There was once a gentleman who owned a beautiful home. A noble mansion surrounded by all that would make life delightful. There were gardens and groves, parks, fields, deep forests, charming scenery of seashore and mountain—all that the perfect human heart could desire. Here dwelt a happy family. Calamity befell this happy family. The father lost all that he had. The right to the beautiful home passed to another and the father removed to a small cottage in the midst of very unhealthy surroundings. When in this condition of poverty and sickness, a stranger called at the humble cottage. During the conversation with the father he displayed a roll; it was the deed to the old home. To

the father he said: "Would you accept this deed as a gift, were I to execute it in your name?" "What," said the father, "may we hope to return to that which we once lost? Why, my friend, this is beyond all expectation. It is too good to be true." Then as a heavy cloud quickly chased away the radiant joy on the father's face he added: "But I quite forgot. We are all sick. Were we back at the old home not one of us could enjoy its blessings." "But," said the stranger, "you are not aware that I am also a physician, and my services are yours, if you care to accept them, to restore you and your family to perfect health." Again the father's face was bright with joy as he said: "My benevolent friend, this is too good to be true." There is another feature of our story. During the period of poverty and distress which befell this happy family, there came to a daughter of the family a most remarkable offer of marriage. The King's son invited her to become his bride. "But," said she, "I am in no sense prepared to accept so honorable a position. With neither culture, experience nor fitness therefor, I am not able to accept that which I esteem as most sacred and honorable." He replied: "You have a pure heart and a willing hand, and under my training all your present deficiencies will be fully supplied and you will be duly equipped for the place in the King's house, to which I now invite you."

With great joy did she hear these words from the lips of her noble bridegroom. Her heart responded in awakened tenderness, esteem, gratitude and loving devotion, which increased in depth and ardor as day by day she earnestly and most heartily wrought out the lessons he set before her. Although the discipline was often quite exacting and severe, yet the deep love in her heart for him made every lesson joyous, gave zest and zeal to every endeavor and effort. After her exaltation and glory, her mind turned with ever recurrent joy to the days of hallowed memory, when awakened love lightened persistent, incessant labor. What a mighty power is the power of love! What a strength! What an invincible energy! Dear friends, does the energy of divine love operate in us to do the bidding of Him whom we love, or is it the cold, heavy slave-chains of DUTY and FEAR? "There is no fear in love, for perfect love casteth out all fear." "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Now we know the sweetness of joyfully doing His will because the holy love of Christ fills our hearts. For love of Him we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. It is the STRENGTH of LOVE.

Because her heart was open to such love as this, her beautiful character blossomed into fruitfulness and the graces and perfection that gave her queenly glory came to birth, because free, untrammelled love was hers. Could she have grown to such sweet grace had DUTY been her ward? Could fear have wrought such skill, such depth of soul, such wealth of heart and mind? Ah, no, the child of fear is weak, and faint and strength hath none. And duty, while her rod compels and smites, she leaveth stings, which wound the soul, and scars which never heal. Her beauty and her grace have come to birth because of LOVE, because her heart was FREE.

Dear friends, we see in this the call He gives to us. OUR FATHER'S HOUSE is ours because we are in Christ. By union of our hearts with His dear heart we leave our Father's house—the earthly house, its hopes, its joys, its fellowships are now no more our hopes, our joys. We leave the love of earth for heavenly love, and earthly joy for joy of heaven. With heavenly joy we say: “Our FATHER which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” And now while still we live on earth we say with holy joy: “May thy rule come into my heart more and more, and thy will be done in my mortal body.”

Still in the flesh our human life is now a life with Him. The human things which we have to do take higher joys because of love for Him. Our human ties have sacredness we never knew before. A father's love has now a dignity and grace that could but come because we see the pattern and grace that could but come because we see the pattern given above. A mother's love, what joy to us reflect the love of God in human daily life. As father, husband, wife, as daughter, son—how all we see above finds human form, by which we may express our love divine that now is ours since we have come into OUR FATHER'S HOUSE. But thus to do means that we walk apart from human kind. The spirit that would lead to such a life is not of earth. This spirit is a gift. It comes alone from God, and so we say, full knowing that except from Him we have it not:

“Relying upon thy grace promised to help in every, time of need.” What a step we take when thus we link our hearts with heavenly POWER! His power becomes our power and in our hearts His ENERGY, His STRENGTH, finds birth and flowing forth in daily life our ACTS reflect His praise. How could we know a heritage more rich than this which now is ours? This wealth of earthly good is not to be despised. A home, broad fields and fellowship of noble hearts and cultured souls, are gifts that bring rich gain, but when our hearts receive the heritage of His great love, it is a heritage of POWER for LOVE can DO and BE and is a POWER we could not know apart from His good gift. It is the UNION with His will that gives us POWER. It is the MARRIAGE tie, the family tie, by which our hearts are bound to His dear heart.

His will becomes our will. We know no will but His pure holy will and in His strength and by His power we DO His will. On earth a father makes a will, and courts of men respect that will and give the heritage to heirs as therein specified. With holy joy we turn to John 17:24: “Father, I WILL that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am. THAT THE LOVE WHEREWITH THOU LOVEST ME MAY BE IN THEM.” Has king or crown on earth the power to execute a will like this? The love wherewith Thou lovest me—that it may be in them! Did ever any earthly WILL bestow such gift? Did ever earthly family ties bring legacy so rich? The children born into an earthly home have right to all the good that home can give. The wife who shares her husband's name shares all his goods; this is the family gift; the legacy the earthly house bestows in earthly things. But we, born in our Father's house, have gifts divine; a legacy no earthly house could ever know. His WILL in us, His holy WILL, not in the way the

angels know His will, but only as the Son hath known (John 17:25), and “copies of his son” attain the likeness of the Lord—the Father’s likeness, in which image all the family share. That will is LOVE. It is a POWER, and in its strength we now can DO His will. This is the MARRIAGE joy, the joy of HOME. For we on earth are not at Home. Like Noah’s dove we find no place to rest our feet, save in the ark—our home. We’ve left our father’s house—the earthly house—and now with Christ we share MY FATHER’S HOUSE, and say:

(1) “Our Father which in heaven art, still hallowed be thy name.”

(2) Each day we bring to mind the harvest work, the blessed share we have with holy ones in service for our Lord and thank Him for the gift of service in His name. The BETHEL—house of God, where sacrificing souls forsaking earthly home, together. work—in harvest work, to gather golden grain. This family, sacred to our hearts, is often in our thought and earnest prayers ascend each day, that GOD would bless each member dear. Sweet incense on the altar burns—obedience, love and faith. (T. 1:20) In hearts made free the world o’er, we pray for Him, “THAT SERVANT,” who doth give meat, in due season, to the house of God. Sometimes the Pilgrims seated by his side give forth the meat they first received from his dear hand and all the household share the food, the strength the Master giveth to his house, MY FATHER’S HOUSE.

(3) Each day we scrutinize our thoughts, our words, our acts, that thus we better may our brethren serve—the flock from whom Christ died. ’Tis LOVE which prompts in this. Love gives the POWER and by His LOVE our daily walk is more and more conformed unto His will.

(4) His love in us discerns the serpent family that with evil power would cast its spell. Love says, RESIST, and LOVE gives POWER and in its strength we see the serpent flee. He cannot stand before the will sent down from heaven. When we rely only on grace for EVERY time of need, no hidden foe can stand; fear flies, and courage, faith and love triumphant are.

(5) The world has rules and laws which faithful saints are bound to honor and obey. (Rom. 13.) What she expects of us are debts we needs must pay, God’s holy ones slack not to render unto Caesar all his due, and in their lives as men and women in the world conform to rules of fellow men, examples thus to them which are without. Love, holy love, is also quick to see a brother’s low estate. Love, lofty-minded, noble love, finds neither chains nor bands in rules which meet his brother’s need, for love delights to serve.

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Monday evening 7:30 P.M., the last session of the convention was devoted to the colporteur praise and testimony meeting and saying good-bye. After the testimony meeting, Brother Russell stepped on the platform and spoke as follows:

I presume, dear friends, that all good things come to an end, except the Kingdom, and we know as the Scriptures say, it will be a Kingdom without end. I am not going to ask whether you are tired or not; I presume you are tired, but not of the convention. These are called truth meetings and we hardly know when to stop. There is a verse of an old hymn which reads: "Congregations n'er break up and Sabbaths have no end." That rather describes our style, but I do not know how they got the words in advance of our day. We have had about all that we can hold; at all events we have arrived at the time when this convention comes to its full close.

I do not know anything that I can add to the matter than what has already been stated. You have in mind the various good things, the glorious hopes, etc., that have inspired your hearts. You will also have trials that you have not had while here. These are necessary, but in my observation, some of the very best people that I know among the Lord's Saints are those who have passed through very severe trials. When we remember that fact, and what the Lord said through the Apostle that, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and when we have that thought before our minds, it should give us rest and peace. With the knowledge that nothing can happen to us without His permission, and that all He permits shall be for our good, if we are exercised thereby, we need not have fearful forebodings respecting the trials, but faith in God that will have its restful influence and that the peace of God that passeth all understanding will rule in our hearts.

I trust that as we go to our homes, we will carry to them some of the good things that have so refreshed our hearts; so may we let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which art in heaven. The greatest influence that can go from you is that which goes out unconsciously.

This has been a grand convention. What will the Great Convention of the Firstborn be?  
**Let us abide in Him and continue to be His.—Amen.**  
(1907 Convention Report, Part I, page 72—Indianapolis, June 14-17.)

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When I go to make a resolution, or a vow I usually think it over pretty well, and try it for a little while, see how it would go, and whether it would do to make it a fixed resolution or not. I have never been as much afraid of vows as some of the dear friends, but I have made a number of vows to the Lord, and I hope I will make some more. Whenever I find a place where I think I can improve on the old man, then I say, Here, put another strap around him and tie him down, and if you find it is likely to be able to hold, make it positive, clinch it with a vow, and that helps you ever afterwards.

(1908 Convention report, Nashville, Tennessee, Dec. 26-30. Answer to Question 12, page 61 about middle of page.)