

THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Discourse below by C. A. Wise, Cincinnati, Ohio Convention 2/23 to 3/1/1908, page 81)

Dear Friends—Let us begin our services by singing the first and last verses of No. 105:

“If I in thy likeness, O Lord, may awake,
And shine a pure image of thee,
Then I shall be satisfied when I can break
The fetters of flesh and be free.

When on thine own image in me thou hast smiled,
Within thy blest mansion, and when
The arms of my blest Father encircle His child,
O! I shall be satisfied then.”

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” And this is our prayer. I want to talk a little while to the prospective members of the Body of Christ. I trust everyone in this room is such. We come upon a scene in God’s great plan when the last members of the Body of Christ are being called out, and we want to encourage them. Nothing I shall say will be new, dear friends, but I want to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

Eph. 5:27: “That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” And we are told in the 25th verse that Christ gave Himself for the Church. There is a great misunderstanding among our Christian friends, and they do not rightly divide the Word of Truth in that respect, seeming to think that all the promises in God’s Word refer to the world. I want to show you some of the special promises that refer to the Church, the elect of God, and do not refer to the world. We are told that this class shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and every individual member of the Body of Christ is to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged according to the deeds done in the Body. No member of this class will have another judgment day. This is your judgment day, dear friends, and this is my judgment day, if we are prospective members of the Body of Christ. And O, how careful we ought to be. He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might redeem us and purify unto Himself a peculiar people. Are the world a peculiar people? No, no. All the members of the Body of Christ are peculiar people, people zealous of good works, and we need to try to rightly divide the Scriptures this afternoon, because there is a preciousness in the promises as related to the members of the Body of Christ that does not relate to the world. We read that He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world; and we are

glad of that, and we want to realize the preciousness of the promises that relate to the elect, the Bride of Christ.

I want to call your attention to three figures, which the Scriptures clearly bring out, to call to our minds the fullness of this class, the Church class—or you may call it what you will, dear friends, it all means one and the same thing. These exceeding great and precious promises refer to but one class. I trust we are all realizing some of these exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. So, I trust that everyone who is within the sound of my voice this afternoon, has come, as it were, out from under condemnation, sin and death, and is now rejoicing in Christ Jesus. We are among those who are recognized as being free men and women in Christ Jesus, and if we are among that class, the Apostle says to you, Therefore ye ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which you have heard, lest at any time you should let them slip.

We see, dear friends, it requires constant refilling. It does not take much to fill these little vessels that you and I possess, but I trust that our capacity is growing day by day, and it requires more and more. I trust you are daily requiring more and more to fill your capacity. We remember the time when God for Christ's sake pardoned our sins, and we were made clean, as it were, through the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and, Oh, what a joy and peace there came into our hearts! Our dear Saviour mentioned that when He said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You have all enjoyed that sweet rest, but there is another rest that you have also enjoyed, and which you are rejoicing in today. I think that a great many of our friends fail to comprehend the two rests—the first rest of justification, and the second rest of consecration, or sanctification. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—that is the first rest. Some of us are so glad that we simply sit down, fold our hands and try to think of what we have. We want to realize or comprehend the fact that there are oceans of love of which we have not yet drunk. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and you shall find rest unto your souls." There is the other rest. I wish that all Christian people could realize upon both of these rests. Our text says, That He might present it unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Every member of the Body of Christ is to be made according to the pattern of Christ Jesus, and as we realize the perfection to which He attained we realize that we must all attain unto that perfection—not in the righteousness of our own—no, no, for we are all as filthy rags; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. But, dear friends, entering upon this first rest we have this glorious privilege of wearing this robe of Christ's righteousness; Christ wants to present this Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

There is so much need of being washed by the water of the Word. You sisters, especially, frequently send your clothes to the laundry and have them cleaned and you have what is

known as “dry laundry,” and after we have been washed by the water, we are made like unto the clothes. When they are returned there are a great many wrinkles that have not yet been ironed out. We are the same way; there are a great many wrinkles that need smoothing out, and all must be smoothed out, and it is going to require fire to do it. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials that shall try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” I say, it is going to require fire to do it. It is peculiar what various agents the Lord is using to try you so as by fire. Let me tell you something of these wrinkles we need to have ironed out.

Impatience. (I noticed some of us during the debates have not that wrinkle fully ironed out; we became impatient. We certainly want to have that all ironed out.) Pride; Evil Surmising; Evil Speaking; Selfishness; Fear. These are some of the wrinkles that seem to predominate in our characters, and it is necessary that each one should be smoothed out. We are, as it were, on the wheel, and the Adversary is turning it. I think that all the members of the Body of Christ recognize the fact more and more that whosoever shall live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, and I am sure that the friends who are assembled here today are not attempting to get to heaven on flowery beds of ease. No, no, you are all finding it a rough way, as suggested, a very narrow way also, and few there be that find it. But, dear friends, we must all walk this way, because this is the way our dear Redeemer walked; He blazed the way so to speak, and you and I are walking in His footsteps.

Now let us smooth out some of these wrinkles. I think that the one that predominates in our characters is that of **impatience**. The Lord permits various conditions to come to us—permits us to be placed under various circumstances in order that we might be tried as it were. You know patience should be fully developed. I sometimes wonder, as I meet the dear friends, and I see how the Lord is permitting those who are the very dearest unto their hearts to assist in turning the wheel. Those that you would give your very life for are the very instruments the Lord is using to develop patience in you. If you are placed in that condition, rejoice. “Lift up your heads and rejoice!” “And again I say rejoice.” If you feel that in any sense you are being placed upon the wheel, even though it may be those that are very near and dear to you who are assisting in turning it, just leave yourself there. Every member of the Body of Christ must be made like unto our glorious Head; and so let us see that patience may have her perfect work.

Unkindness. We need to iron that out until brotherly-kindness begins to shine out.

Pride. As we smooth out that wrinkle, we find humility.

Evil Surmising. How careful we ought to be here. As we smooth out that wrinkle, we see that of self-control coming in.

Evil Speaking. Oh, how careful we ought to be.

Selfishness. Let us iron out all the selfishness in our characters, and then we will see that generosity will appear.

Fear. As you get that wrinkle all smoothed out you will find that perfect love casteth out all fear.

If, dear friends, we are feeling the influence of the Adversary in any sense; if we are being placed where we are being tried, so as by fire, let us not withdraw. You remember that our heavenly Father sits as a refiner, and He will allow it to come to just such a point that all of these things, all the washings, and all the refinings will be just right. We want to be, dear friends, as clay in the hands of the potter. We recognize, as we begin to realize something of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and the honor and glory to which all the members of the Body of Christ are called, that we can see that all of these things, all the washings, and all the wrinkles are to be smoothed out in order to be presented to Him a glorious Church. And as we consecrated ourselves, all we are, all we have, and all we possess, and all we ever expect to have, unto our heavenly Father, we will seek to among those who are recognized as being members of the Body of Christ, and we will know that we are all built up into Him, Christ the Head and the Church, the various members of the Body of Christ. Let us recognize this fact, that the Body of Christ has been selected out during all the Gospel age, and that we have come upon the scene when the last members of the Body of Christ are being called out—the feet members—and the Prophet looking down on the stream of time said, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.”

Why? I want to tell you why. Truth, as relating to God’s plan is now due in a way as it never before has been due to be known to the household of faith. There are truths due today that were never before due to be known; so far as the Plan is concerned. I verily believe that all the members of the Body of Christ understand the plan. We are not getting anything new, so far as the Plan is concerned. To give you an illustration: I often liken the Lord’s Plan as a wheel, the hub representing the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Plan revolved upon the Man Christ Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all. The various spokes leading away are the various parts of this great plan of God, and here we have this great rim that binds all of these spokes together—love. If you will watch them making a large wheel, you will find that it is necessary to put in little wedges all around these spokes. That is what you are getting now—the wedges all around. So far as the plan is concerned, you know the plan. God has revealed the secret unto us, and He has told us in the text the secret, and this is the secret, “I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” It is a wonderful secret, but a secret which the world has never known and cannot comprehend. Why? Because it is a secret society that has 144,000 members, and there cannot be another one in that society. And since 1881 that number has been complete; but there is a vast number who have been standing in the ante-room, so to speak, and when one fails to complete his consecration, he steps down and out, and one of these in the ante-room is bidden to come in. See that no man take thy crown—it is man that is going to take the crowns.

Peter speaks to us about this glorious Church, and he chose the figure of the spiritual temple, which is now being erected, and for which the stones have all been gathered out from the various quarries of the world throughout the Gospel Age. Daniel, looking down the stream of time, says, "O the blessedness of him that waiteth and cometh to the 1335 days!" What a wonderful privilege it is! All of these stones have been quarried, and they have been chiseled, and polished, and brought up to a certain standard of perfection, in order that each stone may occupy the exact place in that spiritual temple which our heavenly Father is erecting. You know, dear friends, it requires a great deal of work to bring up a stone to a certain degree of perfection; as we recognize to what depth humanity has fallen, we can see that it requires a great deal of polishing to bring us up to the condition that our heavenly Father designs all the members of the Body of Christ shall attain unto. Are you being polished? Yes, you are. You are polishing one another and if the Lord has placed you in peculiar conditions where you feel the polishing is going on, praise the Lord. You and I will not have very long in which to complete the polishing.

I am familiar with building, and I have often noticed the process of preparing a stone. The man first has the plan of the stone thoroughly fixed in his mind, and then begins to work. Our Christian experience is like that man. If you will watch him, he takes a blunt chisel and begins to knock off a little here and there and all around. Now what is the process of that man day by day? Instead of keeping on with these blunt chisels, he takes a finer one. And as that stone is brought to a certain condition nearing perfection, he also changes implements; and when it comes down to getting the fine details of the stone or the designed pattern, he gets a kind of sharp-pointed chisel and cuts down in the cracks and crevices, in order that all the fine details may be brought out in their fullness. The Lord is doing the same thing with you and me. There was a time in our experience when the Lord needed to use the blunt chisel, taking a blow here, and a blow there. As we began to grow in grace and knowledge, it was necessary to take different kinds of chisels; and I want to say, dear friends, that we come upon a scene now when He is using the long-pointed kind of a sharp chisel. Do you feel the effects of it, dear friends? I know you do. But just be passive in the hands of our loving Redeemer; He wants to present you unto Himself a glorious Church. It can be only through that means, dear friends.

Then we have that other picture of the Bride of Christ. You all remember the invitation to become members of the Body of Christ, as in the 45th Psalm. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider; and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." Where was this daughter called from? "I have called thee from the cedars of Lebanon." There is where she was called from. But the Psalmist wants us to hearken. "Incline thine ear; forget thine own people and thy father's house." And so we have.

As we saw the wondrous beauties of the court of Christ, we presented ourselves living sacrifices, and now we are running for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. “So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.” O, ye members of the Bride of Christ, so shall the King, the great King of the universe, greatly desire thy beauty. Let the chiseling, polishing, and grinding go on, dear friends. “The King’s daughter is all glorious within.” O, we are all as filthy rags, there is none that doeth good, no not one. The King’s daughter within the palace is all glorious, and so we will be, dear friends. And I want to tell you that that daughter class represents 144,000 members—the King’s daughter within the palace is all glorious within. It is no wonder our Savior said that He wanted to present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

“So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.” O dear friends, how glad we ought to be that our eyes have been opened and we have seen the beauties and wonders of this prize, the “little flock,” to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom. To me, dear friends, this is one of the most startling statements of the whole Scriptures to think that we, as human beings, can so be changed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that the King of the Universe would like to give us the kingdom. And this is true, dear friends. All through the Gospel Age the Bride has been longing, waiting anxiously for the return of the Bridegroom. How often she has prayed: “Come, O Lord, come.” How glad we are today, dear friends, the heavens cannot retain Him any longer. He has returned, and we, like Rebecca, see one walking in the field. Who is this one walking in the field? O, dear friends, it is the returned Bridegroom! He is in your midst today. O, Bride, put on thy jewels and all thy fine array. “His saints He now will gather to crown and glorify, And bring them to mansions prepared on high.”

Before our dear Redeemer went away, He left us many words of encouragement. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” “Peace I leave unto you.” There are so many endearing terms that our dear Redeemer has left for us; He knew that we would need all the encouragement we could possibly receive; so in every way possible, He has left such endearing words, such words of comfort and consolation. I think of a little illustration our dear Brother Bohnet gave us at one time. He said we were accused of having long faces. He said it is true—our faces are long the other way, this way (Cross-wise). I think this is true of all of us.

But there is yet another work to do. The Prophet says, “Gather together my Saints unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” And so awaken those that slumber.

Behold the Bridegroom, he is in our midst today!

O Bride, put on thy jewels, and all thy fine array.
His saints he now will gather, to crown and glorify,
And bring them to the mansions prepared for them on high.

Behold the Bridegroom! O ready stand with those
Whose lamps are filled and burning before the door shall close;
The nuptial feast is waiting for those to enter in
And then the joy exceeding with love reign will begin.

Behold the Bridegroom! Our fast days now are over,
For the Bridegroom's presence we need not hunger more.
We know Him in the breaking of truth sustaining bread,
And at the King's our table, are fed.

Behold the Bridegroom! We cry, Lord Jesus, come.
Lift up your eyes ye reapers, and bring the harvest home;
The sowing time is over, your night of weeping gone,
Oh joy the morning breaketh—'tis now Millennial Dawn.

Coming on down the stream of time, John shows us when all the members of the Body of Christ have made themselves ready. "Come hither, and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." Do you think, dear friends, that refers to the world? No, it does not refer to the world. Here is a peculiar class, a class that our heavenly Father has taken, so to speak, into His confidence. "Unto you is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God." "Ye are not children of the night, but of the day." "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him." Would that all could see the differences between these great promises, those that relate to the world, and those that relate to the Bride. We are glad to know, dear friends, the time is so near at hand when all the blindness shall be removed, and all the world will have the opportunity of coming to Christ. But still there is other work that must go on; there are still other members of the Body of Christ that must be awakened; and I trust, dear friends, as a result of this Convention, many may be awakened.

The Apostle John says, "I looked, and lo, there stood on Mount Zion a lamb, and with him an hundred and forty-four thousand having their Father's name written in their foreheads." Now that means 144,000; it does not mean one less, and it is said of this class that they sang a new song as it were, and no one could learn that song but the 144,000. Have you learned to sing the song? I used to think I could sing that song. For years I was under special instruction, and I was playing the harp, I thought, very skillfully, bringing out, as I thought, very beautiful tones. One day the Lord showed me what I was playing was not harmony at all, but He re-tuned the harp and gave it back. I trust He has done that in all our cases—re-tuned the harp, and we are playing upon it; we

are playing, as it were, the song of Moses and the Lamb. No one can sing that song but the 144,000. And I know some people wonder why we place so much stress on this little flock, this Church, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, the 144,000. But the blessing cannot go to the world until that class have all been called out. It will go to the world as soon as the Gospel has been preached to all the world for a witness, and the last member of the Body of Christ has been called out, and exactly on time the last one will be called out.

The Diaglott rendering of our text is very beautiful. It reads, "That He might place the congregation by His own side, glorious, having no spot, or blemish, or any such thing, but that she might be holy and blameless." There is where the Bride of Christ is going to be placed. When the Bride has made herself ready, then she will be presented without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, and our dear Redeemer, our Bridegroom, will place her at His own right hand. It will require a little more work before we will be in a condition to be placed there. I think we can all realize that. But it is true that the nearer you get to the goal, the sharper and keener are your temptations. The Adversary is trying you on all sides. You remember in the 45th Psalm, it says, "The King's daughter is all glorious within. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle work." You and I work upon the pattern; we make a great many mistakes in doing that. You know there are seven threads we are using to bring out the beauty and harmony of the pattern. We are inclined to use one thread more than we do the others, and that is the thread of knowledge; and as we began to work there was not much harmony or beauty, because we were using principally the one thread, and when Present Truth was presented to most of us, we were so glad, and we were so anxious that all the world should receive it, that we went out using it as a sort of club; and we had to unravel it. So then, if you will use the seven threads, you will find there will be beautiful harmony. So as we work day by day on this stamped pattern, we develop the spirit of Christ in our hearts. We want to be made in the likeness of our glorious Head, and if we are, then it will be true that He will present us unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. You and I have received a wonderful blessing, I trust, in our association here, and we have been a great encouragement to one another, a tower of strength, so to speak, but in a few days we will be going to our daily avocations, each one for himself, and there we will have to stand alone, and then it will not be so easy as it is now. When we get to where the grinding and polishing is going on, we cannot always go along smiling; but let us stand shoulder to shoulder with one another as much as we can, and encourage one another, and build one another up, with songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Do not place a stumbling-stone in the way of any one. You can remove stumbling-stones from the weaker members of the Body of Christ that they may also make progress.

I said we were all going to be tried so as by fire. I am told that in the army, the hardest thing to do is to stand. A great many have reached the standing condition. Stand, and let patience have her perfect work. A soldier recently told me that of all the difficult duties there were in the army, standing still was the hardest. Let patience have her perfect work,

dear friends. Let God work in and through you. Just a few more trials, and then the victory will be ours. It is suggested that while all of these individual stones have been quarried out from the world and brought up to a state of perfection, and up to the time our dear Redeemer was due to return they were placed at one place, and when He came our great heavenly Father began the construction of the great spiritual temple, of which Solomon's temple was a type. You know how those various stones and timbers were all prepared and brought to the temple site, and so it is said, there was not the sound of a hammer when the building was put together; and so it will be when the great spiritual temple is erected. There will be no opportunity beyond the veil. The polishing must be all done this side the veil, and the Lord is going to place you in the position where all the polishing can go on, and all the defects removed, and all the wrinkles ironed out, and just as soon as this work is accomplished, then our heavenly Father will take that stone and place it in the great spiritual temple in just the exact place the great architect designed that stone to occupy. And then as soon as the last stone has been polished, the chief corner stone, Jesus Christ, is placed—and what then? Back there in Israel when the Lord had accepted the literal temple, the glory of the Lord filled it, and the High Priest came out and blessed the people. So it will be when the Chief Corner Stone is placed upon the Spiritual Temple, the glory of the Lord will fill this temple, and then the blessings of the Lord shall go to all the people. The Lord is going to use that temple class for 1,000 years to verify His promise which He swore to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," and we are glad to know through the Word that temple class is almost complete.

So now, ye reapers, lift up your heads and rejoice and bring the harvest home. Then the Church will be presented to our dear Redeemer, and He will place it at his right hand, and then for 1,000 years we will assist the dear Redeemer in blessing all the families of the earth.