

GENERAL CONFERENCE
DAILY BULLETIN.

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, FEBRUARY 17, 1897.

VOL. I. No. 4.

Studies in the Book of Hebrews – No.5

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(Sunday Afternoon, Feb. 14, 1897.)

OUR text reads: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels," etc. Here we are referred to the origin of man. When we read that God made man, to what are our minds instantly turned?—To the record in Gen. 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

Wherever in the Old Testament it speaks of any one being broken to pieces by the Lord, we find coupled with that repentance, submission, or bitterness of soul, dust and ashes. When they humbled themselves before the Lord, they put dust on their heads. What was signified in this?—I am nothing but dust. In the fifty-first, the penitential Psalm, it says near the close: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, than wilt not despise." That word "contrite" means rubbed together until it is dust. The Lord, then, does not despise dust; because he can do a great deal even with dust. A good workman does not despise his material. Dust is one of the things which the Lord takes to do everything. Out of dust he made all things to grow. Out of dust he made man to rule over the works of his hands, therefore the Lord does not despise dust.

In Psalms 90:1-3, we read:—

Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, return, ye children of men.

The better reading is, "Thou turnest man to dust." The original word is the same as that before translated dust. It does not mean, turning man to destruction, for that would reduce him to a condition from which he could not be brought back. The force, then, of this expression is, that to turn man to dust has something to do with salvation. The Lord turns man to dust in order to make him over. Thus he turns him to dust, and says, "Return, ye children of men." When God sends the message of reproof, that breaks a man all to pieces, and gives him a broken and contrite heart. Then he is just where the Lord can create him a new man. But if a man does not believe this

message which breaks him all to pieces, he becomes discouraged, and says, I am good for nothing.

Here is a man that knows himself to be a sinner, but he does not and will not believe that he can be anything different. All the talk about what God is able to do for him, and to make of him, is to him as an idle tale; he does n't believe that God can make him a righteous man, although he is contrite. That man may think he believes the Bible, but the fact is he does not believe the simple statement that the Lord can form man of the dust of the earth. Or if he does believe that, he believes that the Lord has lost his power since doing it the first time, and cannot do it again. But the Lord did that thing once, and he has not forgotten how. In the beginning he made man of dust. Now the man that doubts that God can take him where he is, and do what he pleases with him, does not believe that simple statement; and he needs to go back and learn the first principles.

I am reminded of an incident: A friend of mine was going through the potteries in England, where thousands of men are employed. Of course you know that in making vessels some will be spoiled. He saw an old man with a barrow full of those broken vessels, and he said, "Uncle, what are you going to do with those?"—"O, I am going to convert 'em." And he went up and threw them into a hopper, and they were all ground up, and converted into dust, ready to be made into new vessels. In the first place they were spoiled, and were perverted. Then they were turned to dust again; and new vessels were made of them. The potter was just as able to make new vessels of them as he was to make them in the first instance.

There is a lesson in this that the Lord wants us to learn—that he can make us over again, as well as he made us in the first place. But the trouble is that this dust begins to put on airs, and look down on other dust, and to forget that it is dust, or else to think that it is a little better quality of clay than some other. The man will not allow that he is dust, and he will not allow the Lord to use him. But as long as we acknowledge that we are dust, we have the blessed comfort that the Lord God made man of the dust of the earth, and crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of his hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet; and that what God did in the beginning, he is able to do still, and does do it in the man Christ Jesus. The text shows us

two things at once—utter helplessness and wonderful dignity. The dignity comes only because of helplessness. The lowest places mean high places with God.

God in the beginning made man of dust, and gave him dominion over everything. When God does anything, he does not undo it; and when he makes a gift, he does not take it back. God gave the earth to man, and he has not taken it back; it belongs to man forever. What world is it which God has given to man?—The world to come. What about this world? This is not the one. What does he say about us in this world?—"He gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." What condition is it that calls for deliverance?—Bondage. The whole thing is turned upside down. In the beginning man had dominion, and now he has to be delivered from the thing which he ruled. "Ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of" it.

What is the only use, then, that the child of God has for this world?—It is only just a place to stop while waiting for the world to come. It is only a stepping-stone, which he is to get off from. Who has this world?—The devil is the only one. Often the professed people of God, who have a home and a right in the earth made new, and are heirs to the kingdom which God has promised to them that love him, try to get a foot-hold in the affairs of this world, which the men of the earth are always trying to do. While professing to be heirs to the kingdom of God, they are trying to share a second dominion, and get a part of the devil's dominion. Now, there is a message which has been sent. I will not read it, but it is in regard to the people of God taking part in the turmoil and politics of this world. The word politics has nothing to do with Christ. There is no politics with God. Policy and politics go together, but God has nothing to do with policy. If we had read the Bible and believed the truth, it would not have been necessary for a message to be sent. It is the world to come that God has given to us, and God has sent Jesus to deliver men from this present evil world. Christ is the Word made flesh, made lower than the angels, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. By what comes death?—Sin. So he took upon himself sin. Man was made just as good in the beginning as the Lord knew how to make him. He was made perfect. The devil

said, I will spoil that man; I will show that I am stronger than the Lord.

The Lord made man to rule over the works of his hands. Satan said, I have spoiled his plan; it cannot be done. The Lord said, Yes, it can; and not only that, but I will take a fallen man, with all his infirmities, and I will rule the world through even him. The devil is defeated. That is not a theory; it is practical for you and me. When the devil has me down, he cannot rejoice against me; for when I fall I shall rise again. And just as low as I fall, just so high I will rise above where I was before. The Word was made perfect flesh in Adam, but in Christ was the Word made fallen flesh. Christ goes down to the bottom, and there is the Word flesh, sinful flesh. Who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? There is no form nor comeliness in him, nothing that we should desire in him. Who would believe that he could see him, that same being,—so marred, more than any man,—crowned with glory and honor. What goes with the crowning of glory and honor?—Kingship. Of what?—Glory. Of what?—Of the world to come. Then the man Christ Jesus has a right now to the world to come. In the beginning it was the Lord ruling through Adam; now it is the Lord ruling through the second Adam, and through far inferior conditions, doing what he would have done through the first Adam under the first conditions. This is the glory connected with what we read the other day in the first of Ephesians:—

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

Who is it that has all this?—The *man* Christ Jesus. And you also hath he made alive in Christ, and hath raised us up with him, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, but he has to us; and that is the reason why the angels cannot preach the gospel. The heavens belong to the Lord our God; but the earth hath he given to the children of men. One man lost it; Another came and regained it. And he was lifted up; and you hath

he lifted up to sit with him in the same place, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [that is a small thing], but also in that which is to come."

How much of an idea can a man have of the dignity of his position as a prince of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ, sharing what Christ has of the world to come, sitting with Christ in heavenly places, if he spends time digging around in the muck-heap of the politics of the world. These two things do not go together. You would not think of the President of the United States running for town-clerk, while still President of the United States. Think of the President of the United States coming down and taking part in a village caucus or running for office in a school district; yet there is a congruity in that, because it is all a part of the same dominion. But here is a man quickened, made alive in Christ, in possession of the power of the world to come, and then taking hold upon this world, from which the Lord said he must be delivered. He says, I know God has made me a ruler over the world, but let me play with this bubble a little while. I know that I am going to leave it, but there is something so inspiring, so thrilling, in the beat of the big drum; so let me play a little while before I leave it.

Brethren, we do not begin to appreciate what the Lord has for us. That comes by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. We need to pray for the Spirit of God; praying that we may know the high calling and the riches of the glory of the inheritance. The man who has found a diamond mine, and knows the value of it, does not have to be pleaded with not to put clay in his pockets, in place of the diamonds. But the trouble with us is, we have gone daft. We have not come to our senses. We have not received the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, so that we can appreciate the inheritance that God has given us.

The things that are seen, are not real; they pass away in a little while. But the things that are not seen, are real. God has given to man only eternal things to deal with; he gave him the eternal world. The center of man's dominion was the garden of Eden; that was his home. No defilement came upon that, so that has continued unsmirched until now, and will so continue to all eternity. The central part, the homestead itself,

has never been lost, never been cursed or defiled. And that is the thing we have to deal with; that is where our citizenship is. Some people think that Christians are the ones best qualified to rule in this world, but they are just the ones who are not. This world does not pertain to them, and they should leave the government of it to those to whom it pertains—to those who are of it. God has not given us any citizenship here; he has not given us anything to do with this world, except to get out of it, and take as many people along with us as we can: because it is a sinking ship, and going to perdition, and we are safe here only while we are saving or helping somebody else out.

Political Controversy.

(Special Testimony.)

IN the meantime when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples, first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

There were a great number who wanted to hear Jesus. They were attracted to him; for his teachings were simple and plain. Searching truths were spoken. Our Saviour presented before the people of that time the character of their sins. His plain words aroused the consciences of the hearers, but Satan's counterworking agencies were seeking for a place for their theories, to attract minds from the plainly spoken truth. As the great Teacher would speak impressive truth, the scribes and Pharisees, under pretense of being interested, would assemble around the disciples and Christ, and divert the minds of the disciples by starting questions to create controversy. They pretended that they wanted to know the truth.

Christ was interrupted on this occasion as on many similar occasions. And he wished his disciples to listen to the words he had to say, and not allow anything to attract and hold their attention. Therefore he warned them, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." They feigned a desire to get as close as possible to the inner circle. As the Lord Jesus presented truth in contrast to error, the Pharisees pretended to be desirous of understanding the truth, yet they were trying to lead his mind in other channels. Hypocrisy is like leaven, or yeast. Leaven may be hidden in the flour, and its pres-