

# A GOOD NAME

## A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1860

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

Volume 2 Number 67

“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of Judgment upon his heart.” Exodus 28:29

I NOTICE here first, *a distinction of names*. “Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel.” Secondly, *the order*; “he shall bear them on his breast-plate; third, *the nomination*; “breast-plate of judgment;” and then, fourthly, and lastly, *the heart work*; “upon his heart.”

First. First, THE DISTINCTION OF NAMES “Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart.” These children of Israel literally, as you are aware, meant the twelve tribes; and therefore, taking the names of the twelve tribes, he thereby in effect took them all. And thus, this priest, this high priest, is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes mystically into his breast-plate, or has done so, all whose names are written in the book of eternal life. He was to take their names into sacrificial excellency; and secondly, it will mean that he was to take their names into new covenant order. These are the two points that I now dwell upon, I hope with profit to our souls. First, he was to take their names into sacrificial excellency; for that same person who was to take these names, was to offer sacrifice on behalf of the self-same people; and then those names were in his breast-plate to stand before God that which the sacrifice constituted them. Naturally our names are bad; that is, taking our names to mean ourselves, our names naturally are bad; and therefore, we need a substitute to take our names, and take away the badness, and constitute them such as the blessed God can approve; and then in new covenant order maintain them in that excellency which the Lord Jesus Christ has constituted them. I need not use any arguments here to prove the truth of what I am now saying because when we come to God's holy law we have this one sentence that puts a negative upon all attempts at justification that by the law, “he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole;” and that all by nature are carnal, sold under sin. I will therefore, this morning speak to you as knowing your need of this wonderful Mediator, this Great High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus the Lord. As Aaron, therefore, was to take the names of the people, and to offer spotless and acceptable sacrifice on their behalf, and by which he could go with their names into the holy place, so the Lord Jesus Christ has taken the names of poor sinners, and has constituted them free from any spot, and that by the excellency of his own sacrifice. But what was the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus had in order to make our names good? The sacrifice was himself; he had no other sacrifice; not by the blood of goats and of calves,

but it was by his own blood that he entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. The sacrifice then was himself; his whole person, his wonderful person, was presented to God's law in our stead. His wonderful person was presented to endure the penalty of law and justice in our stead. And I am sure when the law looks at the whole election of grace, and contrasts them with the blest Redeemer, it finds in the first place in Christ Jesus an excellency surpassing all the excellency put together that it ever could have found in the whole election of grace, if not one had ever fallen; so that if all the election of grace were now standing where man was originally created, in the image of God, all righteous and upright; nevertheless there would not have been then in all the election of grace that amount of excellency that there is in the holy and obedient life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is self-evident to those that know the Lord; because though they would have been then free from sin, yet they would have been but creatures; but the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Melchizedek, our great High Priest, he is God, as well as man. This then, is the sacrifice that he had for the people; and he put himself into their place. Then when you come to His death, we take the same view there; that what they would suffer in hell to all eternity could not go down to the bottom of the curse, could not extend to the breadth of the curse, could not rise to a height that should overtop the curse, and could not outlive the curse. And yet Jesus Christ did all this; he went down to the bottom of the curse, he rose to the full height and overtopped the curse; he spanned the whole length of it, compassed the whole of it; he was greater than the curse; so that he brought all its parts together, and himself was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Here then he takes the names of poor sinners; and now their names before God to all eternity stand what the Savior has constituted them. Ah then, how encouraging is this for us to look to the Lord, to pray to the Lord, to believe in the Lord, and to cast all our cares upon him. Oh, what a wondrous High Priest, what a wondrous Mediator, to stand in such a position as this. Was my name then inscribed in God's eternal book and did Jesus take my sinful, my worthless, my vile, shall I say my hell-born name, and put that away by the sacrifice of himself, and give me a new name? And if you ask what the new name is, the answer is this, that "the whole family in heaven and upon earth are named after the Lord Jesus Christ." Call this high doctrine or low doctrine; dangerous doctrine, or safe doctrine call it what you please; it is God's doctrine and it is that by which alone a sinner can be saved. The Lord enable me to speak upon it this morning freely; there is something so sweet in it. When I look at my sins, when I look at myself, when I look at the threatening of God's law, when I look at death and hell, I am afraid;

"But if Immanuel's face appear,  
My hope, my joy begins;  
His name forbids may slavish fear,  
His grace removes my sins."

Second: He has taken my sins, and now I stand before God in all the worth and worthiness of the blest Redeemer's name; after whom the whole family in heaven and on earth are named. But bearing the names on the breast-plate also means bringing them into New Testament order, new covenant order; for this is one step towards the gospel order of which I have spoken. This high priest was to teach the people whose names he took. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ stands engaged to teach the same people whose names he has taken; he has engaged to teach them, and make them willing in the day of his power; and to bring them not only into this unity with him of which I have spoken, this sacrificial excellency, and to know that they now stand good before God by the Savior's name standing good before God, and as long as his name is good, theirs cannot be bad;

as long as his name is accepted, theirs cannot be rejected; as long as his name is a name of dignity, their names cannot be names of indignity; as long as his name is a name above every name that is named, not only in the world that now is, but also in that which is to come, so also must theirs be a name above every name that is named; for there is no creature name so high as the name of the saint of God, so high as the name of a king and priest unto God, so high as the name of an heir of the kingdom, an heir of salvation, an heir of eternal glory. They are named after him; a name that stands above all names. And that name can never be damaged; their names are damaged in this world, and will be; as a minister (Mr. Spurgeon) said a Sunday or two ago, and it is the truth too, that hardly anybody's name is safe in this deceitful, reviling, gossiping, lying, slandering day. But it all has a tendency to endear that perfection of standing we have in Christ Jesus before the living God. Ah, my hearer, this may be one reason why the Christian may like to die, leave this world, to go to that place where his name stands unblemished, where eternal sunshine settles on his head, and where he shall realize the full import of all the blessedness of the priesthood of the Savior, and the excellency of his name. But it also means bringing the soul into new covenant order; for this priesthood work, taking the names of the people, and bringing them by sacrificial excellency into that state which God can approve, is a testamentary work, a covenant work. Second chapter of the prophecies of Malachi, "My covenant was with him of life and peace," with Levi, that is the patronymic name of Aaron; Levi literally means *joined*; a suited name for the father, the head of the priesthood: sin has disjointed us from the Lord; but this great High Priest joined us again to the Lord in better ties than those we had by creation; "He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." The Savior is evidently alluded to in that 2nd chapter of Malachi, "My covenant was with him of life and peace." So, if we have life, it must be in Christ Jesus; "He that believes in him has everlasting life;" and if we have peace it must be in Christ Jesus; "He is our peace." "And I gave it to him;" the Lord gave this covenant to Christ because Christ was worthy of it, because Christ would not corrupt it. Adam corrupted the covenant he was under; the Jews corrupted the covenant they were under; and men corrupt the word of God now. But here is a Person that will not corrupt the covenant, that will not distort the covenant; and therefore, the Lord says, "I gave it to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name;" that is, I gave it to him because he was worthy of it, because he would hold it sacred, and carry out all its items. And so, the blessed Redeemer did honor, everlasting honor, to his dear name. He was not ashamed to say, and under solemn asseveration, in the presence of assembled thousands, that his sheep should never perish, that none should pluck them out of his hand; he was not ashamed to present himself as the Shepherd and the Surety, the eternal Surety of the people that were committed to his care; he would give unto them eternal life, and they should never perish. "My covenant was with him of life and peace;" and he was worthy. And hence after his worthiness was tested in his humiliation, we find when the book of government was proclaimed in heaven, and none was found strong enough, worthy enough, nor honorable enough to take that book, there was One found, he who had taken the book of the covenant, and worked it out in his humiliation, by his life and atoning death, was worthy to take the book of government, "You are worthy to take the book; for you was slain, and have redeemed us to God out of all kindreds, and peoples, and nations, and tongues, by thy blood and have made us kings and priests unto God." He shall bring them, then, into this testamentary order. And now mark, the law of truth was in his mouth "the law of truth," I like that. I am sorry when I hear people, men that profess to preach the truth, ridicule others for using the word *truth* so often; the word of God uses it very frequently: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips;" iniquity means not only sin in general, but that body of error that imitates God's truth, and yet contradicts it; that pretends to be Christ, but is nothing but anti-Christ; that body of

error that makes a great show of and pretension to holiness and goodness, but is at the same time iniquity and deception. But the law of truth was in Christ's mouth; and iniquity was not found in his lips; his mind was light, and in it was no darkness at all; thick darkness laid upon him, our sins and demerits, but there was no darkness in him; he was as the light, yes, he himself was the true light. "He walked with me in peace." All our sins that were laid on him could not make him find fault with God's dealings with him. It would take very little to make you find fault with God's dealings with you; but all the sins of the people laid upon Christ could not make him find fault with God's dealings with him; and though, such were those dealings of necessity, standing as he did the Surety of his people, though he did sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and had to die the agonizing death he did; yet none of it could force from him a single complaint of God's dealings with him; even when overwhelmed with agony he said, "Not my will, but yours be done." Ah, this part of the Savior's work, in walking with God in peace, has a great deal to do in covering a great many of our rebellions. I tell you this morning, whether you can join with me in saying it or not, I have, I had almost said blasphemously rebelled against some of those very dealings of God with me out of which has come the greatest good; so blind have I been. One of old said, "So foolish was I; I was as a beast before you." What is to cover these rebellions? Why, the blessed truth that Jesus Christ walked in peace with God, and not anything could extort a complaint from him. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth." Ah, the Lord give you grace to creep to this rock; ever to take shelter in this rock; ever to plead this name; and ever to cleave to this blessed High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus the Lord. But he also "walked with me in equity;" take notice of that. Why, you cannot say that of any other. Whoever walked with God equal to all the demands of law and justice as Christ did, to all the demands of the necessities of his people as Christ did? "He walked with me in peace and equity." And mark the end of the Savior's work, "And he did turn many away from iniquity." There is no getting away from it but by his blood, by his equitable work; there is no getting away from condemnation but by the justification that Christ has brought in; there is no way of getting away from the adversary but by the blood of the Lamb; "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Men may reform, and reform, and reform; and go over from irreligious iniquity into a life of religious iniquity; and all their purity and their doings are only one species of iniquity exchanged for another; they are as much workers of iniquity as ever they were; the only difference is they have changed their name, and their dress, and their mode; but with all their changing, their hearts were enmity before, and they are enmity now; they hated the truth before, and they hate it now; and I am not sure that such persons, with all their piety, noise, and goodness, are not even two-fold more the children of hell than they were before. My hearer, be not deceived, there is no real separation from iniquity but by the equitable work of the Great Mediator of the everlasting covenant, bringing us to renounce all confidence in the flesh, and to receive the truth as it is in Christ Jesus the Lord. This priest, then, was to teach the people those things; so that if you are Israelites, you will know your need of this Priest; you will know not only the sacrificial excellency, but something of the covenant order; mark, "my covenant of life and peace!" that is, my testamentary will, my good will, my counsel, that is what is meant by that covenant. Notice the conclusion, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge." You have all of you read the Gospels through, and you see how this was verified in the Savior: whenever the disciples asked him a question he was never at a loss; whenever his adversaries tried to entangle him, to catch something out of his mouth by which they could accuse him, he was never at a loss; and even when in the depth of agonies too intense for either human or angelic tongues ever to describe, yet when the thief cried to him, "Lord, remember me," Christ was not at a loss; when that thief applied to this

great High Priest who was then putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Christ was not at a loss; he kept knowledge. I know you, and I know what to say: "This day shall you be with me in Paradise." "And they should seek the law at his mouth." Oh, wonderful difference between receiving the law merely from the pulpit and receiving it from his mouth: the minister is but the voice, Christ is the real Speaker when any real good is done; when he speaks, he speaks to the heart, he speaks to the point, he speaks effectually: "For he is the Messenger of the Lord of hosts." Does that mean Christ? Have you any doubt about it? I am now quoting from Malachi 2, if you have any doubt as to whether the "Messenger of the Lord of hosts," there means the Savior, go to the next chapter, the 3rd, "And the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in;" Christ is the Messenger, therefore of the Lord of hosts.

Third. But now we must come to the BREAST-PLATE. He was to bear these names in the breast-plate of judgment. The breast-plate has a variety of meanings; but one of its first meanings is that of righteousness. I am aware the circumstances are different; they are not priestly, but rather military, conflictive circumstances under which it is written that Christ put on righteousness for a breast-plate, but still it is a remarkable thing this breast-plate was square; and we know that that does convey the idea of justice. I think therefore, this is the first idea; that the breast-plate being square will denote righteousness. And this gives a sweet idea, that their names are taken up into righteousness; that they appear righteous before God; that they are complete in him. And then as it means righteousness, it also means something satisfactory. I may be thought fanciful; but it says of the breast-plate that it was a span each way; and I have sometimes thought, though what I am speaking here are rather my own thoughts than the Lord's words, so if you think it to be wrong you must treat it as such; but I have sometimes thought that the breast-plate being a span would perhaps denote that the work of Christ was as much as law and justice could span and I was going to say as much as the hand of love could give, and as much as the hand of faith could grasp; as though the law should say, By the righteousness of Christ my hand is full; so if you bring me anymore I cannot hold it; as though justice should say, By what the dear Mediator has done my hand is full, so if you bring any more I cannot receive it; and as though love should say, I cannot give any more; I have given as much as I could span.

Now the priest was to present these Israelites, the twelve tribes, the names, in his breast-plate; the question arises now, under what circumstances of the people of God they are here intended? because there were not two precious stones alike, excepting in this one thing, they were all precious stones; still they all differed in color and character. It cannot, I think represent the people of God in their state by nature, because there we are all alike, all black; and it cannot I think, represent them in a state of glory, for there they are all white. Hence you find in Revelation, when John saw the people in heaven, he saw them all alike; he did not say, well I saw a man there with a robe rather short, he had not performed good works enough; and I saw another with a second best robe, he had not been quite good enough; and I saw another with two or three rather dark threads in his robe; he had omitted some of his duties. John might have given us, if he had been one of those fashionables of the day, a long list of the people in heaven; and said, There is another with very large sleeves and a very long robe, to denote that he has done more than any of the rest. Not a syllable of the kind is hinted; John saw them all alike; they were all washed in one blood; they all bore the palm of one victory, they all ascribed the conquest to one God and to one Lamb; they all

stood around one throne; they all came out of the one tribulation; they all possessed one heaven, and one joy, and one glory; there is no difference; black by nature but pure white in Christ Jesus. I should think therefore, there may be some reference, even this you must take only as a conjecture, I think there may be here some reference to the people of God in their state of grace. There is a great variety among them; some have deeper experience than others; some wear more mournful colors than others, and some brighter than others; there is a great variety in the tribulations, joys and sorrows of the people of God. It may perhaps intend this; but whether or not, one thing I do consider; the Lord Jesus Christ certainly does intercede for us according to our necessities; so that when you come under great necessities, Christ will intercede accordingly; when they are not so great, he will intercede accordingly; he will plead for you and deal with you as seems good in his sight and according to what you require. The Spirit, it is said, makes intercession with groanings that cannot be brought into words; but then it is not always that we are under such groanings as that; that lies entirely with the Lord. But bearing these names upon the breast-plate, then, will mean righteousness and fulness; and will likewise indicate that their cause is pleaded according to their necessities. Also, it will denote order. These precious stones were carried in order in the breast-plate. And so, you may depend upon it, I must have my lot, and you yours; some were higher, and some lower; some to the right and some to the left, and so on. And so, it is now; the Lord places his people just as seems good in his sight. We know not what gloomy scenes we may yet have to pass through; but if our names be inscribed on his breast-plate, we know that at eventide it shall be light. It will mean also safety. The precious stones were safe in his breast-plate. And so, our safety is in Christ. I should be exceedingly grieved if I were to say a word this morning that should seem to savor of presumption, but I was going to say there was not one of the doings of the people, good or bad, could affect these precious stones in the breast-plate; they remained the same. So, bless his precious name, in Christ Jesus there is safety, there is sameness; always the same; we are poor, feeble, changeable creatures; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and forever.

I will now notice *the nomination*, or the name given to this breast-plate. It is called “the breast-plate of judgment;” I think for four reasons. First, the Lord will not minister any judgment until he first consults the welfare of his people. And it is a remarkable thing that the very name of the breast-plate, its sacred name, Urim and Thummim; meaning, as some of the learned render it, “lights and perfections;” as others of the learned, perhaps with more propriety, render it, “revelation and truth;” Urim meaning “revelation;” Thummim meaning “truth.” So, the high priest appeared before God, and the Lord would never answer the high priest or commune with him without this breast-plate; when he had the breast-plate on, now will I talk with you. There was not any part of the high priest’s dress more essential to qualify him for the presence of God than that of the breast-plate; must not go without that, nor indeed without any of the parts the Lord commanded; but the breast-plate is the part that we are dwelling upon this morning. Just so the Lord Jesus appears before God, he must not appear there without his people, without his breast-plate. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” If I go not away, as though he should say, and take your names to heaven with me, in all that excellency that I have brought them to, in all that covenant order into which they shall come; if I go not thus away, the Holy Ghost will not come, God the Father will not send him; but if I go, then the Father will send the Comforter, and I will send him to you. So, then there is no fellowship with God without this breast-plate. Is a world to be drowned? Let me first consult the breast-plate, and see whether an ark be needed. Are the cities of the plain to be burnt? Let me first consult the breast-plate, and see if there be one Israelite there. Are Pharaoh and his host to be drowned? Let me first see that the

Israelites are safe. Are the walls of Jericho to fall down? Let me consult the breast-plate, and see if there be any of mine there. Yes, here is Rabab; that part of the wall shall not fall; that part of the wall may be the weakest, but it shall not fall. Ah, thus many a poor, weak creature stands fast while mighty towers fall, mighty mountains are overturned, mighty trees are uprooted; and we wonder how that poor creature appears as he does. The secret is that such an one belongs to God; and it matters not how weak he is in himself; if the Lord be his strength, that man though in himself as weak as water, yet in Christ he is omnipotent. And at the last great day is the universe to be burnt at the brightness of the Savior's coming, and in the day of his power? He will take care that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and appear at his right hand, far beyond the reach of the conflagration the universe, standing upon the omnipotence and eternity of his power, in all that magnificent glory into which they shall be brought. Then, and not till then, shall judgment be ministered. He will never minister judgment even to an adversary till he has first consulted the welfare of his people. The second reason it is called the breast-plate of judgment is because the high priest was to bear typically the judgment; to take the sins, of the people. It says in the very next verse, the 30th, that "Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel." It is therefore, called the breast-plate of judgment. Christ taking our names made him responsible; he came into a responsible position; he appeared with the breastplate of judgment, and God judged Christ for our sins; God commanded the sword of justice to awake against Christ for our sins; he bore the judgment that was due to our sins; therefore, it is called the breastplate of judgment. Oh, how all this endears the Savior. The paschal lamb was killed for the people; the typical lamb was roast with fire after it died; but Christ, shall I say, was encompassed with his fiery trial before he died; in the type the fire followed the death, but in the Antitype the fire preceded the death; the flaming sword of justice descended and pierced his soul before he died. Third, called the breastplate of judgment because the people of God are judged by the Lord by that which Christ has constituted them. Ah, some ministers make mistakes relative to the ultimate judgment. They tell us that men are sent away into everlasting perdition for not giving bread to the hungry of the Lord's people, for not visiting the sick, and for not clothing the naked. No; what the Savior says there is not that these people are sent away for not doing these things; but they're not doing these things is a proof and evidence that they had no real sympathy with the real people of God; but then the cause of a thing and the evidence of a thing are two very different things; Just as on the other hand, at the day of judgment, "Come, you blessed of my Father;" but did the Father bless them because they gave to the poor of the Lord's people? Did they have an abundant entrance because they visited the sick, because they did these things? Such a doctrine would be to set the sacrificial excellency of the Savior aside, would be to set the great rule of judgment aside; the rule of judgment will be Christ's work; "you are complete in him;" who, therefore, can lay anything to their charge? So that those things are mentioned not as causes, but as evidences, and only as such. Do not let us, then, friends, turn our evidences into thieves and robbers, putting them into the place of Christ, and thereby setting aside the Savior; and setting up even our good doings, and doings that are, as expressions of love to God, acceptable in his sight; but if you try to make saviors of these things, or put them into the place of Christ's atonement, you turn those things that are good in their place into thieves and robbers.

I shall not be able to finish the text this morning; I shall have to give a sermon upon the latter part of this verse next Sunday morning; I must therefore, now make a remark or two, and then close, without touching upon the fourth point, that of bearing the names upon his heart. The fourth reason it is called the breast-plate of judgment is because it is the test by which professors are to be tried. Every minister in every sermon he preaches ought so to preach the truth as to put his hearers to the

test. Are you a receiver of this or not? Are you a lover of this or not? Are you a friend to this or an enemy? Do you know this or do you not? Do you seek this or do you not? Do you admire this or do you not? Because if you cannot stand the test of God's truth, God's testimony concerning the eternal priesthood of Christ; if you cannot stand that test, then you are an enemy. Thus then it is the breast-plate of judgment, first, because the Lord will do nothing, will not minister judgment even to the adversaries, without first consulting the welfare of his people; second, it is the breastplate of judgment because Christ bare our judgment; third, it is the breast, plate of judgment, because by the equitable work of Christ the people shall be judged; and then finally, because it is the test to which professors are to be put. I am sure those of you that know the Lord can bear that test well. Bear the test? say you. I desire with all my soul to bless the God of heaven and earth there is such a test to be put to, such a rule to be judged by; such a firm foundation laid in this immoveable, this glorious Zion. But your time is gone; I say no more.