

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

CONSECRATION TO GOD.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27TH, 1860, BY*

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Isaiah lii. 15.

I MUST deny that the first part of this verse has any reference whatever to baptism; I maintain that it does not mean that nations generally are to be sprinkled, literally so. Yet we find men in quoting this Scripture refer us to the Saviour's mission; "Go into all the world, preach the gospel, teaching all nations, baptizing them;" "so shall ye sprinkle many nations." But then baptism is not sprinkling. Every man with even the smallest acquaintance with the language in which the New Testament is written, well knows that the Greek word for "sprinkling" is that of *rantizo*; whereas the Greek word for "immersion" is that of *baptizo*. I must also deny that it refers to literal sprinkling at all, but that it refers to a spiritual sprinkling. And if we ask what this spiritual sprinkling is, I think the answer ought to be, the word of the living God. What was the sprinkling of the blood on the lintels and the side posts, what was the sprinkling there but a declaration of their belief in the gospel? That was their gospel, their temporal gospel, for an immediate and temporal purpose, having in it an ultimate and an eternal meaning. And when the blood was sprinkled in olden time, this was nothing else but a type of the diffusion of the gospel. And when the Lord says that he will sprinkle clean water upon his people, it means the gospel, the words of the gospel. And if you have any doubt of the correctness of this view, just hear what the word of the Lord says upon it. You know it is said of the disciples that they were clean through the word that was spoken unto them. And you know that the Saviour did cleanse the leper, that he cleansed the blind eye from its films, that he cleansed the deaf ear from its morbidity; that he cleansed the palsied man from his palsy; in a word, all the purifications he wrought physically he wrought by his word. And so the sprinkling here I understand to mean the word of the Lord. If I were asked whether clean water in that sense of the word had been sprinkled upon me, my answer is this; has the Holy Spirit ever brought home any gospel word to my soul which has endeared the Saviour, which has brought me any healing, brought me any strength, brought me any refreshing, brought me any cleansing, given me any access to God? That is what I understand by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, and again, you are aware, the holy word of God is spoken of as having a cleansing power. And so again it is said, "He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water." And that we may not understand the word "water" there literally, but figuratively and spiritually, the apostle adds, the washing of water by the word, 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."

* My last Sermon before my illness.

No. 96.

With this view then, I proceed to notice first, *the consecration to God, to the service of God*; for that is the idea intended in the first part of our text. Here is second, *the power of that word in putting to silence the highest powers of men*; "kings shall shut their mouths at him;" and then thirdly, and lastly, *the knowledge to which the Gentiles, who are evidently here referred to, shall be brought in the Lord's own time; yea, they have been brought so far*. And hence if we want an explanation of this verse as regards nations, we have nothing to do but go to Revelation vii; there John saw a people out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people; there he saw it was done, and they presented without spot before the throne of God; in sweet accordance, you see, with the church being washed and cleansed by the washing of water by the word. I take then simply a two-fold view of this consecration to God; first, *to the service of God*; and second, *to the special presence of God*.

I. First then, CONSECRATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. You are aware that in olden time, under the Levitical dispensation, or if we go back to the beginning indeed, there was no access to God except by consecration. Sin having come in, there must be something to give access to God. This is where Abel was well taught; and this is where Cain failed; Cain thought he could have access to God without sacrifice; Abel knew he could have access to God only by sacrifice. But let us hear the apostle Paul's explanation of this consecration to God; and taking the language of our text spiritually, it will mean a consecration to God on gospel grounds, in gospel order, to gospel ends, to gospel privileges, and ultimately to gospel glories. Hence in the 9th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle traces out this subject very beautifully. He in the first place connects, and you will I think see the excellency of the idea as we go along, I mean his ideas; he connects with this idea of service to God eternal redemption, that it is not by the blood of calves and of goats, but by his own blood he entered once; here is the service of Christ going before us; and we are to serve God by faith in him. He entered once; priests under the law had to enter annually; but Christ once and for ever by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Now the apostle commences in this way, and approaches nearer and nearer to the subject contained in our text. He throws in this great subject of eternal redemption first; as though he should say, you are under sin and under the curse, and under death, and under the law; and except there be a price paid, an adequate price paid for your redemption, then there can be no consecration to God. He would look, therefore, upon that as step the first towards this sprinkling, towards this consecration unto the blessed God. And this eternal redemption contains in it also a contrast, or at least it bears reference to a circumstance in the Old Testament age. As you are aware, in the year of jubilee every man at that time was redeemed from his debts, bondage, and difficulties; but still he was not by that year of jubilee so redeemed from his debts, his bondage, his poverty, and his difficulties, but that he might get into them again, and did get into them again. But here, in this redemption which Christ has wrought, it is eternal; and the people once redeemed, they are redeemed for ever; they cannot get into debt again; they cannot get into the same trouble again; they cannot get into the same difficulty again; they cannot get into the same trial again; it is eternal redemption. This then is one of the truths by which the Lord shall sprinkle many nations; that is, this blessed truth shall be diffused abroad; and when a poor sinner gets hold of this, what! is the redemption of Christ not only adequate, but eternal; is the redemption of Christ so honourable, so glorious, and so sure, not only in itself, but also in relation to the people for it is not more true that he hath obtained eternal redemption, this is not

more true than it is true that those whom he hath redeemed shall return, and shall come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Thus then, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;" the 19th chapter of the book of Numbers would give us an explanation of that, that any person that touched an unclean body—a dead body, or any one who had become ceremonially unclean; he could have access after that unto the holy things only by being thus sprinkled. And do we not find it so? If the gospel of God, if the mercies of the Lord, if the blood of Jesus Christ, did not keep pace with our sins, did not keep pace with our impurities, for in what a variety of ways do we come into contact with dead bodies; and we have never any occasion to go far for a dead body, for every one has a body of sin within him and that daily touches the soul, and the soul daily touches that; so that the just man in this sense falleth seven times a day; and consequently needeth perpetually the precious blood of Jesus Christ to give him access to God. I know not how this subject appears to you; but it is to me a delightful institution; it looks well in the ceremony of it; it looks gracious, and merciful, and kind there; but when we take it in its higher sense, in the spiritual sense, when we take it to mean the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, then as our old man of sin within daily toucheth the soul, and the soul daily toucheth it; and therefore we need this sprinkling, this gospel, perpetually to give us access to God. Do you not find, that there is a wonderful difference between God coming to you and you coming to God? Do you not find that your carnality and your sins shut you out from enjoying the things of God? Do you not feel that you have that old man of sin within you that you cannot do the things that you would? But if the Lord is pleased to bring home a word with power, to sprinkle the soul, ah, then it cleanses the soul from its unbelief, from its weakness, shall I say from its disease; enables it to lay hold of the truth, enjoy holy things, have access to God, and rejoice in the efficacy of the blood of Christ. "How much more," says the apostle, "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." I must be careful in this part of my subject to take notice of the eternity of these gospel matters; the apostle seems very much charmed with their eternity; "he hath entered in once, having obtained eternal redemption;" and now he says, the Lord Jesus Christ offered himself without spot to God through the eternal Spirit; here is the Spirit in his eternity. So that Christ's offering to God was not a mere time matter, a mere temporal matter with the Holy Ghost; but the blessed Spirit was there in his eternity; "the eternal Spirit, as though the Holy Spirit should say, this is the offering I have been looking for from all eternity; this is the offering I have been looking at in all that I have ever manifested to every poor sinner from the fall down to the present time; and this is the offering by which I will begin my work of grace in the hearts of sinners; and by which I will enlarge their hearts; by which I will shed abroad God's everlasting love, and by which I will dwell in them; and guide them unto all truth, and comfort them, and cause them to cry, Abba, Father; and cause them to rejoice. Here then, is an experimental and real consecration to God. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works;" the dead works mean works that we are obliged to do. For instance, suppose I was a Roman Catholic; and my conscience forces me, in order to keep it at peace, just to go through certain forms. Now all these are dead works, because I am obliged to do them; I am driven to do them by conscience. Then whatever religion I belong to,

if I am forced to do them as a slave, they are dead works. But here the conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God ; so that the child of God has not to keep his conscience quiet by a round of duties or ceremonies ; the partaker of this redemption, the man that is thus taught of the Spirit of the living God, he is consecrated by the love that he has to the truth, his works are living works ; he prays not as a dead form, but as a living, hungering, thirsting, sighing, mourning, needy sinner, after mercy and after God. He believes the gospel not as a mere creed, but he believes it from conviction ; he sees it in the Bible, he sees it just suits his circumstances ; he knows that that gospel is good news, good tidings from a far country ; and therefore he receives the truth in the love of it, he is pleased with it, charmed and delighted with it. Here are living works ; here is living prayer, living faith, living love, and living assurance. The man is alive, the truth is alive, the spirit is alive, Christ is alive, God is alive ; it is a scene of life from first to last ; there is no death with God ; there was a death with God, namely, the death that belonged to us ; but Christ has taken that death away ; therefore as there shall be no more curse, so there shall be no more death. But in this consecration to God, the apostle would give us to understand that it is not only by the eternity of redemption, by the offering of Christ, and by the eternity of the Holy Spirit, and by this living faith in and love to God ; but he goes on a little farther ; and we must not stop till we go on a little farther with him. He says, "For this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament ;" the word "cause" there I should think must mean "reason ;" "for this reason," that he might bring in eternal redemption ; for this reason, that there might be a resting place for the Holy Spirit in his eternity ; for this reason, that the people might be consecrated to God for ever ; for it is an everlasting consecration, and consequently must be by that which is eternal. "The mediator of the New Testament." Some may think perhaps that I dwell rather too much upon these words, "New Covenant," and "New Testament ;" but I really cannot help it ; I seem more and more charmed with it. Look at David's testimony when he was dying, how he was charmed with it ; it was everything with him. He had no doubt in private thought a good deal of it ; and perhaps had said a good deal more about it than we are aware of ; but when he came to a dying hour he bursts out, and preaches as it were a thousand sermons in very few words, expressive of his delight in this everlasting covenant, this new covenant consecration to God. The apostle in order to make the way clear goes on then, and says that "Jesus is the mediator of the transgressions that were under the first testament ;" that is, the first covenant ; "by means of death ;" so that Jesus Christ made a ransom for all the violations wherewith his own people violated that temporal covenant. Hence the apostle in another place, 2d of Colossians, speaks of the old covenant, concerning Christ's management of it, thus, that he hath blotted out "the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Now mark the end at which the apostle arrives ; he says, "that they which are called," called into the knowledge of this redemption, called into this consecration, called to the knowledge of this offering of Christ, "might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." So that in sprinkling, then, the people, we see what they are consecrated to ; they are brought into the truth of eternal redemption. Are we brought there ? Are we brought to feel our need, understand our need, and appreciate the blessed truth of the eternity of Christ's redemption ? Are we brought to appreciate the truth of the eternity of his offering, as implied there in the words that "he offered himself through the eternal Spirit ?" Then mark the end ; the end is "that they

which are called," thus called, "might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." And see how the apostle here dwells upon things that are eternal; that is what he is so delighted with; and what we too, if thus called, shall also be delighted with; as he saith in another place "we look not at the things that are seen, for they are temporal; but at the things that are not seen, for they are eternal."

There is another view I must take of this first part of our text, the sprinkling; which we get from the customs of the east; and though we must not rely too much upon what we get in our literary readings, and rangings, and meditations, still as the custom still exists I think we may apply it here. Dr. Kitto has a very good note upon this clause of our text; he observes that in the East to this day when any great personage entertains guests, there are persons appointed to sprinkle them with fragrant water; and he says there is a kind of three-fold object in so doing; first it is supposed to fit them for the presence of their entertainer; and second, that it declaratively constitutes them his guests; and third that it makes him responsible for their safety and for their happiness. I thought it was a very good note; it is only a literary note, but it will spiritualise itself very easily; for I am sure that faith in the word of God fits you for the Lord's presence. If you go into his presence with a lie in you hand, you will be sent out again; but take with you his own word, his own truth; if you have faith in his blessed word, and that faith works by love, and that word has endeared to you the Spirit of God, and the Christ of God has endeared the blessed God to you, and made you to love him; then this love to his word, this reception of his truth, this love to his name, this experimental acquaintance with him, fits you evidentially for the King's presence, for the presence of God; but without faith it is impossible to please God; while unto him that believeth all things are possible. Then we observed that it constituted them declaratively his guests. And we all know from the Scriptures that to eat and drink with a person is in that part of the world an emphatic declaration of friendship. Perhaps Peter includes this among other ideas when speaking of the Saviour after his resurrection he says, "We did eat and drink with him after his resurrection." So that not only after his resurrection did he declare the same truths that he did before his death; but he outwardly according to common custom, declared friendship with us, and we were glad to eat and to drink with him. And so, my hearer, if the truth of God be thy food now, the fruit of the tree of life will be thy food to all eternity; if Jesus be thy life now, he will be thy life for ever. You see whatever subject we take up, God's truth is the touch-stone; God's truth is the test; everything must be tested and tried by that; whatever will not bear the test of God's truth cannot stand. Then observe, the third idea is that this sprinkling not only fits the guests for the presence of their host, and declares them to be his guests, but makes him responsible also for their safety and for their happiness. And hence we have instances in the Bible; Rahab is one striking instance of the responsibility of hospitality. Now the Lord our God, as sure as ever he has made his truth dear to us; as sure as ever his word has been blessed to us, and we have eaten the same; so sure is he as it were responsible for us; he has undertaken to see that we are safe, and to see by and bye that we are happy; to see that our feet shall not be moved; that no evil shall befall us; a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand; but the destruction shall not come nigh them who are thus sprinkled with the truth, who are thus consecrated to him, brought near to him, by Christ's eternal redemption, Christ's eternal offering, by the promise of eternal inheritance; and thus brought to live upon the truth as it is in Jesus.

But as I intend to preach a very short sermon, I will go on to the next.

“ So shall he sprinkle many nations.” This word “ so,” this adverb of manner, has reference to the preceding verse; and the preceding verse has reference to the sufferings of Christ; to shew what kind of gospel that should be that would consecrate the people to God. Hence, “ As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” If we take the words of this verse literally, they may be taken thus; and there is no difficulty in the first clause; “ As many were astonished at thee.” They were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power; and they were astonished at his miracles, for they never saw it in that fashion before; and they were astonished at his wisdom; for when the officers would have taken, him, such pure wisdom shone in what he said that it awed them into silence, unnerved them, and made them return not with him, but without him; not with a testimony against him, but with a testimony for him. What, have ye not brought him? No, we have not. What have you to say about him? All we have to say is that never man spake like this man. So that many were astonished at him in his life, in his death; and all his people will be astonished at the mystery of his person, the greatness of his love, and the glory of his grace; and that for ever. “ His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” I think the way to understand that, if we take it literally, is this. Among the Romans crucifixion was, as most of you no doubt are aware, reckoned one of the most ignominious modes of punishment; and the malefactors always underwent previously to their being crucified certain scourgings, which would make them appear poor, miserable objects. But the Lord Jesus Christ not only underwent the usual scourging, but he underwent a great deal more in their treatment of him; they treated him as though there never was such an unworthy character upon the earth before him; they spat in his face; and as the Saviour says two chapters further back here, the prophet personating him; “ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” They were not content with giving him the common scourging; they must crown his sacred temples with thorns; they must cover his sacred face with blood; and as Kitto has observed, the Greek word translated “ scourge ” shews what kind of scourge it was; that it was not an ordinary one, that it was one that must have torn his flesh to pieces. So that the Saviour in connection with his crucifixion underwent an amount of suffering such as was never known in any other case! such was the rage of Satan, such was the malice of man, and such was the enmity of man against God. And yet, my hearers, just mark one thing; none of this formed any part of his atonement for sin. He had to wade through all this; for while they were thus treating him, his soul, as the hart panteth for the water brooks, was panting for God; he was longing to reach Calvary, he was longing to reach the place, to reach the time; he was longing to drink the cup, to endure the sword of justice; Yea, he was longing for the accomplishment of his work; and when on the cross he thirsted with an intensity of thirst for the accomplishment of his work. Mysterious that he should go through all this; hell’s object was if possible to stop his progress before he came to the atoning part; but stop his progress they could not, did not; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. And if the dear Redeemer thus conquered principalities and powers in his humiliation, and triumphed over them in it, how much more now that he is enthroned on high, having all power in heaven and on earth. So then, by what he should suffer, demonstrating the reality of his loves and by his atonement, so shall he send out a gospel that shall gather up a multitude that no man can number, consecrate them to God by eternal redemption, by the perfection of his offering, by the work of the Blessed

Spirit; and bring them to receive first the promise of eternal inheritance, and then have eternal inheritance itself.

But then it says, "the kings shall shut their mouths at him." They did so before he came for he was with his people of old; he was the divine angel, the angel of the covenant, the divine Word that was with his people of old. Take for instance Pharaoh; how he was put to silence; I mean the Pharaoh that lived in the time of Joseph. Not all the wisdom of his kingdom could fathom his dream; but when Joseph comes he interprets the dream; he lays open the seven years plenty first, and then the seven years famine. Why, Pharaoh was put to silence; Why, here is something has been told me now that I was never told before; I have heard something now that I never heard before; I need not remind you of the next Pharaoh, in the time of Moses. Moses went by the word of the Lord; Pharaoh opened his mouth very wide too, but his mouth was shut at the last. Look at it, here is this Pharaoh with his horsemen and chariots, a mighty host, close to the heels of the Israelites; but what of that? There is the word of the Lord; there is the promise of the Lord; by faith—ah, they had authority for that faith; it was not by fancy; the Lord's prediction and the Lord's promise had been upon record for many years, that he would visit them, and bring them up out of that land; by faith they went through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. The Egyptians assayed to prevent them; they might have said, We are going with great haste after these Israelites; let us stop and ask whether we have authority or not; because if we go into this sea without authority perhaps we shall not get out again. But no; the Lord did not intend that Pharaoh should have these reflections; his heart was now hardened; God has given him up to his own destruction. How true it is then that kings shall shut their mouths when the Lord thus interposes by his Arm. I need not remind you of Nebuchadnezzar; whose mouth was stopped three times. He opened his mouth very wide; he sent out a decree that wise men and of course poor Daniel and his companions all three were included, should be cut off. This mighty king Nebuchadnezzar, that killed whom he would, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would put down, and whom he would set up; this mighty king dreamed a dream, and not all the wisest men in his kingdom could fathom his dream. Ah, now comes the wisdom of God; Daniel and his friends have a nice quiet little prayer meeting; the Lord answers them, unfolds to Nebuchadnezzar his dream; and his mouth is shut, he is put to silence. But however, he forgets this, opens his mouth very wide again; sets up his image; says that all men must worship that, or else go into the fiery furnace. Daniel's companions refused; and so he ordered them to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. But his gods could not protect his own servants in executing his command; for when they came to the mouth of the furnace the flames consumed them. And what was the result? Did we not cast three men in bound? Yes; but here are four, and they are all loose; and the fourth is like unto the Son of God. Put to silence; his mouth shut. But still, after all this, he opened his mouth pretty widely again. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Ah, stop, Nebuchadnezzar, with all your wonderful greatness you shall be turned for seven years into a beast; they shall drive thee from among men; put to silence for seven years. See how true the words of our text are; there are plenty of instances of their fulfilment. I need not remind you, either, of Belshazzar, how he was put to silence; how his knees smote together, and his lips quivered; need not remind you of Darius, how he was put to silence; wondered because the lions could not eat Daniel. I need not remind you how Ahasuerus, after sending out a decree against the Jews, was by Mordecai's instrumentality, or Esther's rather, or the two together, was put to complete silence. I need not remind you of Herod, when our Lord was

born; he thought he would slay him, and a great many infants were slain; but ah! he could not slay the Saviour. In all these instances we see the force of the Apostle's reasoning, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But I shall now in conclusion take the word "kings" to mean tribes or kingdoms; again referring you to that scripture in Rev. vii.: "Out of all kindreds, and nations, and peoples;" so that people in the Gentile world shall be put to silence by hearing the truths of the Gospel; their mouths shall be shut; they shall not say a word against Christ. Ah, it's a great thing, friends, for the mouth to be shut against him; it is a great thing not to have a word to say against the perfection of his work, against the order of his kingdom, against his people, against his ways, against his covenant, against his truth. When a sinner is thus brought down into silence, then his prayer will be, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." "They shall shut their mouths at him." I know the time when my mouth was opened against the Lord. Ah, I said, elect! I will never believe that God would choose one and leave another; never believe that: God ordain a certain people to eternal life, whether they would or not; never believe that: the Lord Jesus Christ die for some of the human race, and not all; why, I said, I will never believe that. But as I went on into a knowledge of my own heart, and felt my need of a better Gospel than free will or duty faith could present, I then began to search the Scriptures; and that very free grace vineyard into which I said I would never go, was then glad to repent, and to come into that free grace vineyard, where the leviathan was slain, where the Lord keeps it night and day, where he waters it every moment; so that my mouth was shut; and now I praise the Lord for the very things which I once blindly and ignorantly spoke against.

Well, our text closes with saying, "That which they had not heard shall they consider;" it shall become a matter of meditation. I had intended to have given four ideas here, but my strength will hardly permit it. First that they shall consider the constitution of Zion; they shall walk around Zion, they shall tell the towers thereof; they shall mark well her bulwarks, they shall consider her palaces; they shall see there is no city so beautifully situated as Zion; it is after the order of the New Covenant; they shall see there is no God so great as Zion's God; to be so greatly praised as Zion's God; that there is no God that can defy our enemies like the God of Zion; that glorious things are spoken of Zion; they shall consider and meditate upon it, and the thought shall swell out the soul, and become a thought delightful, that this God, who is so great, and who is to be praised in the city of our God, and the mountain of his holiness, in the mount Zion, so beautiful for situation, and so strongly constituted that it hath everlasting foundations, and shall remain for ever; where the Lord God is the everlasting light, a glory that shall never be tarnished nor eclipsed; that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death. That is a department worth considering. Second, they shall consider also the providence of God. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, toil not, and spin not; seek his kingdom, and all other things shall be added. Consider God, how he takes care of all the departments of providence, and if he takes care of inanimate things, and of animate things which are of little value, as the sparrow, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? You will consider this, that if you can do nothing, he can do everything; if you can get at nothing he can get at everything. He may put some hard questions to you to prove you; but he himself knows what he will do. Third, they shall consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, Christ Jesus. Bless his precious name; he is always and everywhere the same. Consider then the objective end of their conversation; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." These words were the first text I preached from in our new chapel. And with these words I close this sermon, but when I shall preach again I know not.

NOTE.—Mr Wells did not preach again until Lord's-day, August 26.