

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE SON THAT NEVER TRANSGRESSED AT ANY TIME.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 3RD, 1861, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Romans 1. 4.

AFTER what I advanced last Lord's-day, morning, upon these words, I notice further what appears to me to be fairly implied; first here is *a contrast*; 'the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness.' I must keep these two together, namely, power according to the Spirit of holiness, because this spirit of holiness is the secret of his power: and then, secondly, *here is resemblance implied*; and thirdly, and lastly, *certainty*.

First, here is CONTRAST. You recollect in the genealogy given by the evangelist Luke, Adam is called the son of God, but Adam lost all his power. But Jesus Christ never lost any power that was given unto him. No power could be given unto Christ as God; because all power was naturally his as God—and so, 'The hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee: for thou hast given him power,' mark that, 'over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;' 'for the Father loveth the Son, and giveth all things into his hands, and hath committed all judgment unto the Son.' Thus, as God, he could not derive power; because all power naturally belonged to him; but as the Son of God, he had a power given unto him, and that power, in contrast to the first Adam, the Saviour kept. Adam lost his power by sin: and Jesus Christ, I say it with reverence, would have lost his power also if he had sinned; but he did not sin, he could not sin—he was not liable to sin; there was no possibility of his sinning, because he was, as I have observed, but one person, God and man in one person; so that whatever strength there was in his divinity, that was thrown into his manhood; all the attributes of Deity were the security of his manhood; so that he must be overcome as God, before he could be overcome as man. Well therefore may it be written that he did no sin. Let us, then, look, in the first place, at the contrast here implied; and we shall find that, there are, at least, no less than three contrasts in this matter. The Apostle Paul takes up this subject of contrast between Adam, the created son of God, and Jesus Christ, the begotten Son of God; he takes up this contrast in a very beautiful way, in the second chapter to the Hebrews—where the apostle brings before us Adam as the federal head of the human race, where the Lord had put all things in subjection under him; but saith the apostle, now we see not all things put under him: no, Adam lost his dominion by sin. Where then is the remedy? Here is the remedy: 'But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.¹ Here then, is the contrast. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels; he has gained, the second Adam, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, he has gained, for this is the idea, dominion; the first Adam lost dominion, but the second Adam has gained dominion, and retains, the Son of God retains that dominion. Christ, then, hath obtained dominion over sin; and as we are brought unto the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his atoning death has put sin down, has destroyed sin; the condemnation of sin is gone, the tribulation of sin still exists in the experience of the people of God, but the condemnation of sin is gone, now Jesus Christ hath thus obtained entire dominion—and being brought to see that this is the way of dominion, and how suited the way is, (Mark the language; 'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.') Here is a poor sinner brought to see and feel he is nothing but a sinner; now how shall that man have dominion over sin, how shall he have legal, experimental, universal, and final dominion over sin? Simply by Jesus Christ. 'It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' So that this dominion over sin is perfect. Here then, as the Saviour saith, 'If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' You may depend upon it there is no dominion over sin that will bring us to God, give us access to God, or acceptance with God, or fellowship with God, or bring us to anything that is eternal, but the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here then, is an entire contrast to the first Adam. But time would fail me to point out to you the 'very many' instances in the Scriptures of contrast between the created Son of God, Adam, and the begotten Son of God, Christ Jesus. I need scarcely, in this part of my subject, remind you of the 5th chapter of this very epistle; where, on the one hand, we have sin reigning by the first Adam, and death, judgment, and condemnation; all men under sin, and death, and judgment, and wrath; all men in the worst possible condition for them to be in; for what can man be under worse than under his sin, worse than under God's wrath, worse than under death, especially the second death, and under all the powers of darkness? Such is the representation given in the 5th chapter of this book. But just change the scene, see the Redeemer come in, see him the end of sin, the end of death, of judgment, of condemnation, of the law, for the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound—mark that; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so shall grace reign through righteousness, and that righteousness means, I think, a four-fold righteousness; first God's right to have mercy as a God of sovereignty, and therefore this grace shall reign by right, by Divine sovereignty; for he had a right, if he were pleased to exercise that right, to have mercy upon sinners, and through his sovereignty that grace shall reign to eternal life; second, that the righteousness means also equitable righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that that grace shall reign through Christ's righteousness to eternal life; third, that it means the righteousness of faith, that if I am a believer in this Jesus Christ with that faith that worketh by love, then God will be not unrighteous to forget my work of faith and labour of love that I have shewn unto his name; and so through this also, grace shall reign unto eternal life. And then there is God's ultimate right, for he never can lose his right—he has made provision for his people, and having made that provision, he has engaged to bring them to that provision; and so by the ultimate provision also that he has made, grace shall reign unto eternal life. Here then, we see the contrast, to be thus brought unto the Son of God, we get rid of sin, and death, and judgment, and condemnation,

and law, and wrath, and Satan, and everything that stood against us. Thus, then, he is the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness; and he being free from sin, he doing no sin, he magnifying God's law—what should we do without this hope? Thus if we take only this one view I am now taking of Christ, I am sure we may test the real Christian by the words of Peter when he saith, 'Unto you that believe he is precious.' I have been for years praying to the Lord to let me know what faith really is; what it is to be filled with all joy and peace in believing in Jesus Christ; what it is to triumph by faith; and what it is to rise by faith as with the wings of eagles, and what it is to defy everything by faith; for the Saviour saith, 'All things are possible to him that believeth;' and the matter comes to this, that whatever the Son of God has done, we can do, if we are believers, taking it in the proper sense of the word; for the Saviour, when referring to his miracles, saith, 'He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these, because I go to my Father;' that is to say, he has brought his atoning death against sin; we are taught to do the same, to bring his atoning death against sin; he has brought in his righteousness as the way of justification; we are to do the same, to make mention of his righteousness; he has brought his victorious power, and accomplished the warfare; we are to do the same. I should think this must be the meaning of the Saviour; 'The works that I do ye shall do also, and greater works than these;' because those works essential to eternal salvation are greater than the miracles that he wrought in his life. And thus see how he stands out a contrast to the first Adam: that the first Adam lost everything; the second Adam loses nothing; that the first Adam is gone, and gone for ever; but the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted, and exalted for ever. He is, then, declared to be the Son of God with power; and he is at the same time God as well as the Son of God; and therefore doing no sin, he still remains in the possession of his power, travelling in the greatness of his strength. Here then is that omnipotence; here then is that eternal God, for this Son of God is God as well as the Son of God; here then is that eternal God that is our refuge. And who is it that has placed underneath us his everlasting arms, his everlasting power, but Jesus Christ? And who is it that has thrust out the enemy, and that destroys that enemy, but the Lord Jesus Christ? The Son of God with power. This then is God the Father's delight, as it carries out the expression of his love to our souls; it is the Holy Spirit's delight, for he hath testified of this all through the scriptures; and I am sure it is the delight of the poor sinner.

But, second, he contrasts not only with the first Adam, but with ourselves. Oh, what a contrast between us and the Lord Jesus Christ. Just let me give you one general idea upon the contrast between us and Jesus Christ, and that one general idea shall be from circumstances recorded in the Bible. Take, for instance, all the miracles he wrought in a way of healing; whether you take the leper, or the blind, or the deaf, or the dumb, or whether you take the dead, or whether you take the other kinds of miracles, such as his feeding the multitude with the loaves and the fishes, such as the casting out devils, and such as his saving his disciples, and putting to silence the winds and the waves. Do you not see, taking this general view, which I am taking for conciseness' sake, do you not see in the contrast here what these poor creatures were without him? If they could have got rid of their maladies themselves, would they have come to him; would they have troubled him, would they have sought him? If the disciples could have fed the multitude without him, they had pride enough in their hearts, like all of us, to do the miracle without him, if they could have succeeded. And so, when they were tossed on the waves, they laboured with their oars until the fourth watch of the night; if they could have done without him, think you they would not? for human nature is so bent that Christ is the very last refuge we would fly to, his name

the very last name we would own, and his truth the very last law that we would desire to be regulated by. Now then look at these poor creatures without Christ, and see in all their maladies and troubles how helpless they were; but when the Saviour stepped in, in the vast variety of form which is shewn in the New Testament in working miracles, see how by him they all got rid of their troubles and maladies, and acquired all that provision, and safety, and, in a word, everything that they needed. Just so it is now, my hearer, whatever our troubles are, whatever our distresses, our griefs, our necessities, however stormy our path, let our circumstances be what they may, we can get rid of them, be sustained under them, and surmount them, and they shall be subservient to our good, only by the Lord Jesus Christ. See then the mighty contrast between Jesus Christ and us; how true his words are that 'without me ye can do nothing.' When he comes by his Spirit, and touches the tongue of the minister, with what eloquence that man can pour forth the mysteries of eternity; when Jesus Christ by his Spirit touches the heart and feeling of the hearer, oh, then, how the word becomes meat, and wine, and honey; how delightful it then becomes; you can then rejoice, and understand what is meant where the Lord says, 'Hear, and your soul shall live, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness; and come unto me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'

Ah, you say, here is the mighty contrast; I can bear testimony, I hope you can; and if you can honestly say so, you have life in the soul; I mean where the Saviour says, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Now it is very easy for you to say that theoretically, but can you say it honestly? Have you tried to make yourself holy and righteous, and to love God, and to obey his law? Have you tried to be everything you think you ought to be? Have you laboured at this? Because if you have not, when you say you can do nothing it is mere guess work; you have acquired the doctrine of human helplessness theoretically, but then that is, one thing, and the Lord that searcheth the heart knoweth whether we have acquired that doctrine experimentally, or whether we have learnt it 'from the pulpit, or from books, or from hearsay. Now if we know something of trying, and constrained at last to give up in self-despair, until we heard, if not in words, yet in substance, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour;' ye that are trying to make yourselves holy, ye that are trying to make yourselves, you think, as good as God would wish you to be, but you will never do it; you are trying to be heavenly, and to please God by your doings, but you will never accomplish it; you may labour and toil, and the more you labour, the further you will be off, for the flesh will be flesh still: and from your experience you will learn that flesh and blood cannot inherit spiritual things; and your flesh and blood nature will war against spiritual things, and that your old Ethiopian will be an Ethiopian still; and that the leopard will be the leopard still; there is no hope, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' What, say you, is that an invitation? Well, we are in the habit of calling it an invitation; I suppose we must go on doing so, unless we like to risk being criticized and reproached more than we are. But I should very much question whether Jesus Christ ever gave an invitation during all his ministry; I cannot find an invitation to his people anywhere. Well, but he says, 'Come unto me;' is not that an invitation? It is what men call an invitation, but I do not believe it. Ah, you are coming out then now, you don't believe it. No, I don't, I positively don't believe it. Well, what do you believe then? I believe that it is a positive command, and that he directs that command just where he pleases, and when he pleases. If you invite me to come to your house, I can come or not come, which I please certainly; but when we come to these gospel matters, now I

I say Christ does not invite; I mean in real gospel matters. You would not like to call that an invitation, 'Lazarus, come forth.' No, say you, that was a command; the word went with power, and he did come forth. And just so now, 'Come unto me;' there are the words: can you come? No! you cannot. 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden.' Well, you say, I have been trying; well, can you come? No, you know you cannot. 'And I will give you rest.' But can you enter into that rest? You cannot. 'Take my yoke upon you.' But can you yoke yourself to Christ? You cannot. 'Learn of me.' But can you learn of him? You cannot. 'And ye shall find rest unto your souls.' But can you find rest to your soul? You cannot. No! Men think because the words are recorded in the Bible that there they lie, we can come and do just as they say. I have found to the contrary, and so did all the Old Testament saints. 'Be not silent unto me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.' Now let the Lord speak home with power to my soul, 'Come unto me;' and let the word be powerful enough to bring me, and to say, 'I will give you rest,' and to break the yoke from my neck, and burst my bonds in sunder, and open my prison house, and expand my soul, and fill me with joy and peace in believing; and make me happy, and yoke me with Jesus Christ; and let me learn my eternal election of God, and then cast all my burdens and cares upon him, and find his yoke easy and his burden light. Let the word thus come with power, then I can do what is there commanded, but not else. Thus then, there is not only a contrast here between Christ and us; he having power, we altogether helpless, that without him we can do nothing; but there is a set time to favour Zion. Ah, say you, what then would you do in this case? I know what such a person will do; I can prophecy what he will do, and I am sure not to be wrong; I mean a person who is in the state I am describing, who is brought to know that by Jesus Christ, and him only; that by free-grace, and by free-grace only; that by the Son of God, and by the Son of God only; that on the ground of eternal new covenant relationship, implied in the very term, Son of God, that in that way only that man can be set free; I will tell you what he will do; he will turn his back upon all other gospels, upon all yea and nay ministers, he will flee from all yea and nay gospels; he will wait at wisdom's gates, and watch the posts of her doors; he will say I must perish here, if I perish at all: I have no hope anywhere else; this is the only gospel that is any use to me; and whether I am lost or saved, I can listen to no other; and he waits and looks, and by and bye a little comfort comes, just to keep his head above water; and at last the set time to favour him comes, and at an hour when he thinks not, the Son of man comes in upon him; he comes and stands in the midst, though the door is shut, and the soul is in the dark; he comes and stands in the midst, as it were, and saith, 'Peace be unto you.' Oh, then, the foundations of the prison are shaken, the bonds fall off, the soul comes out and begins to look around and say, ah, what a wonder-working God is this; now I find there is a difference between the letter and the power, the form and the Spirit, the sound and the sense, between the paper and ink of the Bible, and the Spirit of the living God, who alone can write these things upon the fleshy tables of the heart.

Thus then if thou art taught of God thou wilt learn the mighty contrast between Christ and thyself; thou wilt find that all power is with him; that thy times are not in thy hands, but in his hands; and that while men are telling you that you can come to Christ to-day if you like, you will find they are telling you a falsehood, that you can come and have peace to-day if you like, when you know you do like, there is nothing you so much desire, as God is your witness, but you can no more do it than create a world; and thus you demonstrate from your own experience the emptiness of all such gospels; and

having done so, and thus prepared to realize the all sufficiency of the gospel of the Son of God, you will know that you came up out of the pit wherein there is no water by the blood of the everlasting covenant, by the blood of the Son of God.

This is the way to know the Son of God, the way to know God the Holy Spirit; and thus to know him is eternal life. Thus then he stands a contrast to the first Adam and a contrast to us. But bless the Lord, bless his holy name for ever and for ever, that while he stands a contrast to us in the sense I have stated, that contrast shall end, shall terminate, and sweet harmony, and resemblance, and entire likeness shall take the place of that contrast, for his blood shall make us holy as he is holy; his righteousness shall make us righteous as he is righteous; and his power shall assimilate us to his own mind, his own order of things; so that he will present us at the last not as he found us, in a state of contrast to him, but in a state of reconciliation to him, in a state of harmony with him, in a state of sweet and glorious oneness with him; for whatever perfection of beauty there is in him, that perfection is to be upon his people, and he puts that prayer into their hearts that it may be upon them: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.'

Then again, this Son of God with power, stands in contrast to the ceremonial law; upon that I must not enlarge, because I have many more things yet to say. I will just quote one scripture upon this contrast, and it is this: that 'the law,' saith the apostle in the Hebrews, meaning the ceremonial law, made nothing perfect;' fairly implying that the bringing in of a better hope by Christ Jesus made *everything* perfect; the one made nothing perfect, the other made everything perfect: the one could not make the law of God perfect in answering its demands, but Christ did: the one could not make the justice of God perfect in answering its demands—but Christ did: the one could not make victory over sin perfect, because it could not endure the penalties due to those sins—the other did; the one could not bring us into perfect peace with God, the other did: the one could not swallow up death in victory, but the other did perfectly; the one could give no security, but the other gives eternal security, the bringing in of a better hope doth: 'he hath by his one offering:' what a remarkable scripture that is; *one* offering, only one; one love, only one; did not fix his love upon you; and then take it off, and then put it on again: it is done, and done for ever; chose you once, only once done, and done for ever; Christ died once, and it is done for ever; the Holy Spirit quickens the soul once, and it liveth for ever: and the body will not be raised up at the last great day, and made to last a few thousand years, and then grow old and decay, and have to be raised up again: no, raised up once, and that for ever, incorruptible: as Christ dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him, so death can have no more dominion over them.

II. RESEMBLANCE. That just as Noah so abode by the order of things the Lord gave him, that he both saved his house and realized what in other respects was predicted of him, so Jesus Christ, a plan was given to him, for the Father sheweth him all things; and Christ came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father; he worked out that plan, and he so worked it out as to carry us safely through the flood, perfectly safe. Here is resemblance. And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; and the 45th Psalm says of Christ that grace was poured into his lips; that Noah found grace, grace by which he and his house should be saved; a plan of grace, a gracious plan; so grace was poured into the Saviour's lips; the Spirit of God rested upon him, and brought a covenant of grace into his mind as man, and that covenant he worked out. And as Noah was to be a comfort, because of their work, the toil of their hands, because of the ground which the Lord had

cursed; so that then came that great law, namely, 'While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease; here is the covenant of Providence. And there has not been from that day to this universal famine, and I am sure there never will be.'

So then just as Noah carried his family safe through the flood, and got that promise of the temporal and spiritual need being supplied, so did Christ. And just as Joseph was blessed with power to save much people alive, and all the persecution he met with could not move him, the Lord made certain revelations to him, and he abode by these; he would not deviate from them; he had a very rough path to travel to realize their fulfilment, but he did realize them; and his brethren came to him, the very same persons who had hated him afterwards bowed to him, loved him, and blessed God for such a wondrous display of his mercy. Just so it is now; while in a state of nature our carnal minds were filled with enmity against our spiritual Joseph; we were strangers to the spiritual famine; like the prodigal, we were not yet come to ourselves; but when we came to a knowledge of ourselves, a mighty famine arose in the land; we are brought to Jesus Christ, and he does not reproach us with our faults, but he makes the declaration, 'Be not angry with yourselves; God meant it unto good; he hath sent me before you to save much people alive.' And just as Joseph had power to save much people alive, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God with power; yea, he himself is the bread of eternal life, he himself is our sustenance; brought to him we find in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And just as the Lord gave Moses power to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, and sustain them through the wilderness; just so has Jesus Christ brought us out of bondage, and still sustains us in this wilderness world. Joshua had power to settle the Israelites down in the promised land, just so hath Jesus Christ settled us down in the promised land, and we are to go no more out for ever. Just as the Lord gave David power to subdue all enemies round about, and bring about such a state of peace and prosperity as was never known before nor since; just so the Lord Jesus Christ hath so destroyed sin, and death, and the devil, and enemies round about, as to bring about that state of peace and prosperity such as never was before; the prosperity that the Israelites possessed in the time of Solomon passed away; but that prosperity which we have by Jesus Christ will never pass away; it is eternal.

III. The third point is that of SECURITY, of CERTAINTY. He is the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness. He never was defiled, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' So we want a certain holiness; but you will not find it in yourself; we want a righteousness of certainty; a government of certainty, a freedom of certainty, a possession of certainty wherein we cannot be disinherited. Now we have all this fairly implied in the language of our text. 'The Son of God with power.' I dare not branch out upon the various scriptures that set before us the certainty we have by the Lord Jesus Christ, that he opens, and none can shut, and he shuts, and none can open. He opens a way for the Israelites to come up out of Egypt, and shuts up the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and none can open; brings out his own, and leaves the others there. But passing by this I notice the last clause, carrying out the same idea, certainty; declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. 'There never was such a resurrection before, and never will be again.'

I do not know whether it ever struck you, but no person, and there were some in the Old Testament age raised from the dead—and when the Saviour died, after his resurrection, some were raised from the dead; he him-

self raised some from the dead; and all his people, will at the last, rise from the dead: but still there is an infinite difference between his resurrection and the resurrection of his people. And wherein does it lie? Why, you will say, in his public character as a substitute for them. Yes, it is right so far, and true; but there is another point which I wish you not to lose sight of. Angels, fallen angels came under God's wrath, not one has risen from that death, the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, but he will never rise from that hell, never. Now Jesus Christ was the first, Jesus Christ was the last, Jesus Christ is the only person that ever rose from the hell of God's wrath: he went into that hell, and that hell could not destroy him, but he destroyed that, he went into the second death, or into that wrath that constituted the second death, and yet the pains of that second death that he endured could not wear him out, but he wore those pains out. The sword cut him off, and inflicted upon him wounds and bruises that sin entailed upon the election of grace, and yet from this wrath and from all this sin laid upon him, from all the powers of darkness, from this hell, he rose from the dead. He is the only person that ever rose from the hell of God's wrath; no angel ever did, no man ever did, and no man ever will: the fire is unquenchable, the worm dieth not. And yet men now want to soothe us with the notion that the lost will suffer only a little while. God grant that those men that so talk may not be there to try it—for I think they will find it a long while. I happen to be one of those—and while I have my Bible in my hand; I will never give it up—that believe the Lord Jesus Christ brought all the infinities of his nature into play when he endured the curse of the law; the infinities of his person, that is, his attributes.

Shall I mention, in conclusion, three or four? He must have an infinity of knowledge to know when sin was clean gone; he must have an omnipotency of power, to suffer what he did; and he must have an omnipotency of power also to prevent his rebelling; to endure that, and not murmur, to endure that and not rebel, to endure that and not sin. He had provocations enough in his life to make any mere creature rebel, and kick, and commit ten thousand sins; but they could not cause him to commit one sin. And not only so, but all that he endured could not even lessen his love, or his delight in the salvation of sinners. There is a remarkable circumstance to shew that he still delighted to do the Father's will, tremendous as that department was; when he heard the feeble cry of the dying believing thief by his side, 'Lord, remember me;' not all that he was enduring could hinder him attending to that cry, and throwing a promise into that man's soul that indissolubly united that man to Paradise, and that that very day; 'I say unto thee this day shalt thou be in Paradise with me.' I am sorry time will not allow me to say more upon this.

I cannot conclude without just naming one little circumstance, which I think sets a good example. A friend, this morning, sent a note to me, wishing me to acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in a time of need, in preserving both mother and child; and that a kind providence had favoured them with every needful comfort,—and it struck him what an excellent thing the 'Surrey Tabernacle Ladies' Benevolent Society' was, in so nicely furnishing to the needy an excellent box of things, and pecuniary help as well, to the needy at such times, so he thought he could not thank the Lord better than by giving a guinea to the 'Ladies' Benevolent Society' as a thank-offering. So he enclosed the £1 1s. in a note to me. Now this is a good example; all of you follow it as near as you can.