

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

SINCERITY.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4TH, 1863, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."—Ephesians vi. 24.

THE people of God are by the grace of God, when he begins the work, like newborn babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. They are simple in their motives, and sincere in their intention, and their desire is to know the Lord to the salvation of their souls, to know the Lord to the possession of that life which is everlasting; and in due time the Mediator, and the blessed God by the Mediator, will be made dear unto them. Hence the apostle saith unto these same people, "Unto you that believe he is precious." They saw that he was the pearl of great price; they saw that he was that gift that is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it, that whithersoever it turneth it prospereth. And the apostle Peter, seeing them thus desiring the sincere milk of the word, and seeing the Saviour enthroned in their affections, he could read out the blessedness of such a people, and said, on the ground of seeing these evidences in them, "Ye are a chosen generation." He saw in this state of the people their eternal election of God: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood;" he saw their vital oneness with the eternal priesthood of the dear Saviour; and he saw that blameless state into which they were brought;—"a holy nation." Anything but holy in themselves; it is the blood of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus, the spirit of Jesus, the truth of Jesus, that consecrates them to God. And "a peculiar," or, as the margin reads it, "a purchased people," purchased by the blood of the Lamb; and thus they are prepared to show forth the praises of him who hath called them into this new state, into this new existence, into this new and living way, into these new heavens and new earth, into the bond of this new covenant; they are thus new creatures, old things are passed away, and all things are become new.

First, *so love him as to be severed from an ungodly world.* Second, *so love him as to escape that woe to them that are at ease in Zion;* and third and last, *love him above everything pertaining unto this life.*

First, then, *so love our Lord Jesus Christ as to be severed from an ungodly world.* "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men;" or, as the margin reads it, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared;" that is, unto all classes and orders of men. "For it is written that God will have all men to be saved;" that is, as the circumstance proves, all classes and orders of men, and not all men individually; because the end will prove that there are some that the Lord never intended to save; the people that he saves are out of all nations, and peoples, and kindreds, and tongues. Now this grace of God teacheth us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It thus severs us from ungodliness, from the ungodly, and from an ungodly

world. We are no longer at home in Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord is crucified; we are no longer at home with the enemies of holiness and righteousness; we are no longer at home with those that love not our Lord Jesus Christ: we are no longer at home with those that fear not God; we are no longer at home with prayerless, graceless, trifling, ungodly persons, any more than we are with mere empty professors. But then, being thus taught to deny these things, what have we to put in their place? for that is always a matter of importance. Hence, if a man has anything he likes, unless you can give him something that is more valuable than he likes better, he does not care to give up that which he does like unless you will show something that he can see is better, and so can win his affection to that which is better; then he certainly will, when this is discerned, and it is a discernment and a feeling which the Lord gives to his people—such an one will give up the wood for the sake of the iron, he will give up the brass for the sake of the gold, he will give up that which is of very little value, or rather altogether injurious, and with which he must soon part, for that which is infinitely better, and shall be his possession for ever. Hence the apostle says, "Looking"—these same persons, who are thus severed from an ungodly world, and made to fear God, and to walk in wisdom's ways, and to believe in Jesus Christ,—looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, "Looking for that blessed hope." As though he should say, The hope of the ungodly is a cursed hope, the hope of the Pharisee is a cursed hope; there is only one hope that is a blessed hope, and that is that hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, the hope of salvation, the hope of righteousness, the hope of eternal glory; this is that blessed hope. And so, if we truly love Jesus Christ, we shall thus come out from among them and be separate, and shall look for this blessed hope that is in Christ Jesus. And here is that to look for, I was going to say, that surpasses the inheritance of an archangel; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour." Wherein, my hearer, would you look for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour? Where would you look for this? Why, you would say, I would look for that to his coming by-and-bye, at the end of time, for he will then come in his glory, and it will be a glorious appearance. Well, that is right; but I would advise you not to look exactly like that; I should advise you what I think to be rather a better way than that; I should advise you first to look to Calvary's cross, and see how our God appeared there, and see how justice was satisfied there, and see how our judgment was taken away there, and see how our sin was blotted out there, and see how death was swallowed up there, and see how Satan was conquered there, and see how salvation was wrought there, and see how the price of our redemption was paid there, and see how mercy and truth met together, how righteousness and peace embraced each other there. Was not that a glorious appearing of our God, who so loved us that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all? Was not that a glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour? Here everything is harmonious, and here all is settled. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour." Now take this with you all through your life, namely, what Jesus Christ has done; take this with you into the Jordan, and look for the appearing of your God after the same order at the last, and then you may call it a glorious appearing, because as the first appearing put away all sin, the second appearing he will appear without sin unto salvation; you stand entirely exempted. And thus you will so love the Lord Jesus Christ as to be severed from an ungodly world, and appreciate the hope of the gospel, that lively hope which we have through the abundant mercy of our God by Christ Jesus; and you will appreciate this glorious, mediatorial, salva-

tion appearing of the great God. And he may well there be called the great God, for there is great love and great mercy, great power and great wisdom, indeed, everything that is great. Nowhere doth the greatness of God appear as by what the dear Saviour hath done. I am sure Dr. Watts is not wrong when he says,—

“God, in the person of his Son,
Hath all his mightiest works outdone.”

Now these are the endearments of the Saviour; so love him as to appreciate these things and prize them. “Who gave himself for us,” mark that! First, it is a blessed hope; all other hopes are cursed, must come to an end; secondly, a glorious appearing; and, third, he gave himself for us, saith the apostle, the same scripture to which we are referring. Put himself into our place, under our sin, put himself under the curse due to us, put himself under all law’s demands that were upon us; puts himself under our responsibilities; there he is in our place. Bless his holy name, he came himself, stood there himself, himself lived, himself died. It was not by the blood of others, as the priests under the law, but by his own blood he entered into the holy place, even into heaven itself, having obtained eternal redemption for us;—gave himself for us. These, then, will cause us to love the Lord Jesus Christ in this blessed hope, in this glorious appearing, and in this giving himself for us. “That he might redeem us from all iniquity.” Yes, my hearer, your freedom from all iniquities, every one of your iniquities, every one of your sins, every one of your faults; you are, in your freedom from them all, indebted to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. “To redeem us from all iniquity.” Precious Redeemer! precious redemption! precious blood! precious theme! No wonder the Lord should so order it that millions of beasts should be on Jewish altars slain to represent the one great event of Jesus redeeming his people with his own precious blood. “Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.” “And purify unto himself a peculiar people.” He purifies them unto himself in this way, brings them into this hope, and into this revelation, and into this substitution, and into this redemption, and thus purifying unto himself a peculiar people, a people not common; no, they are peculiar, they stand out on peculiar grounds, “zealous of good works,” and that they are sure to be. And I may here just observe that those who are taught of God, they do good works with all their might, but they think nothing of them; that is to say, not in a way of condition, or a way of merit. The great error of the present day, as indeed the error of all ages, is turning evidences into conditions. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom;” “I was hungry, and ye gave me meat.” Now the things there named are not conditions. Jesus Christ did not receive them into the kingdom of God because they did those things; no, he did not bless them on those grounds; he merely identified them as the people that are blessed; “Come, ye blessed of my Father;” and he distinguishes them there by their practical sympathies with the poorer brethren. “Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” He did not bless them because they did these things, but they did these things through love to him, and these things proved that they belonged to him. On the other hand, “I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat.” He did not curse them because they did not do those things, but he cursed them because they were under the law; he cursed them because they were enemies to him; he cursed them, for they were never blessed, and he mentions their non-doing, not as the ground on which he curses them, but as the evidence and proof that they were not his people, and therefore, not being his people, their names were not in the book of life; their names were not on the breastplate of the high priest; their names were never engraven upon the shoulder-pieces of the high priest; their names were never on the roll of the new covenant; their names were never graven

upon the palms of Jehovah's hands; and he mentions the omission of those practical sympathies with his brethren, not as conditions or grounds upon which to condemn them, but as evidences they did not belong to God. Beware, then, how you turn evidences into conditions: mighty difference: all proper in their place.

But, second, we not only so love the Lord Jesus Christ as to be severed from an ungodly world, and to make the Saviour's words true concerning us, that "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; I have chosen you out of the world." You have not received the spirit which is of the world, for the spirit which is of the world is a spirit of enmity against God's truth, whereas you have received the spirit which is of God, and you know the things that are freely given to you of God, and that spirit that you have received enables you to enter into the endearments of the Saviour, so that you do love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Second, *so love the Lord Jesus Christ as to escape the woe to them that are at ease in Zion.* But those words are very quiet in comparison with some words. The people of God in all ages, at least when in their right minds, have detested bondage; they have hated other gods; they have hated the thought of their religion being in subjection to man; they have hated the dastardly spirit that would go crawling on—does not matter how things are, so that we are pretty comfortable in the worldly sense. I do not know the meaning of the words I am about to quote—I must leave you to judge—but I just say there was a woman, an honourable woman; she looked round, and she saw how the Israelites were placed, and she poured out her soul unto God, and God revealed himself unto her, and she was determined, single-handed, if it could be done in no other way, to go forth in the name of the Lord against Sisera and all his host, mighty as they might be. She was awaked up, and triumphed over all. And now there were some among them that did not like to be moved; it disturbed them; and see the solemn words, that while some ran to their ships, their merchandise, and others remained in their sheepfolds, and some said, Who is that Deborah? we are not going with her, no; what is said of these? "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." So, then, that we may so love Jesus Christ that we may not be under that woe to them that are at ease in Zion, nor under that angelic curse that must fall upon those that are not one in heart and soul in the progress of the Saviour's kingdom, and the ingathering of immortal souls, and the glory of the blessed God. And so she triumphed. But there were some then, and there are some now, that love the Lord. "Let them that love him"—in contrast with those that hate him—"be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." And so it is, then, my hearer, not only so love Jesus Christ as to go forth without the camp bearing his reproach, but so love Jesus Christ as to work well and zealously with that love. Now I just now observed that the apostle says they are a people zealous of good works. Noah found grace, and built the ark; that was a good work. Moses, after being at Sinai, built the tabernacle; that was a good work. Solomon built the temple; that was a good work. Zerubbabel built the second temple, and that was a good work. I will not stop to show the vast good that was done by those buildings, that is to say, by the ordinances carried on within them. You built this chapel, and that was a good work; and you paid for it, and that was a good work; and you mean to build another, God being with you, and that will be a good work. And now I am got thus far, perhaps I shall be excused if I say just a word or two relative to my own motives and feelings upon the matter, in order that our friends may have an answer to those that impute to me all sorts of motives. I say nothing of the daring, insulting letters I have had, anonymous letters, imputing to me the worst of motives. And there may be, perhaps, amidst thirteen or fourteen hun-

dred people here, half a dozen or so evil-disposed persons, and perhaps nothing I can say will alter it, for—

“ He that's convinced against his will
Is of the same opiniou still ”—

and all will look yellow to the jaundiced eye. Now just a word upon my motive in this matter. Our deacons for a long time have made every possible inquiry as to whether anything could be done to improve our position here; they arrived at the conclusion that nothing could be done. The people were unhappy, and they wanted to know how it was the deacons came to that conclusion. The deacons at last felt it was needful to have a public meeting; but when that public meeting was held I knew no more what would transpire, or what position the people would take, than I know the man in the moon. I was utterly ignorant of it. I did not suppose they would propose a new chapel. I myself did not. I cannot say I did not think of such a thing, but I certainly did not think of proposing such a thing. We had our meeting. At that meeting we pointed out the grounds upon which the deacons had arrived at the conclusion that nothing prudently could be done to this place. The meeting immediately fell in with the conclusion of our deacons, and thereby justified the conclusion to which our deacons had come. Now at that meeting I did not propose a new chapel. I must confess I did just suggest it. I said, Well, there is but one remedy left if you are determined not to remain as you are, and that is a new chapel. And it was taken up, as those of you here who were present know, unanimously, ran like electricity through the meeting, and you gave practical proofs that evening that you were determined in the principle you had adopted. Well, I will now come to my own feeling. I will say, if I studied my own personal ease I should have nothing at all to do with it. Here is a nice little chapel, and as nice a congregation, as beautiful a flock, as any upon the surface of the globe. I have experienced your unbounded kindness now for many, many, many years. If, therefore, I had studied my personal ease, I should have said, Let me go quietly on as I am; I am getting a bit of bread, as far as that department is concerned. And then, again, if I studied my personal ease, I should not have run about the country in the way I have. I have preached pretty well all over England; left my home and my family a week at a time, and run here, and run there, and in other people's houses, and they have all treated me very kindly. But these things are not done without sacrifice; and while the churches have been very kind to me, I have travelled at a great loss; it has been a great loss to me in every way, both as to physical strength and temporally too, because I have never been what you may call really remunerated. So that if I had studied my personal ease, I should have said, I will not preach for any one; I will give myself up more to the Bible; I shall go into my own pulpit better furnished, and my congregation will get the benefit of it, for I shall be more useful to them, though I shall not be of any use to others. And thus, I do hope that I may on this occasion say, that instead of studying my personal ease I have been constrained by the noble principle contained in our text; “ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” I trust I have laboured in sincerity as in the sight of God, and I think very few Christians would undertake to say that grace has not been with me; I am sure it has, myself. Thus I have not studied my own case. In the second place, if I studied my temporal welfare I should have stood rather against this. I am pretty comfortable as it is; but not quite so rich as some present. There are some that want to get at precisely what I have; they want to get at that. Well, I have a very strong feeling upon that. My sentiment upon that subject is that a minister ought to have what he is worth. Let him labour; and when all the lawful expenses of the place are paid, what there is left I think fairly comes to him. And no right-

minded man would wish to pry into every drawback, or calamity, or loss, or gain, or circumstance of the minister and his family, for his little affairs to be exposed and criticized by a host of enemies. Why, it would only grieve the friends, and furnish, in some cases perhaps, materials to the enemy. I have a very strong feeling upon that. One letter tells me that I have eight hundred pounds a year. I wish it was not an anonymous letter; for if that person would kindly make it up to that, I can tell him he would have a pretty round sum to turn out every quarter to make it up to that; I can tell you that. Well, say you, tell us what it is. Well, the right-minded do not want to know, and I do not always have the same. When we first built this chapel I had about sixty or seventy pounds a year, because I was anxious the debt should be paid off. That debt was to be paid in ten years, and through my having as little as I could, and the Lord's goodness, and altogether, it was paid off in five years. And then, regarding the new chapel now in purpose, I may say I am quite ready to make all the sacrifices I can. It has been said, What does Mr. Wells mean to give? Well, friends, I mean to give what I can. I hope by what I give, and by my labours,—for I, of course, shall travel about partly, at least, at my own expense,—I hope at any rate to give one twentieth part of the whole amount, namely, five hundred pounds. I hope by what I give and get I shall be able to do that. I hope you will not be angry with me for these remarks, though I have not quite done yet. I am not saying them unkindly. I just now said, as regards people knowing what I have, I will tell you, much as I love you, and much as I esteem your kindness, I would rather go to-morrow into some business—keep a sweetmeat shop, or something else,—I would get a bit of bread, I always did, and I would now; I would go and get a living in business, and come and preach as well as I could, and would not receive a single farthing, rather than everybody should know every penny I get. I am sure a right-minded person would not wish to know any such thing. Suffice it to say I am more than satisfied; I have experienced so many favours that I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently for all of them. Therefore, in this case, I have not studied my case, I have not studied my temporal benefit; for if you build a chapel, I do not expect to get any temporal advantage from it, for it will take some years, no doubt, to clear off the last part of the debt; and I see nothing before me but hard work, a happy death, and a glorious heaven, and I do not want anything besides; these things will inspire me and lead me on. And again, if I studied a good name I should have been quiet. That is the nice minister that does not disturb any one; that is the nice minister that does not disturb the devil, and that does not disturb the professor; that is the nice minister that goes to and fro,

"And so he lives, and so he dies,
 And nobody laughs, and nobody cries."

That is the nice minister. Well, that I do not mind much about,—all sorts of reproach. Well, say some, but you should not have united with the people so readily. I do not know whether, in that decision of the people, the Latin saying is not true, *Vox populi vox Dei*, "the voice of the people is the voice of God;" and I trust it will so prove on this occasion. And therefore I do unite with them, heart and soul; I pray for them, I labour for them, and do all I possibly can at the throne of grace, and all the means that God has appointed. We are running into no hazard; and may the Lord bless us with all the grace and all the wisdom we need. Thus, then, those of our friends,—I do not mind adversaries,—but some few of our friends impute such motives to me,—it always hurts me when that is the case; because when I was first led to speak of the gospel I told you many times the motives, and that remains the mainspring, shall I say, of the watch to this day, namely, that the Lord having rolled into my soul his eternal mercy by the 8th verse of the 54th of Isaiah, I felt

I could not hold my peace, I felt the very stones would cry out. With that feeling,

"I went and told to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I had found."

And here I am this morning, and I can call the Lord to witness I am not conscious of any ambition; I am not conscious of any motive of vain-glory; I am not conscious of having any end in view but the good of the souls of men and the glory of the blessed God. But to rest where I can move is what I never did, never will, and never shall. I therefore rejoice in the wonderful unanimity that is among you; fourteen or fifteen hundred people, and scarcely twenty among them all that differ from us; and they, some of them, I think, would not, only they want to be a little noticed; they think they will be lost in the crowd, and so they stand out,—stand on one side;—I am here, I wish to be noticed. And I think the less I notice them the better; the best way is to let them alone, for they will come by-and-bye. Well, say some, I don't like Mr. Wells as I used to do. Never mind Mr. Wells; the place is not for man, but for God; do not do it in my name, but in the name of the Lord. Ah, well, he does not preach as he used to do. Of course; I know all about that; do you think that I cannot understand that? You must think that I am a greater flat than I am; you must suppose my pate is more shallow than it is, to think I cannot see through that. You had better say nothing, and leave the matter; and then, by-and-bye, when you are ashamed to stand out any longer, you will come and redeem the time. I hope I shall be forgiven this digression. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." I am not conscious of any other motive, and I am sure the people can have no other motive, for they are parting with their money without the slightest hope of ever gaining anything temporal. But they have a hope of glorifying the Lord their God. They hear the Lord saying unto them, "Freely ye have received, freely give." I rejoice, therefore, in this sincerity. I do not like at all to speak about myself, but I will mention just one more little circumstance in keeping with many others. People say, His motive is this, and that, and the other. As I hinted just now, I do not choose every one to know everything, nor to know how many half-crowns or shillings I may give away to the poor, the afflicted, and the needy, nor to tell you how many sixpence-a-week pensioners I have; it is not for me to tell you that. I do not like people to know it, friends. I think I have shown some signs, after all, of sincerity. I go back to the early spring of the present year. I gave what I could to the Lancashire distress. I went to the North, and preached within an inch of my life; came home thoroughly knocked up. I paid my own fare there, and my own fare back again, out of my own pocket; and at some of the chapels where I preached they offered me money; but I declined taking a halfpenny, nor did I take a halfpenny. I went there to take your bounty. Your kindness and bounty was distributed among the churches, and the churches feel deeply indebted to the people of the Surrey Tabernacle for the kindness they showed; and they are writing up letters to me from Manchester and the North, and they want some of our collecting books, because, they say, you have been so kind to us. Your people thought of us in our distress; thought of the brethren two hundred miles off; sent their minister; their minister came at his own expense. They paid my expenses when I journeyed from place to place while I was there, mind that; and I am sure you yourselves could not have been more kind to me than the people there. I do not forget the kindness of the Greenoughs, the Bradburns, the Blackburns, the Suttles, the Goodfellows, Grinods, the Smiths, and others, of Manchester; the Leeches and others, of Rochdale; the Crowthers and Wilsons, of Huddersfield, and others, in other places,—I met with nothing but kindness from them all. My thunderstorm sermon some Sundays

ago, some good friends murmured at it. Well, I could tell you where the said sermon has already helped much in building a new chapel. I like a thunderstorm sometimes, to clear the atmosphere, and the shining of the sun will be all the more welcome afterwards. I may appear angry, but I am not angry with your souls, nor angry with you in any wrong sense of the word. "Be ye angry, and sin not." Why, surely there is no harm in now and then sounding an alarm in God's holy mountain, to waken up his people, and make them look about and see where they are. Sincerity, then—nothing like it. I am sure you can more easily pardon a man that commits a fault through over-zeal arising from sincerity, than you could forgive a man that commits a fault through designing and crafty hypocrisy. Why, none of us justify Peter in cutting the man's ear off, but for the life of me I could never feel angry with him. No, say some, because it is like your own hot temper. I know one thing, if I had been there, ten to one if I had not had his head off. That was wrong on the part of Peter, but then the Master put the ear on again. And so that sermon cut off the ears of several of you. I cannot, say they, hear him any more; but the Lord has put the ear on again with some of you, and you can hear me again. And how is that? Why, because you have in your soul sincere love to Jesus; and though there may be a little something sometimes that gives you offence for a time, yet by-and-bye, when you come round to your senses, you will say, Well, we did not like it, but it is all right after all. It stirs us up, leads us the right way, and will lead us to honour the Saviour, and be more and more zealous in his service, and for the glory of his name.

I should not, of course, have preached just such a sermon as this, but for the circumstances that exist. I will therefore pass by a great many other things that might be said, and sum up the whole by giving a fourfold view of the desire—Grace be with such. I think there are four things fairly implied in this request. First, that the people of God, notwithstanding their love to Jesus Christ, notwithstanding their simplicity and sincerity of motive, and notwithstanding their consecration to God, they daily inwardly sin, and sometimes outwardly. "There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not." But this love to Christ is a proof they belong to him, and so all the grace that is in Christ is there to cover their sin. Hence, in the Old Testament dispensation, that dispensation was a dispensation of grace. See the variety,—that is, temporally so, and typical of that mercy and that grace by which we are saved,—see the variety of sacrifices in that dispensation. If a man were in any sin or trouble whatever, that dispensation left him no reason why he should stop in it; there was a sacrifice for everything. And so here, grace is with the man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace reigns in the man, reigns for the man,—

"Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,
And melt the hardest hearts;
And from the work it once begins,
It never more departs."

Second, that grace is with them also to enable them to hold fast the gospel of grace. I smile at some of the letters I have had, insinuating I am giving up the gospel, have an under-current of I do not know what, and by-and-bye shall come out and be like the rest. I smile at all that. No, my hearer, I have suffered such a martyrdom from my own heart, from my own fallen nature, from the shafts of the devil, and one thing and another, if you take from me the gospel that sets before me the all-sufficiency of God's grace, down I drop into black despair. No, grace must be with me. I feel I am a poor sinner. I need pardon every step; I need forgiveness every breath I breathe; I can live only by faith in that Son of God who is full of grace and truth.