

# THE RIGHT SANCTUARY

## A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning, June 26th, 1864

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, Borough Road

Volume 6 Number 288

“And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he has established forever.” Psalm 78:69

THE sanctuary here, no doubt, refers to the temple built by Solomon; consequently, this psalm must have been written after Solomon's time. But how unimportant the meaning would be if it referred only to that temple, its ritual and the privileges of connection with that temple, all of which are now waxed old and passed for ever away! But when we look at this sanctuary as pointing to Jesus Christ and to the church, it acquires then an intensity, I may say an eternity, of importance. And it is under this view that I shall notice the subject before me, and it will point first to Jesus Christ and the church. I will notice, then, first, *the sanctuary in this its twofold meaning*; and secondly, *that to which it is likened*, “high palaces, and the earth which he has established forever.”

The word *sanctuary* is derived from the word *sanctify*, meaning *holy*; and Jesus Christ was that holy Person who was consecrated to God. He was consecrated to God, being that that God himself did, and could naturally as well as mediatorially approve. There was a twofold sense in which God approved of Christ. First, naturally; God is holy in his nature at all times and in all places, and therefore anything unholy is, in all places and at all times, infinitely offensive to him; so that when he looked upon the human race, the whole of them were offensive to him, unholy; there was not one that did good, no, not one. Jehovah is righteous at all times and in all places, and therefore anything unrighteous is infinitely and eternally offensive to him. And Jehovah is a God of integrity and infallible truth at all times and in all places, and therefore where integrity is wanting, or where truth is wanting, there, there is that which is infinitely offensive to him. Now the Lord looks around the human race, and finds them all in this offensive state, finds them all in this state which he must necessarily abhor. And he looks upon his dear Son, and there is a person holy as God is holy. God would therefore naturally like his dear Son, because he was like him in holiness, and because he was like him in righteousness, and because he was like him in integrity and in truth. So that there would be this natural liking to Christ; there would be no reason why any one of the perfections of the blessed God should in any way object to, or in any shape come into collision with, the person of Jesus Christ. But then there is another sense also in which he loved his dear Son; and that is as associated with the specialty of his love to his people. He has loved his people. And I am sure the language is none too strong, it is the Lord's own language; he says, “I have loved” what a mercy

that he should have settled his love upon you before time, even from everlasting! “I have loved” and then comes the person, “loved you” loved you; and then comes the duration, “with an everlasting love;” then comes the person interested in this love, “therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn you.” But how are these unholy creatures to be holy? How are these unrighteous creatures to be righteous? How are these deceitful creatures to become persons of integrity? How are these liars, for “let God be true, and every man a liar” how are these liars to become truthful? Why, the answer, through the mercy of the Lord unto us, is clear and easy. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” By faith in his precious blood, there we stand pleasing to holiness as Christ himself is pleasing; clothed in his righteousness, justified by faith, we are brought into sweet harmony with God, righteous even as he is righteous; and the Holy Spirit having quickened our souls by a seed that is incorruptible, our spirit, whatever the flesh may be, for that is still the same as it ever was, and will be to a dying hour; but in the spirit of our profession there is no guile, there is no iniquity. The Christian in his spirit, in his profession, is as sincere as the truth of God in itself is sincere; that is called “the sincere milk of the word;” and those who are thus born of God, they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and then, the Lord bringing the truth of his immutable covenant into our souls, we come before him with truth. As a poet somewhere said,

“Nothing but truth before your throne  
With honor can appear.”

While God naturally loves Jesus Christ, he loves him also especially as the Mediator, because by him he can possess all his children. Does not the Savior include this when he says, “Therefore does my Father love me”? As though he should say, He loves me naturally because I am all that that his divine nature can sympathize with; besides, Jesus Christ was and is God as well as man. But the Savior refers to the speciality of this love, “Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” Our sins were bound up in his life, the curse of the law was bound up in his life, death was bound up in his life, and all our tribulations were bound up in his life; so that when Jesus suffered, then our sins died, the curse died, death itself died, all our tribulations died; God is pleased, the enemy defeated, our souls saved, grace reigning, mercy prevailing, and we joyfully on our way to Zion, and shall have nothing but joyfulness when at that happy place we shall at last arrive. But let us look at this sanctuary now. “He built his sanctuary.” This, I think, means the completing of the Lord Jesus Christ; I say, the completing, the building up of Jesus Christ, the completing of the Lord Jesus Christ. “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.” I will notice a fourfold completeness in the Savior, taking that scripture in the Proverbs somewhat as a guide, where it is said, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe.” And if I can point out, then, this morning, the dear Savior as the sanctuary, as the hiding-place from the tempest, and as the strong tower, then we shall be able to judge whether, while we have fled for refuge, we have fled to the right refuge, and whether we have fled rightly to that refuge. There is, then, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ a fourfold, shall I say? completeness. First, there is the completeness of his humiliation work. This I need not enlarge upon, as through the sweet mercy of the Lord most of you are well established in that. And so far are we in that respect favored that we can never doubt the completeness of his righteousness, nor can we ever doubt the completeness of his atonement, and we are brought to feel that were not his righteousness complete it would be no shelter to us, it would be no exemption to us from condemnation, it would be no hiding-place to us, because justice would find us out, and

ask us for the remainder, saying, You are found here by faith in this righteousness; but this righteousness is not complete. You must come forth, and come under the law, and live a sinless life, and do certain things before you come here. But no, bless the Lord! no, no, no; his righteousness is for the condemned; it is only the condemned that will fly to this refuge; his righteousness is complete. This name of the Lord, then, is the sanctuary to which we come for shelter, and here the Lord is. Again, see him as the atonement. And the apostle saw at Ephesus an inclination to make somewhat less of what the Savior really was, in order to make way for a little more popularity; for it is a very pleasant thing to receive a great many rich people into the church, that is pleasant to the flesh; and therefore, if we just lower the standard, and just soften matters down a little, and make room for their religion, why, that will increase our popularity. That was no doubt the feeling then, and the apostle saw it coming, and so he said to the elders of Ephesus, "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." "The church of God." Why does he speak in this way? Why, to show the completeness of the Savior's atonement, and to show, I had almost said, the blasphemy, I don't know that that term is too strong to use, the blasphemy of attempting to connect any creature merit or creature doing as a kind of help out to the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; "Feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." And it is our happy lot to know that the dear Savior, as he committed no error in his life, and as guile was not found in his lips, we are sure he did not err when he said, "It is finished." Can you find anything pertaining to your eternal welfare that was not finished? A great many years have rolled on since the Savior uttered those words, and a great many thousands, thousands of sinners from that day to this have found the truth of his words, "It is finished." I know several instances where the people of God in a dying hour, they have looked back over their lives, their negligence of the house of God, perhaps arising sometimes from worldly-mindedness and sometimes from one cause, sometimes from another, and ranging sometimes over their faults, and Satan coming in and saying, Well, I don't think you are a Christian now, for if you were there would not have been so many faults thus connected with you. I have met with a considerable number of instances where the Holy Spirit has settled the matter in their departing hour with those words, "It is finished," caused to be rolled into the soul those words, and brought it into sweet confidence and rejoicing in the completeness that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. This, then, I think, is one thing meant, that Christ was built up thus to perfection in his humiliation work. Hence the Lord says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold;" God upheld Christ with his approbation; he appeared to him again and again and approved him. And that's just the way he upholds us by his approbation. When you have the smiles of heaven, and have peace with God, that is God's approbation; when the word is made sweeter to your taste than honey and the honeycomb, that is his approbation; and when you feel your affections go out towards the Lord your God in covenant, that is nothing else but the sign of his approbation; and then you may come to the certainly strictly logical as well as scriptural conclusion, if God be for you, who then can be against you? Now, then, is this the sanctuary that we are brought to? Is this the sanctuary that we fly to for safety? Here alone we can be accepted of God. So, then, his name is thus a strong tower; the righteous runs to it and is safe.

Second, his name is a strong tower in the effectual ingathering of the people. With what hope could a minister preach the gospel if there were not a certainty as to the ingathering of the people? When he sent the apostles to preach, he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" They therefore knew that as many as were ordained to eternal life should believe; they knew that the Lord being with them, Satan should be cast out; that sinners would become saints, that the unrighteous should become righteous, unbelievers would become believers; they knew very well

that his omnipotent arm would find out his sheep, let them be where they may, and that he would lay them upon the shoulders of his power, and bring them in. You observe the apostles were always concerned to see the work of God. Hence it is said of Barnabas, that when he came to Antioch, he saw the grace of God. There is a great deal in that, he saw the grace of God; though I most solemnly believe that if Barnabas was living now, he would not see the grace of God where a great many think they do see it. How many are there now, if there is a sort of natural conversion, converted by false doctrine unto false doctrine, down into that they settle! Barnabas would not in such a conversion as that see the grace of God. For how did he see the grace of God? Like this: These persons being converted *by* the grace of God, they were converted *to* the grace of God. Therefore, it was their conversion to the grace of God that proved their conversion by the grace of God. If I am not converted to the grace of God, to the freeness of God's mercy, to electing grace, to redeeming grace, to the certainty of the covenant of grace, to the certainty of God's truth, if I am not converted to the certainty of God's truth, then I am not converted to his grace. Well, says one, but cannot a man be converted to the grace of God without being converted to the certainty of his truth? I think not. You recollect that scripture that "it is by faith;" and now I should like you just to notice that scripture; it is a very beautiful scripture, bearing upon this very point; "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Here, then, the name of Jesus Christ is a strong tower, in the certainty of the ingathering of the people, in the certainty of his grace. "Others I have, which are not of this fold." Thus, then, he who is converted by the grace of God will be converted to the grace of God. For instance, if I am converted by Catholicism, of course I am converted to Catholicism; if I am converted by duty-faith, I am converted to duty-faith; if I am converted by free will, why, I am converted to free will; and if I am converted by Mahometanism, well, then I am converted to Mahometanism; or, whatever ism it may be, if I am converted by it, I am converted to it. And so, I may profess to be converted, to be converted by the grace of God, but in order to evidence that, I must be converted to the grace of God. So, then, Barnabas saw that these people understood the truth in the certainty of it, and were converted to it, and therein he saw the grace of God; for all are to be, says the apostle Paul, damned that receive not the love of the truth. But these were led to receive the truth in the love of it, and their conversion to the grace of God, certainly of the grace of God, was a proof of their conversion by the grace of God. And that's the reason, one reason among others, why the apostle would not preach any other doctrine. If the apostle Paul had said to Agrippa, "Almost you are, from my statement of how I was converted, persuaded to be a Christian; well, you can if you like;" now that would have been false: "it's your duty to do it;" that would have been false: "you will be damned for not doing it;" that would have been false. And the apostle knew if he sowed these mingled seeds that the crop would correspond with the sowing, and so he would not sow wrong seeds, lest he should have tares instead of wheat. "I would to God, that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Thus, then, the Lord Jesus Christ is a strong tower, not only in the completeness of his work, but in the certainty of the ingathering of his people.

Then, thirdly, he is a strong tower in their preservation, in preserving them. Why, it was his very delight to bear testimony before God the Father: "Of all you have given me I have lost none." Judas was given to Christ providentially, but was never given to Christ graciously, was never given to Christ vitally. Judas never loved Christ, only for the money he got by him. You observe in the garden of Eden, as soon as Adam sinned there was an end to his preservation, gone directly. Under the old covenant, when the Jews at all sinned, they sinned their religion away directly. But here in

Christ Jesus you have upon record the faults of the saints, but as those faults arose, atoning blood spoke louder for them than their sins could speak against them; atoning blood stopped the mouth of the accuser, cast Satan down. "There is not a just man upon the earth, that does good, and sins not." Yet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ gives them the victory, and thus they are preserved; or else, first, they would go away in despair; second, God would send them away. But he gives them such a knowledge of his dear Son that they shall not go away; and, secondly, they are held so in his perfection, that he will not send them away, and thus they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This may seem, perhaps, going, in the eyes of some people, that don't know much of their own hearts, a long way; but am I not speaking the truth? Could you hope in God one more day, come so close as that, could you hope to get to heaven, could you hope ever to see his face with joy, could you have any hope one day more, if you took away the atonement of Christ, and if you had to hope in God direct, and if that atonement did not plead faster for you than your sins can against you, and speak louder for you than all your adversaries can, conscience, or your sins can speak against you? Here, then, Jesus in the completeness of his work, in effectual ingathering, and also in final preservation. Thus, his name is as a strong tower. And what shall I say to the last, that of final presentation; what will it be? "Here am I, and the children whom you have given me." Truly then Jesus is the sanctuary; Jesus Christ consecrated to God by him. Here, then, is that that embodies all we can need for time, and all we can need for eternity. I like that religion that makes a man love Jesus Christ, and love God by Jesus Christ; because if we have not right views of the Lord, just in proportion as we are in error, just in that proportion there is that which at the least demands a doubt as to whether we are taught of God. What made the apostle stand in doubt of the Galatians? It was not on the ground of any fault in their lives; he does not complain of them in that respect. What made him stand in doubt? "I stand in doubt of you." Why so? Why, because they admitted another gospel, or at least admitted doctrines that perverted the true gospel, and made a sort of mixed medley of it, of works and of grace. "Tell me, now, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?" He shows them the consequences of those errors. He therefore stood in doubt. Is that scripture, think you, unmeaning, where it is said that "all your children shall be taught of the Lord"? Is that scripture unmeaning, where it is said of the Holy Spirit that "he shall guide you into all truth"?

Now the sanctuary in our text means not only Jesus Christ, but also the church of God; but inasmuch as I have spoken in what I have said of the connection of our souls with Jesus Christ, I will pass by that, and now come to *the similes here used*, that "he built his sanctuary like high palaces." The question is, what is the idea here intended? Let us get the meaning. And the meaning is very clear and very simple. In the first place, the temple is called a palace, the temple of God; and when spoken of in the plural, referring to the holy place and to the most holy, the temple is called "palaces." Now the idea here intended is that of conspicuousness. If in ancient times you had been living in the Eastern world, and had travelled to Jerusalem from the sunrising, in the same direction that the wise men of the East did, when you came to the Mount of Olives you would have the whole city of Jerusalem lying before you, for it all slopes that way, from west to east. But nothing would have so much struck your attention, nothing would so have engaged your notice, as the temple. The temple would have been necessarily, from its magnificence, of more attraction to you than all the city besides. And hence you find the disciples, they themselves were struck with the beauty and magnificence of the temple, and they came to Jesus to show him the buildings. So that on coming to the Mount of Olives, there stood the temple right before you; for the temple stood on the eastern side of Jerusalem; you might call it the very first building, on Mount Moriah,

that would stand before you so conspicuous. Now, then, this is the doctrine here intended. And what is there so conspicuous as the Lord Jesus Christ? But I must not forget in this part that if a blind man came over the Mount of Olives the temple could not be conspicuous to him; and I must not forget that deaf people cannot hear, and I must not forget that dead people cannot feel. I saw a sermon lately<sup>1</sup>, wherein escape from a ship on fire was made use of to exhort sinners to fly from the wrath to come; how they would escape from that vessel, and we should do just the same. I thought within myself, That is all very well, if man by nature were not dead. If the people on that deck, the people in that cabin, had all been literally dead, I don't think they could have got away from the fire; I think you might have called long enough. That's just how men make a mistake; there must be life first. So, upon this matter of conspicuousness, to whom is Christ the conspicuous object? What was he to me when I was blind? What was he to me when I was dead in trespasses and sins? What was he to me then, and what was the language of my wicked heart? "Depart from me; I desire not the knowledge of your ways." But now that the eyes are opened, now that the ears are unstopped, now the promise is fulfilled, "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim; the ears of them that hear shall hearken; the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge:" now there is no rose to you like the rose of Sharon; now there is no tree to you like the tree, the apple tree in the midst of the wood; now there is no star to you like the bright and the morning star; now there is no sun to you like the Sun of righteousness, that rises with healing in his wings; now there is no rock to you like the Rock of Ages; now there is no stream to you like that river of mercy that is full of water; now there is no cedar to you like this wonderful cedar, Christ Jesus; now there is no Lebanon to you like this Lebanon: his countenance is comely even as Lebanon, the chief of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. "He built his sanctuary like high palaces."

So the dear Savior is now so conspicuous that he is all and in all; he is all and in all to the blessed, blessed God; he is all and in all to the poor sinner brought down to his sacred feet; he is all and in all to those who are in eternal glory. So that that very Being who, in the dignity of his person, in the perfection of his work, is thought so little of in the professing world, is of all objects the most conspicuous to the believer. As the sun rises and eclipses the stars, so when Jesus comes, he eclipses by his glory everything else; all then is lost in the splendor of his presence; nothing so conspicuous as the Lord Jesus Christ. He was so to all the prophets; they all saw him in distinction from all other objects; they all delighted in this plant of great renown; they all prophesied of him; and so, the apostles went forth everywhere to testify of him. And is there any name like his name in our souls? No. And when are you the happiest? Why, when you can scripturally think of Jesus Christ; if he has given us such a wonderful person as this, what will he not give? Is it any wonder that the dear Savior should speak as he does? words that have very often encouraged me, "What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe" that is, when you ask for them conscientiously, "believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." Never forget that he alone can enable us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is he that works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. So, then, if you are looking to Jesus as your sanctuary, leaning upon him, living upon him, walking with him, trusting in him, and glorying in the fulness that is in him, then you are a Christian. And the apostle evidently meant eternity as well as time when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" and here is an infinity, beauty, depth, and height that will delight us to eternity, without cloying, or at all abating or lessening; and thus, then, "he built his sanctuary," Christ Jesus, "like high palaces." So conspicuous was the

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<sup>1</sup> This was C. H. Spurgeon's sermon titled "The Ship on Fire – A Voice of Warning" It is number 550 and it was preached on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1863.

temple. Not any one of the ancient nations, broad and strong as were their walls, great as was the circumference of ancient Thebes, and ancient Nineveh, and Babylon, and wonderful as are the pyramids of Egypt; yet no ancient city had any building so wonderful as was the temple of God. And no church or people has anything so wonderful in it as we that have the true Christ of God. He is the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. See then the glory of the dear Savior. The apostle says, "We preach not ourselves;" I suppose that is a hit for some of us that do sometimes preach ourselves, and for those ministers that really preach but little else than themselves and their own doings; "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." Let him be the Alpha, and the Omega, the all and in all.

But lastly, another simile, upon which I meant to have said a great many things. Not only is the dear Savior here likened to the high palaces, to denote conspicuousness, but "like the earth, which he has established forever." In the first place, it is very clear that none, but God could have created such a world as this; that's very clear. And none but God could have formed such a person as the person of Christ, and none but God could have formed such a church as is the church of Christ, I think this is one thing fairly meant. See how beautiful the 40th of Isaiah is upon this, our old favorite scripture: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things;" the word *things* is not in the original, and I think it would read better without; "Who has created these, that brings out their host by number; he calleth them by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power not one fails." We know the literal reference is to the planets, which we call stars, which are in reality worlds. Who created them? God. "He brings out their host by number;" marshals them in that order in the magnificence of space which his omnipotent power alone can manage and control; he sits in the midst, arranging them all just as he pleases. And to denote his intimacy with each, familiarity with each, complete knowledge of each, "he calls them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one fails." Lift up your eyes, and see a people embraced in God's everlasting love; they are God's living stars. Lift up your eyes, and see a people chosen in the high counsels of eternity, they are God's living stars, Lift up your eyes, and see a people range in Christ in all the perfection of eternal beauty; they are God's living stars. Lift up your eyes, and behold the holy prophets and those that are gone before us, raised up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; lift up your eyes, and behold in the heavenly skies a number that no man can number, clothed with white robes, palms in their hands, ranged before the throne of God, God in the midst, who created them? God did it all; and he is great in power, not one fails. Not one fails, each move in his destined sphere. Not one fails; no, bless the Lord! not one of his children shall fail, not one shall come short. Here then, is the Creator; so that in the greatness of creation he is thus spoken of to represent the stability, the certainty, by which he will abide by his people. "Calls them all by name," knows his children. "Not one fails." Says one, I am failing every day. Never mind, your faith won't fail, not fatally; your hope will not fail you; you will not fail to possess all that God has for you, finish your course with joy; he is the author and finisher of your faith. And now I must close, without a quarter, I was going to say, finishing the subject. The Lord says, "Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" No, it is not; Jesus Christ is your way, and your judgment is not passed over from your God; his judgment to you is, Who shall lay anything to your charge? If God free you, who can condemn you? If God justifies, who is he that condemns? None but God created the earth. Then I intended to notice the stability, and then the fertility, and then the habitation, and then the presence of the Lord, those things I intended to notice; but your time is gone.