

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

BETTER THAN GOLD AND SWEETER THAN HONEY.

## A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 22ND, 1866, BY

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."—Psalm xix 10.

THE Psalmist does in the preceding verses describe the operation of the truths of the gospel in the salvation of the soul, and then sums up the whole in the language of our text concerning these gospel truths, that "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Of course we may take the gold here to represent everything that is good in this life, as it is by its means that our necessities are met, and that we command the conveniences, the comforts, and we may say the honours of life. And therefore it is desirable, very desirable, in its province. "Money," saith Solomon, "answereth all things;" that is, in its own province, of course: he does not mean that it can answer anything beyond its own province. So, then, if we take gold here to represent everything that is advantageous in this life, and then take the honey to represent everything that is pleasant, yet if I can this morning set before you something that infinitely surpasseth gold, yea, even much gold, yea, even much fine gold; and if I can set forth this morning something that will surpass in sweetness and in pleasantness honey and the honeycomb, then I only say, if we understand the spiritual meaning thereof, we certainly are a happy people; because we all know we must very soon have done with gold, very soon have done with poverty and riches; we must very soon have done with both the bitters and the sweets of this life; therefore it is an unspeakable mercy to be acquainted with that which infinitely surpasseth the whole.

I will not occupy your time by making the customary remarks upon a subject like this, in relation to the natural love that man has to gold. I will just make, before I enter upon the subject, one or two remarks, and they are these. "I think the providence of God in England, as regards the use of gold, has been truly wonderful." When we look at the Holy Scriptures being translated, the many thousands and thousands, millions indeed, that have been voluntarily given to translate the Scriptures into now, I believe, upwards of a hundred and fifty languages,—there we rejoice to see the use made of gold, and especially the voluntary way in which it has been done. When we look at the many great benevolent institutions that adorn our land; when we look at the vast number of places of worship

that people have built from their own voluntary feeling, I think, with all the faults that people find, there must be some good feeling somewhere; there must be some Christian feeling somewhere, for such an extensive use thus to be made of gold, expressive of the gratitude which men feel to their Maker, and beyond all expressive of the gratitude that they feel to him as the God of salvation. Though those who are rightly taught well know that salvation is in none of these things, still there stands the scripture, the holy scripture, "Honour the Lord with thy substance." And that is the way to get more, for I am sure not a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. And, after all, it is not the abundance that any man may possess, it is what the Lord is pleased to make it to him. Solomon's riches at the last became rather a curse to him than a blessing; and we see this very frequently in human life. The riches that men have hoarded up have at the last become a very great curse to them. I say we see this sometimes; so it is not the quantity that a man may possess, it is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. That was a wise prayer of one that desired neither poverty nor riches; he knew the two extremes, that either extreme was dangerous to poor old fallen human nature. Therefore it is, amidst it all, that real happiness lies in the ways of God, in the blessing of the Lord; and all who are taught of God, whether rich or poor, they feel this, and know that these providential distinctions will by-and-bye pass away; then will come that eternal oneness that we have in Christ Jesus the Lord.

But I will at once proceed to notice the spiritual meaning of our text, which you will observe presents itself in a twofold form. First, then, here is *something better than gold*. Secondly, here is *something sweeter than honey*.

Now, then, what is that which is better than gold? I need not, indeed I will not, occupy your time in stating the reasons why the things I am about to advance are better than gold, because as we go along it will be so self-evident that I need not, I was going to say, cripple my subject by stopping to state the reasons. Now the first thing I notice is the law of liberty, In the 72nd verse of the 119th Psalm David saith, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Let us now clearly understand what this law is. This law is called by several names. First, it is called the law of faith, because God's gospel law is, "He that believeth shall be saved." God's gospel law is that "all things are possible unto him that believeth." And this law of faith is called the law of liberty. The apostle Paul describes it thus, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It is the law of faith, something to be believed in; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus; the word "law" there meaning, I apprehend, "power;" let us so, for the sake of explanation, read it; that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the power of sin and death." A law means power. I think, therefore, that is the meaning—"made me free from the power of sin and death." Christ Jesus having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, precious faith makes us free from it, and brings us before God, accepted even as Christ is accepted. And also from the power of death; death

hath it not in its power to do us any harm whatever. The word of the Lord saith—a truth that nature could never teach, a truth that flesh and blood cannot rejoice in, a truth, in one sense—at least, the circumstance embodied in the truth—that men naturally shrink from, but the word of God declares it, “To die is gain.” It does not say how much the gain is, for the simple reason that the gain surpasseth all description. No human language, no words spoken by angels or men, could measure, or weigh, or define the infinity of the gain which the departed spirit realizes when it leaves its prison to enter into the palace and presence of the most high God. Then, again, James calls it “the law of liberty.” “So speak”—words that have cheered my heart many times—and we had better be filled with grief—that kind of grief and sorrow that nothing but the word of the Lord can cheer us under, and help us and comfort us under; it is better to be in that state than to be in a careless state, or in a happy state after the flesh, for “blessed are they that mourn;” “blessed are they that hunger and thirst;” all of which are not exactly pleasant sensations, but they indicate life and earnestness in the soul towards God. These words, then, I say, have cheered my heart many a time; “So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” And in keeping with this you will recollect, in the 50th Psalm, it saith, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” He that believeth is to be judged by the sacrifice of Christ, by the blood of Christ, by the righteousness of Christ, by the promise of God, by the new covenant of the blessed God; to be judged by the law of liberty. It is a law that, whatever it finds you in captivity to, to release you from; it is a law that writes upon every adversity, trouble, captivity, imprisonment, and entanglement of the real Christian, “Loose him, and let him go.” This law of God, that thus maketh us free, the law of liberty by which we are to be judged, is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. I need not stop to give reasons. Is not this a self-evident truth to those of you that are Christians? For what could silver and gold do in comparison of what is done by this law of faith, this law of freedom, this law of liberty? Let us hear a little of what the apostle Paul saith upon this. He gives us a beautiful representation of this gospel law of God’s mouth in the Hebrews in few words, after dilating in a way that must charm every Christian when he can read it and understand it, with the Holy Spirit to go with him in reading it—where the apostle says, “Being a change of the priesthood, there must of necessity also be a change of the law.” What a wonderfully significant scripture is that! There is a change of the law of sin, for without the priesthood of Christ sin is a law that damns us to eternity; but that law is so changed now, as we have already said, by his priesthood, that sin, while it burdens us, cannot damn us. It has lost its power. There is a change also in the law of God; for, apart from the priesthood of Christ, the work of Christ, that law is an unfulfilled law; but by the priesthood of Christ it is a magnified law. That law, apart from the priesthood of Christ, is a fiery law, but by the priesthood of Christ it is as peaceful as were the marble tables that were deposited in the ark

under the mercy-seat. And the law of tribulation, apart from the priesthood of Christ, is to destroy men; troubles would destroy us every day of our lives; but by the priesthood of Christ the law of tribulation is that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." And apart from the priesthood of Christ the law of death is to hurl the soul into the presence of almighty and everlasting wrath; but by the priesthood of Christ the law of death is so changed that it becomes only the gate by which the soul enters into the immediate joyful presence of the Lord. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Now these are very contracted views in comparison to those that no doubt David had in his mind,—“The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.” Can we say this? Do we see what we are without that law of faith, without that law of freedom, without this law of liberty? To be judged by any other law is to be condemned; to be judged by that law of faith in Christ is to be judged with the judgment of justification, and also of gratulation; not only the judgment of justification, but also of gratulation, because those who understand this law of liberty, they stand so solemnly fast in it, and hold so fast the testimonies concerning it, that the Lord will say to each at the last, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” That is one thing, then, I take to be better than gold, yea, than much fine gold; and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. The sweet freedom of the gospel, the glorious liberty we have in Christ. But, secondly, the person of Jesus Christ, that is the next part we name that is better than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and that his name is indeed sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. I take the 12th verse of the 13th chapter of Isaiah to help me out with this part, because it there saith, “I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” This is a very beautiful scripture, but our language does not show forth its real beauty. The two Hebrew words there translated “man” are different; they are not both the same. In each case in that verse we have the word “man” in our version; but in the original there are two different terms used, and those two different terms will enable us to see somewhat into the force of the contrast there given. “I will make a man”—the Hebrew word there translated “man” is *Enosh*, which signifies everything that is sorrowful, miserable, wretched, and everything, in a word, that is bad, and is expressive of our Adam-fallen state. And the man so represented there means Jesus Christ in his humiliation, as explained in the 8th of the Romans. I do bless the Lord for that scripture, because some of us, perhaps, feeling ourselves, as we do, such poor, sinful, wretched creatures, should be almost afraid to apply such language to him, were it not for that scripture in the 8th of the Romans—namely, that he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Now, mind, he had none of the properties of sin in him; no; I abhor and detest that idea, do not admit that. But he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh because he took our sins upon him, he took our sorrows, he took our griefs, he took our curse, he took our miseries. Now then, *Enosh*—I will make this man, the man Christ Jesus, in his humiliation, in his suffering, in his bearing our burdens, in his thus being wounded for us, and our being healed by his stripes,—I will make this man more precious than gold. Does not the apostle Peter seem to bear a little upon this when he saith, “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things”? your redemption is something infinitely beyond that. “Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ;” the precious sufferings of Christ, the tears of Christ, the agonies of Christ, the sorrows of Christ, the death he underwent, the bloody sweat that he endured; here is your redemption—by the precious blood of Christ. I would not be harsh to any one that

is seeking the Lord, but I will say this,—until you arrive at that point of Jesus Christ laying down his precious life, and obtaining eternal redemption, putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself—until you arrive at that point wherein he in this feature becomes precious to you, until then there is something very defective in your religion. God grant if I am speaking to any that have a little sort of feeling about them to seek, and yet have not understood what Christ has done, and he is not yet precious to you, and if you desire that he may be precious to you, God grant that you may be led along until you know what the apostle means when he says, “Unto you that believe he is precious;” that is, those whose faith has gone on so far, and whose conviction of their need of him is so clear, that he becomes their only hope. “I will make a man”—this man of sorrows; that is the idea—“more precious than fine gold.” “Sweeter also than honey.” Can you say, then, as we sing sometimes—the language is very simple, and the more so the better in these matters,—can you take those words to yourself,—

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In the believer’s ears”?

I, does, No name surpasseth it.

“It charms our sorrows, heals our wounds,  
And drives away our fears.”

“Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” What is so sweet as the name of Jesus? His name is indeed as ointment poured forth. Now the word “man” in the remaining part of that 12th verse of the 13th of Isaiah is *Adam*. “I will make a man”—make *Enosh*, this man of sorrows—“more precious than fine gold; even *Adam*, than the golden wedge of Ophir.” Now here is Jesus Christ, as the last *Adam*. You know we had a word upon this on Monday evening at our prayer meeting, and I must just repeat the substance of what I then said. Jesus Christ is never called the Second *Adam*, mind that; he is called the Last *Adam*, but not the Second *Adam*; because if he were called the Second, that would imply there was to be a third or a fourth, and perhaps more besides that. Well but, say you, he is called the Second Man. Yes, and that implies there are some more men besides him; and so it is that all his people are turned into real men, that is, into the image of God. “Ye, my flock, are men.” But he is the Last *Adam*. He is called the last, then, because, as *Adam* was the natural and federal head of the human race, Christ is become the spiritual and covenant head of the Christian race, and he is the last head. You will never have another covenant head, never have another spiritual head. There is no severation. He is the last Priest, the last King; he is the Son, the everlasting Son of God, to reign over the house of Jacob for ever. Now put the two thoughts together, if you can; those are the ideas conveyed in the two Hebrew words. “More precious than fine gold.” What sayest thou to that? Second, in his federal character as the head of the Church, having united us to himself, to be severed no more for ever, and that here we have by this federal headship of the Saviour a faithful and unchanging God; and our prospects as bright as everlasting love can make them, our prospects as bright as the exceeding great and precious promises of God can make them; our prospects as bright as the sworn covenant can make them. I do not wonder at one of old, when these glories broke in some measure upon his soul, saying, “Ere I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.” Here, then, is this wonderful person in his humiliation, in his exaltation, and eternal sameness, of infinite value—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and because he abideth a priest continually, he is therefore able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. More precious than gold, sweeter than honey and

the honeycomb. Ah, what a life will yours be in heaven! how precious and how pleasant! nothing unpleasant.

Third, while the law of liberty is thus better than thousands of gold and silver, Jesus Christ in his humiliation, exaltation, and eternal sameness, is indeed more to be desired than gold and much fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb;—third, the faith of the people of God is compared to gold; but then it is infinitely better. Now gold, in order to command the necessary comforts of life, and make it continue to pass current, it must be gold, and therefore it must undergo such a process as will sever it from the dross, and prove it to be real gold; then, when that gold is thus brought out, and proved to be gold, it then commands anything and everything that gold can command, it commands the whole range of its province. Now, then, let us hear what the word of the Lord says upon this, “that the trial of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.” Mark this “the trial of your faith.” The trial of your faith means in reality you; it means that you are to be severed from all fleshly confidences, that you are to be tried to the very uttermost; and just see whether under the very greatest trials you will hold fast God’s truth; see whether you will or not; and if you do, and desire to say, if you cannot say with all the fulness, yet if you feel a sympathy with Job when he said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; and blessed be the name of the Lord,” then you will come forth as gold. Well, but, Satan said, you are not gold, Job; I said you would curse God to his face. But no, he blessed the Lord. And in the 23rd chapter he says, “He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” When the man is proved to be real gold his work is proved to be real. And so, then, as gold commands everything within its province, this golden faith commands everything within its province, and its province is the gospel of God, the God of the gospel. Job’s faith turned his captivity, brought him friends, made him happy. And so your faith is more precious than gold. That that is proved to be real gold will do great things as a means in its province; but what will not faith do? Hear what the Saviour saith, that “all things are possible unto him that believeth.” So, then, that trial that proves me to be real gold, proves my faith to be real, is of great advantage to me, because I now know that I have a faith that is of God, and I now know that that golden faith will, as it were, command anything and everything, for all the promises of God belong to him that believeth. Again, I must just refer you to the 11th of Hebrews, a chapter that I enjoyed very much myself this morning. Ah, what did not this precious faith do there? So, then, I say, this faith is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Faith works exploits, gains victories and treasures infinitely surpassing those of gold. All things you can desire are not to be compared to the sweet privileges of true faith. Oh, it is a great thing to prove that we are real gold, and that is proved by abiding practically, really, and truly by the truth, and by the cause of God through evil and through good report. We know there is no fault in God’s truth, and therefore it is a piece of idiotism to think less of his truth on account of any faults or failures we may see in creatures. God’s truth is faultless, and his people as they stand in his covenant also are reckoned faultless. So, then, this faith is more to be desired than gold. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed—there is a mighty sycamore tree right in the road, and I cannot get along. You will by-and-bye say in confidence, “Be thou plucked up by the roots;” up it will come, and off it will go, and leave the road as open as possible. There is a terrible mountain, with the steep side of it towards you. You turn away, and say you cannot climb it. Ah, you say, troubles are always sure to come at the wrong time and in the wrong way. I would not have minded if it had been so-and-so;

always something the wrong way up, something wrong one way or another. But a grain of faith, "Be thou removed and cast into the sea;" the mountain is gone, the Lord comes, faith is in exercise, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." And thus faith, precious faith, this golden faith, will, as it were, buy the truth at any price from day to day, and work its way along until it shall stand triumphant on the shores of the promised land, and look back at the scene of great tribulation out of which it has come, to return to the same no more for ever. Thus, then, here is the law of liberty; the person of Christ, and saving faith.

I must now hastily run through the connection of our text. "More to be desired are they," that is, the truths of the gospel. Now, in conclusion, I am going to try to show what the truths of the gospel are unto and in the souls of them that are taught of God. Ever remember, unless a good work be begun in our hearts we are not Christians! unless the Holy Spirit hath quickened our souls we are not Christians; unless we are led by the Spirit of God we are not the sons of God; therefore how wrong in any of us to neglect the word of the Lord upon this matter! What are the operations of the Spirit? How shall I know whether I have what I profess by the Spirit of God, or whether I have taken it up by myself or by mere human persuasion? Now the connection of our text will show this. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." This law in the first part of my discourse I have set before you. To convert there means to assimilate the soul to the perfection of Christ. Oh, saith the Christian, then my soul is converted, for there is nothing that fits my soul more nicely than the perfection of Christ; that is the perfect law. There is nothing more gains my sympathies, there is nothing that I seem more at peace with than the perfection that is in Christ; converting the soul to itself, to perfection, that perfection is in Christ Jesus the Lord. His work is perfect. "Ye are complete in him." Ah, saith one, but this perfection we have may not continue unless you do your part. But the word of the Lord saith, "He hath by his one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Now some of you perhaps know not what I am talking about, cannot understand it. God grant that you may, for if you are not found in Christ, you must be found out of Christ; and as every one out of the ark was lost, so every one out of Christ must be lost; all that are planted in Christ, brought thus into his perfection, must be saved. The law of God is perfect, that is, this gospel law, the law of faith. That is one operation, in assimilating the soul to the perfection of Christ. The second is the certainty of the gospel; "The testimony of the Lord is sure," "Alas! we thought that this was he that should redeem Israel." Oh, he will appear to you again, you are not deceived. Well, we hardly know what to say about it. "What manner of communications are these that ye have among yourselves?" "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, not heard these things that are come to pass?" "What is it?" "What is it?" And they soon found that the testimony of the Lord was sure. He had departed from them, and yet not departed from them. And what doth this do? "Making wise the simple." That will apply very broadly, I think. It maketh wise the simple. It enables you to prophesy, it enables you to tell what will be hereafter. Persons sometimes wonder at the great wisdom of our astronomers in foretelling hundreds of years beforehand where departed comets will be at such a time, where such planets will be at such a time; they can tell for hundreds of years to come, because of the certainty and regularity existing in the government of those worlds. But it is more wonderful still for the Christian to be able to say, Well, I know that I shall die in the Lord; I know I shall rise in the Lord; I know there is a crown laid up for me, and I know where I shall be to all eternity. "The statutes of the Lord are right." Statutes mean those legislative decisions to

which he has come; and "rejoicing the heart." For instance, take this statute, for *statute* does not merely mean *precept*, but a kind of legislative decision, something written in the ancient book, always to be regarded and never to be departed from. "One of his statutes is, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and a great deal of the same character; and they rejoice the heart; so they do; there is no question about that. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst "make me clean." The commandment was, "Be thou clean." Away went the leprosy, and his eyes were enlightened. "What will ye that I do unto you?" "That we may receive our sight." And he said, "Be opened;" and their eyes were opened. And so of all that he thus healed, his commandment causing diseases to fly. What a thrill of delight must have run through them! The woman said, "If I may but touch his clothes I shall be healed;" this loathsome disease will be driven away, and I shall be happy. Just so when the Lord is pleased to command freedom, when he commands pardon, when he commands strength and lovingkindness, how it enlightens the eyes. "The fear of the Lord is clean;" how true is that! "enduring for ever." We shall never cease to fear God, we shall never cease to delight in the awful but deep solemnity of revering the blessed God, especially when we come into his open presence, and when all his glories shall be seen in perfection. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Now this embraces the whole compass of your experience, spiritual and temporal. He hath judged it right for you to walk in a certain path, and you judge quite wrong sometimes; I know I do. When Jacob crossed his hands, Joseph said, "Not so, my father;" and so very often in his dealings now; but in the end it turns out to be right, right altogether. So that his judgments, his decisions concerning you temporally and concerning you spiritually are true. All the error lies with us, none with him; "true and righteous altogether." "More to be desired than gold." That is, so I will take it in conclusion, to be guided by the Lord; for the Lord to judge for us, and the Lord to go with us, and to guide us, is a blessing more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Abraham was a wise man when he fell in with these judgments. He said to Lot, "If thou turn to the left, I will go to the right; and if thou go to the right, I will turn to the left." Do not let us fall out. Lot looked about and chose for himself. Fine prospects there, beautiful pastures there. Oh, I shall make a fortune there, I see. What a silly fellow that Abraham is, not to keep his weather eye open! Off Lot went, thinking how foolish Abraham was. But you see the end. You see the poverty and degradation to which Lot came, though a good man notwithstanding all; you see the wealth and honour to which Abraham was brought.

Here, then, is the gospel assimilating the soul to itself; here is the sure testimony of the Lord, making wise the simple; here are the statutes of the Lord, right and rejoicing the heart; here is the commandment of the Lord, pure, enlightening the eyes; here is the fear of the Lord, keeping us close to him; and the judgments of the Lord, true and righteous altogether. May the Lord make us more and more acquainted with these things!