

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

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GOOD TO COME, AND ANOTHER WORD FOR RAHAB.

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## A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 11TH, 1866, BY

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

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"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."—Job xxii 21.

THE former part of this verse occupied our time, as you are aware, and I hope our attention as well, last Lord's day morning; we have this morning, therefore, to notice simply the last clause,—“thereby good shall come unto thee.” I intend to take a twofold view of this good: first, that it means *the Lord's own interposition on behalf of his people, as matters shall require*; and then, secondly and lastly, *the qualities of the good which is to come unto such*.

First, then, I notice *the Lord's own interposition on behalf of his people, as matters shall require*. You at once observe that this promise belongs to the friends of God; that is, to those who are one with him in Christ Jesus the Lord. What scripture throughout the Bible can be more delightful than that declaration concerning Abraham,—when Abraham believed in God's yea and amen promise? and the whole of that which he believed lay entirely with the Lord. So that this believing in the Lord was acquiescing in his sworn covenant; it was acquiescing in the eternal priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Abraham was there and then called “the friend of God,” in direct opposition to what we all are by nature, namely, enemies to God. But here, by Christ Jesus, we become acquainted with him, and are at peace. We have noticed before the several respects in which we are to be at peace with God; to be at peace with him in Christ Jesus, and to be at peace with him in his dealings with us, and the more we are favoured to be at peace with him in his dealings with us, the better; that it is a very great thing to be able to believe that the Lord is leading us forth by a right way, and will bring us to a city of habitation at last. But we notice then that good shall come unto such as the matter shall require. Perhaps I cannot do better on this point than just set before you a few examples of this. Let us begin. We feel sometimes somewhat solemnized, and it is right that we should be; but there is the promise that “seedtime and harvest shall continue;” and there never has been from that day to this, and never will be, a universal famine. He can see providentially all the good you need; you that are thus reconciled to God and are lovers of his truth, all the good you need will come unto you. And it is our mercy that matters stand in this form; for it is clear beyond all dispute that evil will come

VOL. VIII.—No. 381.

unto us; we shall have plenty of evil from our own hearts, and we shall have adversities, and losses, and trials; there is no doubt about this: but then we set over against that the Lord's own promise, his own kind interposing hand. Then, again, good shall come unto us through that which may appear to be evil. We may have bitter experiences to pass through, and those bitter experiences are to test the reality of our religion. See what experiences Joseph went through, but the good that was indicated in the visions came to him. The evil could not destroy the good, but the good came. Though his path was very boisterous, yet he abode, firmly abode by the truths which were revealed to him, and in abiding firmly by them he was as it were, shall I so express it? willing to sink or to swim with those visions, those truths which the Lord revealed to him. And just so with us, if we have the testimony of Jesus Christ we shall feel willing to risk everything for that, to sink or to swim for that; then the end shall be as we have already suggested, the termination of evil, and the possession of all the good we can need. See how carefully the Lord watched over Joseph. What a wonderful morning that must have been when the tidings came to him to leave the prison, and to appear before Pharaoh! And so the Israelites in Egypt, they were under their oppressors, but they were not to be there for ever; good came unto them, the Lord himself came unto them. And so now with you; let us come down here just for a moment to Christian experience. There are times when the Christian in his own soul is persecuted and oppressed; there are times when the Christian feels such hardness,—he feels a darkness in his mind, a wandering, an inability to read the Bible, or pray with any power, or to hear with any profit; he seems particularly oppressed, and he mopes about, and seems very miserable. The soul is now spiritually, as the Israelite was literally, in Egypt; and people may say, What makes that man so unhappy? Why, the unhappiness is this,—there is an apparent, and we bless the Lord that it is only an apparent, separation between the soul and the Lord; and such a one saith, "The Lord hath forgotten me, and my Lord hath forsaken me, I shall never again see any good. I see nothing but evil, feel nothing but evil—nothing but evil." By-and-bye the Lord steps in, and he will,—he will,—he will not allow you to be unreasonably long in this state; he will not suffer you to be tried above that you are able to bear; he will step in by-and-bye, he will say, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." And if you think your evils are too great and too filthy, shall I say (for the Christian feels what a poor creature he is), then the Lord will act accordingly, and he will say, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and if you seem to be a worse creature in your own eyes than any other, then the Lord will step in and say, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgression, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Do not be afraid to come unto me, I am nothing but love to you, I have nothing but mercy for you, and I have done all that is needful for your welfare, and will do. So hereby by holding fast the

truth, be at peace. At peace with God's truth, hereby good shall come unto thee, because all the good that comes, comes by the truth of God. Now this is a truth that we all feel. The good that came to Adam after the Fall was by the promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The good that came to Abel—namely, God's testimony that he was righteous—was by the sacrificial perfection of Christ, of which sacrifice Abel's offering was a type. And the good that came to Noah was by the faith that he had, for he was a believer, and by faith he was moved with fear; and the good that came to Joseph, it was by faith; and so the liberty that came to the Israelites, it was by faith, holding fast the truth. They had held fast the promise recorded in the 15th Genesis that the Lord would deliver them; and in holding fast this truth they realized deliverance. So we must not in this part of our subject lose sight of the preceding clause, "Be at peace with him." If thou art a lover of his truth, he sees that, and all the good that ever has come, or ever will come, will be by his truth. Now how, for instance, did the manna come in the wilderness? Why, it came by the purpose and by the power of the blessed God; it was his promise; so the water from the rock. And how did the land come to the Israelites? Did the land come to the Israelites by their own sword, or did their own arms save them? No, but the Lord's right hand, and his arm, and the light of his countenance, because he had a favour unto them.

I cannot say enough upon this part; it is a part that delights me very much—the thought of continuing in the truth. Continuing in that truth all the good contained in it will assuredly come unto thee as that thou dost exist. We see this all through the Scriptures. There was not an Israelite that fell in the wilderness that did not fall by giving up God's truth; he first threw down God's truth, and then he himself was thrown down; he first gave up God's truth, and then he himself was given up. But hold that fast; and I made John, the aged John, say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." And why was Joshua chosen as the person that was to bring the Israelites to the promised land? Because the Lord had glorified; he brought him into such a knowledge of truth, that the 1st chapter of Joshua would find a response in the heart of Joshua that he was to observe the word of the Lord all the days of his life, that he might prosper in all that he put his hand to; and the Lord said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life," because the Lord was with him. It did not matter whether the river Jordan, the walls of Jericho, or the Canaanites, or whatever it might be that stood in his way; by holding fast God's truth—why, he could command the sun to stand still in the west, and the moon in the east, opposite the sun, so that he had the full sun and the full moon, and those great luminaries stood still until the victory was complete. Thus by being at peace with him, holding fast his truth, yea and amen truth, in and by Christ Jesus, all the good that you can need spiritually, and all the good you can need providentially, shall come unto you; it is sure to come, for who can hinder him? Why, the church when having experienced a great deal of evil and darkness, she saw the good coming,

she summed it up thus, "It is the voice of my beloved;" the good is coming; he is the good;" behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills; and we know what he saith when he doth come, the good that he brings, that the winter is passed, the rain over and gone. That is just the reverse of what she thought; at least, I think so. It is our tendency to think, Ah, there are dreadful things to come, terrible storms to come. My legality and unbelief will rise up in my mind, my ungratefulness, and the various evils of my nature, and make me reason thus:—How can you expect the Lord to bless you? Why, you do not half thank him for the blessings you have, and you do not half appreciate what he has done; how can you expect the Lord to bless you?

These things sometimes sink me down. But then presently the voice of truth comes, and I look up then to the hills whence cometh my help, and I see my beloved coming leaping and skipping upon the mountains, terminating the winter and the rain; both these in that scripture representing everything that is adverse and that is evil: "the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land"—everything paradisiacal and everything pleasing. So then be at peace with God's truth, thereby good shall come unto thee. Time would fail me to enlarge upon this. How was it that Daniel did what he did in Babylon? Why, by being at peace with God, at peace with God's blessed and delightful truth. Read that 2nd chapter of Daniel, wherein the Lord reveals the eternity of the kingdom of Christ in contrast to the temporary character of the things of this world. Daniel held that fast, and in so doing shut the mouths of lions. And how was it that the three worthies quenched the violence of fire? Why, by precious faith, by holding fast the truth. And how was it that Mordecai turned the tide of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces? By simply holding fast the blessed truth of God. You see that those kings of Israel that went into league with other wicked kings, they soon came to nothing; but those kings that held fast God's truth, why, here they were irresistible, —conquerors they were, and conquerors they must be. We must keep up this—"Be at peace with him." You begin to nibble at electing grace, and begin the blasphemous thought that God has no right to choose one and leave the other; begin the blasphemous thought that Christ has no right to constitute one people complete, and leave the other where he found them; and the Holy Spirit has no right to quicken one, and leave the other; that he has no right, as the heavenly wind, to blow where he listeth; begin once thus to cavil at God's truth, and then evil will overtake thee, remediless evil will overtake thee; bring strange fire, strange doctrine, and then death awaits thee: but hold fast his blessed truth, and all that truth contains will come unto thee as the matter shall require.

Then, again, go on a little farther; there is another person, namely, Rahab. She through grace had made herself acquainted with God, and see what good came unto her. Joshua sent the two spies to spy out Jericho; that is what Joshua did, and perhaps Joshua had no idea whatever—I should not think he had—of the existence of such a person as Rahab; so that the Lord put it into the heart of Joshua to send these two men to spy

out the state of Jericho, and the state of the people. That was Joshua's purpose, but the Lord's purpose was something greater than that, something beyond that—the Lord's purpose was to save Rahab, and her father and her mother, and her sisters and her brothers. And yet some of you rather regret that your parents are Christians, and so strict with you; some of you rather regret that some of your brothers and sisters are Christians, and therefore have a tendency to curtail what you call pleasures; but you ought to be thankful that your parents are Christians, you ought to be thankful that any of your brothers and sisters are Christians, because if judgments abound against you, God will have mercy upon you for their sakes. Yea, we read in one place that if ten real Christians had been found in the cities of the plain, the whole would have been spared for the ten's sakes. Oh! what will not the Lord do even for the sake of his people! It is quite possible that some on board the ship might say, I wish that preaching Paul was not here, I wish that praying Paul was not here, I wish that visionary Paul was not here; we do not want religion here, we do not want his preaching and his praying here, we cannot take a meal without he begins to have religion with it, for "he gave thanks to God in the presence of them all for his mercy towards them." But ah! when the ship foundered, when the head part became immovable, and the hinder part of the ship was broken in pieces, who is the welcome man then? when he comes with the tidings, "I have given thee all them that sail with thee;" for his sake the whole were saved. Ah, "this honour have all his saints; praise ye the Lord." Be you then at peace with him, and good shall come unto you, and at your petition good shall come unto others also.

Now then come to Rahab. I have a word more to say about Rahab. If you give your sympathies to the king of Jericho, and turn yourself into a Canaanite, and view Rahab's conduct as a Canaanite would view it, as the king of Jericho would view it, then her conduct from first to last was one scene of deception; that is what I pronounce it as a Canaanite. Yea, Joshua begins the deception, he sent secretly to Jericho. The Canaanite would say, What business had he sending in that secret way? why had he not openly told us what he was going to do, and not carry on deception like that? Then Rahab, she received the spies quietly and secretly. Now a Canaanite would look at that as an act of deception. Oh dear, here is deception again—deceiving the Canaanites. She said they were not there, or as good as said they were not there,—deception again. She sent them out another way secretly,—deception again. She put the scarlet line in the window, and did not tell any one the meaning,—deception again. And she entered—to make it worse than all—into a secret compact not to utter the business of the spies: "If thou utter not this our business," and therefore she kept it back,—deception again. She received her father and mother, and sisters and brothers into the house without explaining the reason to the Jerichoites,—deception again. Therefore I as a Canaanite pronounce her conduct from first to last one scene of deception.

Now my opponents, to be consistent, ought thus to view her conduct; if one part was bad it was all bad, and as a Canaanite that is the light in which I should view it—that it was deception from first to last. Now from being a Canaanite I will transform myself into an Israelite, and then into a Christian, and see how it stands then. Now I come to the Israelite, and I say to myself, Here are two men, good men, whose lives are in the hands of Rahab; it was with her to save their lives or to betray them. It is a great trust for her, how will she act? There are ten thousand ways in which the Lord can preserve the lives of the spies, but we must see how they are preserved, and that will teach us what the will of God is. Very well she knows the Lord, she is at peace with God's truth, and as my sermon on it shows, she holds fast his yea and amen

truth. I presently hear she has received them. Well, I am glad of that, it shows her love to the God of Israel, and her love to the people of God; why, no evil shall come to her. Secondly, I learn that she hides them—pleased again, faithful again; for by exposing or betraying them she would not save Jericho; Jericho is doomed. Presently I find she uses an irony—speaks ironically; that is, she uses a form of speech wherein the words are contrary to the meaning—the meaning contrary to the words. That was the turning-point—she had hid the spies—now comes the turning-point. Here are the messengers at the door, and she uses evasions, speaks ironically; she says that which is literally false but morally true; she stated that which was false in words, but which is justifiable in meaning. That is the great turning-point. She stands fast. The Holy Spirit, I believe, as a dying man,—I believe with all the solemnity of a Christian and of a minister—I believe that the holy and eternal Spirit put those words into her mouth. Here comes then, I say, the turning-point. I as an Israelite, “O woman,” I should have said, “great is thy faith.” Look at her love in receiving them, look at her prudence in hiding them; look at her faithfulness in using those evasions. Presently she sends the spies out another way; she does not utter the business; she keeps faithful to God’s truth, faithful to God, and faithful to his way. Why, I do not, positively, I do not wonder at a prince in Israel falling in love with her; I do not wonder at a prince in Israel marrying her; I do not wonder at that honour put upon her. Why, the image of Christ appears so conspicuous upon her soul and in her conduct, her integrity and her faithfulness, which the spies could safely trust, or else they would not have entered into a compact with her—when I look at this, then, why, it appears to me to be all admirable from first to last. Take a Canaanite’s view of it, sympathize with the king of Jericho, it is deception from first to last; but come over and view the circumstance from an Israelite’s standing, and everything is admirable. And what am I to understand by the apostle when he saith, after setting Abraham before us in what he has done, “Likewise,”—“likewise,” why, “likewise” means “after the same manner,” doesn’t it? I think something like that; and did Abraham do right in offering his son as far as he went? Yes? “Likewise also, after the same sinless, obedient, faithful, justifiable manner, “was not Rahab justified by works?” Thus the apostle sees entire analogy between the faithful works of Abraham in offering his son and the faithful works of Rahab in saving the spies; the apostle evidently never thought for one moment of making any exception to any part of the conduct of Rahab in concealing the spies, he saw she was justifiable in *all* she did, and that it was the divinely appointed and heaven-taught way of their preservation, and therefore there could be no sin in what she did or said, for God hath no fellowship with sin, nor can he be the author or approver thereof; *every part* and especially that part of her conduct that uninspired men object to, was essential to the preservation of the messengers of God, and to make the faith of Rahab practically perfect. So I most solemnly believe, and so I speak. And it is a small, a very small thing for me to be judged by man, seeing it is the Lord himself is my judge, and he judgeth righteously, and with his judgment I am happy and content, and he to the works and words of Rahab makes no exception, nor will I. Now mark, “when she had received the messengers, and when she *had*, not before—when she had sent them out another way.” I believe Rahab was conscious of no sin in what she said. I believe the spies were conscious of no sin in it, I believe Joshua was conscious of no sin in it, and I believe the apostle James was taught by the Holy Ghost to show that there was no sin in it. Well, then, where is my great crime? I would use ten thousand evasions—I would use ten thousand times ten thousand such evasions if I were placed in the same circumstances, and there were the lives of two children of God in

my hands. I would say, O God, give me wisdom justifiably to combine the serpent with the dove, and the dove with the serpent; let me not be a traitor; teach me what to say; give me a mouth and wisdom that the adversary shall not gainsay nor resist; for this is thy way of delivering the spies; thou couldst have delivered them some other way. I dare not betray them. Give me grace, give me wisdom, that I may be faithful unto death, then I shall receive a crown of life. God did give her wisdom; and if ever I should be placed in analogous circumstances I pray that I may have grace to combine the serpent with the dove with as much innocence, as much integrity, as much propriety, to the good of men and and the glory of God, as she did. Men run about and represent that I say that I would tell ten thousand lies; but they are very careful not to bring in the other part—namely, that I would use ten thousand evasions on the solemn conviction that those evasions were justifiable. Therefore I am not at all moved—just where I was. And last night I read my sermon once more, and I was so taken with it that I got about halfway through it and then forgot the object for which I read it. I thought, What in the world is there in this sermon to make all this noise about? It is nothing. There are one or two expressions that might have been expressed in a clearer way; but then, suppose there be two or three expressions in that sermon, what is the practice of Scripture? The practice of Scripture is to pass by the evil in a man for the sake of the good that is in him.

There was no good thing in Judas, therefore the evil was not passed by; but there was some good thing in Peter, and for the sake of the good that was in Peter the evil was passed by. So in my sermon, if there be a few remarks, if you please, not quite clear, then let mercy reign. I only say this, I do not believe during the thirty-eight years that I have been in my humble way preaching the gospel that I ever preached a sermon during all that time with holier feeling, with holier purpose, with more justifiable objects in view; and I had no more idea while my soul was filled that morning with eternal things, and my soul as happy—I had no more idea that any of my brethren would put such constructions upon that sermon, and attribute to me such motives and such doctrines. I had not the most remote idea of anything of the kind. I can come back to my conscience and feel that I am perfectly justified in the end at which I aimed. I will not now name them, but I may perhaps gather together, though I will not pledge myself to do so, the striking instances we have had of that sermon in several cases being most conspicuously and most wonderfully blessed. I do think that the open and broad seal of heaven upon that sermon ought to quiet my mind, and to make me go on happy and comfortable. And if my brethren like still to stand aloof from me, and keep up an agitation in the churches, that would like to have our united labours to help them—if my brethren choose to stand aloof and keep this up, then the sin lieth not at my door, but at their door. I have no unkind feeling whatever; I am quite willing everything should be passed by on honourable principles, for I have nothing whatever to confess. I stand to my own Master; like Paul, to him I appeal. Therefore I say the sin lies with them, and not with me. And besides, where is our Christian character if we cannot allow each other liberty to give our opinions? I therefore still believe that Rahab was justified from the first to the last. The misrepresentations I have undergone I must expect; all public men of course, more or less, are misrepresented; but as to us hypers, us high Calvinist ministers, why, there is not a popular man among us; none of us are popular enough to be very useful, and we are making ourselves, by our littleness of mind and empty quibbles, more unpopular than ever. I could wish that some of the protesters and some of their company or ministers were here this morning in this pulpit with me. I would say, Now, brethren, look upon this assembly of little (if any) less than two thousand persons, and ask yourselves the question

whether, if they were not satisfied that my motive was pure, my object scriptural, they would not, such an assembly as this, long ere this have entered their protest against what they believed to be wrong? Again, I would say, Brethren, look at such an assembly as this, listen to the solemn and glorious realities of eternity, and ask yourselves what you are fighting against. Well, then, if they stand aloof I will regret it, and pray the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge. My prayer shall be that the Lord in mercy will stand by me, that the preaching by me in my humble sphere and contracted usefulness may at any rate be fully known. I have never boasted over any one, I have never assumed superiority over any one. Whether a minister has half a dozen or a dozen, twenty, a hundred, five hundred, or a thousand people to preach to, I have made myself at home with them all; perhaps I have made myself too cheap. God is my witness I have nothing to boast of but his mercy, his grace, and his salvation. And as to the success with which we have been favoured, surely, surely all our brethren would have the same if they could; I think so. So, then, I only say, whatever faults there may be in my sermon, if I have erred, I have erred innocently, and remain as yet perfectly unconvinced, because the misrepresentations given have no tendency to convince me that I am wrong. Thus, then, I still hold the truth that there are evasions which are lawful. And as to the Judge of all not suspending when he pleases one moral, or any other law, to make way for another moral or other kind of law, is simply to deny the truth of the Bible; but mind this, that for God to suspend for one moment his moral *supremacy* would be to give up the rectitude of his nature, which every mere novice in Christianity knows to be an impossibility, or to suspend his sovereign authority would be to give up the freedom of his will. Who in the world, or in the church either, ever dreamed of the possibility of God suspending his moral perfections? I have never dreamed or hinted at such a piece of infinite ignorance. And did Rahab say what she did in the fear of man? Just the reverse. And did she say what she did from mistrust in God? Just the reverse, just the reverse. She said what she did, believing God would sanction the message. I felt this morning I must just say a word or two about it; to say that my opponents ought either to hold her conduct to be one scene of deception from first to last, or else to come over to me, and to my namesake James, that justifies the whole; and that which God justifies let no man condemn. Now, then, be at peace with God's truth, and let men do what they may, good shall come unto thee.

Lastly, I notice *the qualities of the good that shall come to such*. First, all-sufficient good. All things, we are told, shall work for good. Second, satisfying good. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness." Well, then, where do you wish to go to? Why would you wish to leave the soul? Christ sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; let that be our satisfaction. "Naphtali satisfied with power;" let that be our satisfaction. "They shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord." "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thine house, even of thine holy temple." We shall meet with perfect satisfaction nowhere but in this eternal goodness of the blessed God by Christ Jesus. And, lastly, final goodness, goodness everlasting, the goodness of God enduring continually. "The kingdom of God shall come unto the daughter of Zion." May the Lord still keep us, then, in peace with his truth, and every good shall come.