

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

SINAI MOVED,

SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 25TH, 1866, BY

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AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSEY STREET.

“Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.”—Psalm lxxviii. 8.

OUR text stands connected with the Lord's dealings with the people called *his* people. “O God, when thou wentest forth before *thy* people.” He went before them in knowledge, and knew everything and arranged everything for them, and so he goes before his people now in provision, both providentially and graciously, and he goes before them in salvation, and he goes before them in all his doings and dealings with them. “O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness.” Nothing could stop him, nor could anything stop his true people; those who were believers, they did cleave unto him. He marched majestically through the wilderness, and the people who did not err in their hearts, but who knew his ways,—the people who did not provoke him, but abode by him,—they marched majestically on too, fully assured that while they had manna to-day they should have manna to-morrow also; fully assured that while the rock flowed with water to-day it would flow to-morrow also; fully assured that while he was their guide to-day he would be their guide to-morrow also; fully assured that as he had already conquered mighty foes he would go on to do so; fully assured that as he had brought them out of the land of bondage he would settle them down in the land of liberty. Now in the progress of this march the Psalmist is here led to take notice of a subject that will occupy our time this morning. “The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.” God give me grace and strength to enter upon this infinitely important subject this morning. And I shall endeavour to do so by taking a threefold view of our subject. First, *that Sinai and the circumstances connected therewith point out our destiny, our awful destiny according to the law of God.* Secondly, *how Jesus Christ hath arrested this judgment for us.* Thirdly, *the relationship here declared between God and the people so favoured—“the God of Israel.”*

First, then, *that Sinai and the circumstances connected therewith point out our destiny according to the law of God.* I have often observed, and I again repeat it, that the Scriptures very frequently use abstract terms with a concrete meaning. Now when you read of the mountains shaking, when you read of the hills melting, when you read of Sinai being moved

at the presence of God, there you might stop, and say, Well, the scenes are very grand and very solemn. But we must go on and hear what the word of the Lord saith, and you will find that all of us, in our state by nature, are nominated by what Sinai was. As the people of God are nominated by what Zion is, so all of us, in a state of nature, are nominated by what Sinai is. Let me then, this morning, in the first place point out the real condition we are all in as sinners, as denoted by Sinai and the circumstances thereof; and those of you that have never yet seen what I hope to set before you this morning, may God give you this morning to see it, and make you concerned, and help you to understand the latter part of our discourse also, that you may fly from the wrath to come by him who hath arrested judgment for poor sinners. You go to the 4th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and you will there find the truth of what I have asserted—that the people that are under the law are nominated by Mount Sinai. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law," saith the apostle, "do ye not hear the law?" He then points out what it is; he tells us that Sarah and Agar are figures of the two covenants,—the one of Mount Zion, the other of Mount Sinai, and the sign or the figure, one of the saved and the other of the lost. "Which things," he says, "are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Thus you will see that Agar is a figure of us all by nature, as well as Ishmael also is a figure of us all by nature, and you see the end is that they are to be cast out. "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." Now you will be cast out of this world, and cast out of God's presence, and cast eternally into hell, if you die where you were born, without that transition described by the Saviour when he saith, "Ye must be born again." Now it is said the mountains shook, the earth was shaken, made to tremble. So eternal trembling is the lot of every lost man. If you are lost, your soul will never cease to tremble; the presence of a sin-avenging God in hell in his inflexible justice will keep up an awful trembling for ever and ever. There will in this be an analogy between lost men and fallen angels; devils are constrained to believe, because they are in the wrath which men despise, and at which men laugh, and with which men trifle; devils believe and tremble. This, then, is one feature of the destiny of lost man, that trembling can never cease. Your sins can never be lessened; God's moral supremacy can never for one moment be suspended, his justice altered, his holiness laid aside, or any alteration be made; it is a lake that burneth for ever; the fire is not quenched, the worm dieth not. And then, again, it is said the mountains melted at the presence of the Lord. This is another expression of our state. Doth not David say that the wicked shall melt away? I am not aiming this morning at instruction, but at impression. What is human life but a kind of a gradual melting away? Your youth melts away; your health melts away; your strength melts away; your friends melt away; your comforts melt away; one thing is dried up; another thing

dried up; presently you come to be a poor forlorn creature. As the mountains melted away, so that all human hopes, human consolations, must melt away. Do we feel this and see this? If thou seest this, then thou art prepared to listen to what I have to say presently, when I come to the remedy. Sinai therefore being moved, as we are now treating this point, means the people; "this Agar is Mount Sinai,"—by a metonymy, a form of speech very common; it means the people, and the people shall be moved. Stand still we cannot. You may sit down if you like, but the earth with its diurnal and annual motion, will carry you round. Sit down you may, but time will rush on; and were you to sleep your whole life away, that would not alter it. Presently the scythe comes, you are cut down, and the place that knew you once shall know you no more for ever. Thus, then, here is trembling, melting away, and being moved from every hope on earth; the things which thy soul lusted for are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them again no more for ever. Then, again, it is said to be a mountain that might be touched. Now if a man touched that mountain he would die; I shall have to come round to this again presently. You touch the law of God, and attempt to settle matters with God by your doings. Like Cain you would be driven out from the presence of the Lord, and ultimately be a vagabond, not on earth perhaps, but in hell, and that to eternity. And it is said to be a mountain that burneth. "I am," said one unwilling witness in hell, "tormented in this flame." And it is said to be black; as black as sin can make it, as black as human crimes can make it; as black as our original sin, our heart sin, lip sin, and life sin can make it. "Blackness and darkness"—not the slightest hope,—"and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet," waxing louder and louder; so that the trumpet of God's eternal law, that war trumpet, will keep up an awful terror in hell, and that for ever. "And the voice of words, which they that heard intreated should not be spoken any more unto them;" when the people heard this, they stood afar off. And so you, if you are thus convinced of your standing, of your position, as a sinner before God according to his law, you will just do as the publican did—you will stand afar off, to indicate that as a sinner you are far off, and your soul will breathe out the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is very advantageous to be made to feel the solemnity of these things. But I must say a word or two of encouragement here to those who are at all concerned; and it is this. Some of the people stood nearer to Sinai than others did; therefore to them that stood nearer the lightnings would be more vivid, the thunder more terrific, and the trembling would be more sensibly felt, yet they would all see it. Now, then, am I speaking to one that just begins to see out of obscurity, to see men as trees walking, and to say, Well, I have never felt the trembling; I have never felt the terror; I have never been so cut up; I have never fully understood what is meant in the preceding clause of your text, the heavens dropping—that is, the wrathful heavens dropping; not the gospel heavens, but the wrathful heavens; God came down in burning fire;—you say, Well, I have not felt so much of this, but I can see it, I can see it clearly, and I can see that I can do nothing there, that

I cannot approach God there, that I cannot settle matters with God there; but then I am afraid there is no hope for me, because I have not felt so much of the terror. Well, let not that discourage you. I will bring a scripture to encourage where there is the least concern; namely, "The prudent foreseeth the evil." If thou foreseest the evil, if you do not feel it so much, yet if you so see it as to move you to a spirit of prayer to God, however feeble that prayer may be; if you so see it as to feel a desire, a sincere desire, that you may be found an inhabitant of the Rock of Ages; and if you do clearly see that human doings are all of no avail here; that Christ, and Christ only, can be your way of escape; that is the prudent man. He does not feel the force, but he so foresees the evil that he hideth himself by faith in Christ; while the simple and blindly ignorant pass on and are punished. And I feel every way justified this morning in these remarks, for the law was added because of transgression, and that sin by the law may become exceeding sinful; by the law is the knowledge of sin—that is, the knowledge of sin in the demerits of it. Such, then, is that we have lying before us. Unhappy man, miserable man, wretched man, sinful man, guilty man, cursed man, damned man, lost man. Oh, my hearer, where doth the misery of sin terminate? Who can fathom the depth of that ocean, that reservoir of wrath ready to burst forth? Who can measure the breadth of God's fiery law, that law being exceeding broad? Who can undertake to define the intensity of the wrath? It is the wrath of Almighty God. Thus Sinai, indicating the fearfulness of the people, is moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel; and no man can escape his presence. Into his presence death will bring you, either as a guilty man, to be there and then thrust into hell; or else as a saved man, to be received into everlasting glory. All must come to him; all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether good or whether bad.

Let us now, in the next place (for these are matters that concern us all, whether we are unconcerned about them or not),—let us see in the next place how Sinai was moved in a better sense; *how Jesus Christ hath, arrested this judgment for us*; how he hath met the curse; and see if there be anything in the curse which he hath not met. And before I enter upon that I must remind you of one thing,—that the sacrificial service of the Levitical law, the tabernacle, with its mercy-seat and all pertaining thereto, were given in Sinai, and came out, that economy of typical mercy came out from Sinai. Where then is the application? Here it is; Jesus Christ, honour to his dear name! was on this mystic Sinai, he was under the law, and when he came out, what did he bring with him? An everlasting righteousness, to justify the ungodly; they shall be brought to see their need of that righteousness. When he came out from under the curse of the law, and had endured the curse, and when he rose from the dead, what did he bring with him? Eternal salvation. Thus as that economy of mercy came from Sinai, so our salvation came from under the law; from under the curse of the law. But we must go into detail here. "A mount that might be touched." Oh happy man,

happy man. if thou knowest enough of thy state as a sinner, and of the majesty of God's law, to say, I cannot touch that; there is no hope for me. Jesus comes, he looks at it, and methinks I hear him say, If I touch that mount I must die; if I touch that mount and enter into responsibility on behalf of those that are sinners, I must die, I must lay down my life. What shall I do? I will do so; I will touch the mount; I will take it in hand. "In the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." I delight to do thy will; thy law is within my heart. But then comes the burning; Jesus saith, I will meet it. My bride shall never be touched by the fire of hell; the fire of tribulation she will need, but the fire of hell shall never touch one of my brethren. I will meet the burning, quench the flaming sword in mine own vital blood. There is the remedy. I'll take the blackness, I'll take all their blackness of character upon me; I'll take all their blackness of sin; I'll take all their blackness of guilt; I'll put an end to the blackness, and bring in eternal brightness, and I will be hereafter the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. But there is the darkness, and Satan took advantage of that darkness. "Now is your hour, and the power of darkness." A darkness surrounded Jesus of Nazareth that we can never describe; but he never lost himself in the darkness; he knew where he was. When he was at Pilate's bar he knew where he was. He knew how far he was on with the work which none but an incarnate God could accomplish; he knew the solidity of the ground upon which he stood. And when Pilate said, "Knowest thou not I have power to release thee or crucify thee?" Jesus answered, "Thou hast no power;" thy magisterial power is given unto thee of God for to use, and not abuse; and therefore, "he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin," because thou art abusing the power God has given thee. But you will not release me, for, if so how could the Scriptures be fulfilled? He knew where he was. Blackness, and darkness, and tempest. Then broke up the deep reservoirs of, almighty wrath. What a tempest was there! "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But the tempest could not move him; he held these mighty winds in his fist; he compassed these waters as in a garment; he had his own way in this whirlwind and in the storm, the clouds were the dust of his feet, and he dragged the devil and all his powers captive while Christ himself appeared to be a captive. While the assembly of the wicked enclosed him, he nevertheless had complete control over them. And the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder till it ceased to sound; its notes lessened and lessened till they died away. "The trumpet when Jesus was born at Bethlehem, summoned him. The 50th of Isaiah will show that justice exacted daily service of Christ. "He wakeneth morning by morning." I must be in my place all night. When the mountains are my place to be in prayer all night, I must be there. I must be in my place all day. Wherever heaven has labelled the call of a sinner—the woman of Samaria, or the blind beggar by the way—I must be there. The trumpet summons me to all this. And the trumpet waxed

louder and louder, saying, I want more yet, more yet, more yet; I must have your blood, I must have your life, I must have you; you must die. And so the trumpet kept calling for more, for more—more obedience, more suffering—more, more, and more, until he had suffered all that sin demerited. The trumpet dropped; the Saviour said, "It is finished," yielded up the ghost, entered triumphantly into eternity, having arrested judgment for us. And the voice of words, which the people entreated should not be spoken unto them any more,—that is, the fiery words of the law. But as we have said of the trumpet, we say of the words—the words spake until there was nothing more to say. Thus Jesus hath met the curse. If you would triumph over your trembling, it must be by him who trembled for you; if you would come into the new heavens, it must be by him upon whom dropped the wrathful heavens; and if you would be free, it must be by him who ventured to touch the mount for you, who undertook your case; and if you would be free from the wrath of God, it must be by Jesus Christ. If you would be free from darkness, blackness, and tempest, and the voice of words, the trumpet, and the fiery words of the law, then it must be by Jesus Christ. Do we always perceive? I trow not; I never have yet perceived the full force of the words that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." I have given you this morning but a small sample of what the law is, and how Christ met the law. Now Christ's meeting the law, and bringing in that blessedness, I have often thought is set forth very beautifully in the 45th of Isaiah,— "Drop down, ye heavens, from above;" the law heavens dropped upon Christ; the wrathful heavens, the fiery heavens, dropped upon Christ. As the fire came down upon the sacrifices, and the people escaped, so the fiery heavens, and the very clouds thereof, dropped upon Christ. "And let the skies pour down righteousness;" the righteous demands of justice; God's holy, just, and righteous indignation against sin. There God manifested his vengeance to sin in a way that surpasseth all the horrors of the damned. I think no Christian will contradict this. Nothing in the whole range of existence could so demonstrate God's almighty and eternal indignation against everything contrary to his nature as that of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let the earth open." So it did. Joseph, little do you think what you have opened the earth for. You have just had a new sepulchre made. Yes. Do you know what it is for? Oh, the same as other people. Oh no, it is not the same as other people; no, you have opened the earth there to receive a seed that shall die, and fall into that place that you have opened, and shall rise, and bring in an eternal harvest. You have opened the earth to receive your Maker, to receive an incarnate God, to receive him that angels and a number of saved souls shall adore to all eternity. You shall know it by-and-bye. Presently his eyes are opened,—the Son of God, the King of Israel, the salvation of man, the love of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the glory of God. No man shall lie in that sepulchre. And therefore he went in immediately unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus, laid him in a new tomb, wherein man never lay; the person to be received into that

sepulchre was too sacred for any one besides to be laid there. "Let the earth open." Now it is a good thing when we do something for ourselves, and God turns it to his service. We say, "What an honour this is!" "Let the earth open"—Christ meeting the law,—“and let them bring forth salvation;” and who brought forth salvation? Christ, the Holy Spirit, God the Father. Are you whispering and saying to yourselves, some of you, You cannot prove that? Could I not? Ask yourselves now, mark, "Let them bring forth salvation." Is not Jesus Christ salvation? Certainly he is. Did he not take up his own life? Yes. Was he not quickened by the Spirit of God from the dead? Yes. Did not God the Father raise him from the dead? Yes. There it is. Let, them, the holy Three bring forth salvation. When Christ sprang out of the grave, God the Spirit, God the Father, Christ himself, were all joined in the work; the joint work of the eternal Three was the resurrection of Christ, and thus, out, of that sepulchre came eternal salvation. And the disciples soon found it so when he reappeared to them; on the day of Pentecost thousands found it so, and so from that day to this, and down to the end of time, millions yet unborn will find that out of that sepulchre came forth eternal salvation. "Let righteousness spring up together." Ah, saith Satan, I would not mind his rising again if he would leave his righteousness behind, if he would leave his atonement behind, and the story should go forth that he merely died and rose. But alas! says Satan, his righteousness will rise with him, and his sacrificial work will rise with him; and, saith Satan, to my mortification I shall hear the whole congregation singing,—

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

How hard does Satan try to get rid of Christ's righteousness, and to get rid of his atonement! You may have Christ, but you must not have his righteousness, you must not have his atonement. You may have the vine of the gospel, but you must not have the wine that cheereth the heart of God and man; you may have the olive tree, but not the golden oil of his grace; you may have the fig tree, but not the figs. "Let righteousness spring up together. Bless his dear name for ever, and for ever, and for ever! And remember that his resurrection is your resurrection; you will rise by his atonement, you will rise by his righteousness, and when you rise and stand before God you will be no more ashamed than Christ himself was, because by his righteousness you are justified.

"Bold shall I stand in that great day;
Who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous guilt and shame."

"Let righteousness spring up together." How anxious the apostles were to set forth this righteousness of faith! "I the Lord have created it." I have formed the human nature of Christ, I have done all this, I the Lord have done the whole. Can you heartily say Amen to that? Can you touch Sinai? Not if you know what Sinai is. Can you come,

before the Lord in your own name? Not if you know what you are; but in the name of Christ. You will prize Jesus as having changed the scene altogether. Thus, then, Sinai and its solemnity set forth the destiny of all that live and die without Christ; second, that the Saviour hath met the law and its curse; that the earth opened, that he rose from the dead, that his righteousness sprung up with him, and that his righteousness and his salvation last as long as he does. Very ingenious and excellent artisans, and scientific men, and commercial men, some of you are, I know, but still your works will not last for ever. Now his works do. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

I shall not be able to touch the latter part of my text this morning, but just one more point, and then I close. See, then, the mercy of understanding what we are, and what we need to be delivered from. See how Jesus Christ hath met everything, and how he saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." I will sum up with the words which appear to me to include all that I have advanced, in the 94th Psalm. There you have divine chastening, divine faithfulness, divine presence, the arrest of judgment, and the sincerity of the people. It stands thus:—"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." What do you say to this? Has the law taught you anything of a solemn nature? Do you see that your Maker never did and never will trifle with his own law? If so, thou art blessed; you may not possess the blessedness, but you are on the way to it. "For the Lord will not cast off his people." That he will not, whom he foreknew; there is his faithfulness to his sworn covenant, "neither will he forsake his inheritance;" there is his presence. "But judgment"—here is the arrest of judgment, summing up all we have said this morning.—"but judgment shall return unto righteousness." The judgment of God against you in the first Adam is carrying you away; the judgment of God against you in your own wicked heart is carrying you away; the judgment of God against you in the sins of your life is carrying you away. But you begin to pray, and you begin to plead the Saviour's name. Judgment looks round and says, What's that? Why, there is righteousness. Why, says Judgment, instead of condemning you for your original sin, or for your heart sin, or for your lip sin, or for your life sin, instead of condemning you for that, I will accept that righteousness, I will accept that sacrifice; you have accepted it, and I shall not refuse it. And thus "judgment shall return unto righteousness." Righteousness settles everything for you, and you will sing,—

"All is settled,
And my soul approves it well."

"And all the upright in heart shall follow it." You will follow hard after what the dear Saviour hath done; that will be your standing-place; if you are upright in the faith you will follow after from time to time what Christ hath done, and hereby learn something of the great death from which he hath delivered and doth deliver, in whom you have faith to trust that he will yet deliver.