

HEAVENLY SAINTS

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning, April 7th, 1867

By Mister JAMES WELLS

At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Wansey Street

Volume 9 Number 438

“And shall, wear out the saints of the most High.” Daniel 7:25

THE first clause of this verse was our text last Lord's day evening, and we had no difficulty in showing what relation this term, “the most High” bore in the gospel; that it meant the Lord's entire dominion by Christ Jesus over everything; that it meant the independence of the Lord in the salvation of men, that it meant the certainty of his truth. And there was no difficulty in bringing forward proofs that great words had been spoken against this lofty, this majestic, this certain and glorious order of things, wherein we are saved independent of man, seeing our salvation from first to last is of the Lord. And these great words were to be spoken, and the saints of the Most High to be worn out, by what is called “the little horn.” There is not, to my mind, the smallest difficulty in understanding who and what this little horn was. You have nothing to do but consider Alexander the Great's empire. When he died, that empire was divided among four of his generals, it then became four. The Roman empire extended into the East, and one of these horns, or powers, was absorbed in that empire. This was the little horn, little in the East at the first; and it plucked up the other three horns; that is to say, the other three parts of Alexander's empire became absorbed in the Roman. This horn, the Roman empire, was little at the first in the East; but by its increased achievements in the East, and by its possessions in the West, it became exceeding great, and put to death the Savior, and persecuted the apostles and the people of God for centuries. In the time of Constantine, the Great this little horn, that had become a great one, namely, Rome pagan, ceased, dropped, was no more. But while the horn, historically speaking, ceased, its power being gone, its spirit did not cease. How, said Satan, I can no longer use pagan agency to persecute the people of God, but I must now pervert Christianity itself, and make use of that, in order to incarnate a spirit of persecution. And so this little horn, that became great, has existed ever since; that is to say, wherever there is an hostile power to God's truth, that is nothing else but Satan still making use of this little horn in the spirit thereof, that is the way I take it, and by it still wearing out the saints of the Most High.

I shall not attempt this, morning to trouble you with much history, or rather with scarcely any, except that which is presented by the word of the Lord; for the sufferings of the. people of God from age to ago are so clear that none can dispute them. If we read the wretched history of our own country, why, some part of our wretched history, what is it? A history of the sufferings and blood

of the saints; a history of one sect persecuting another, which ever was in the ascendancy, Catholics persecuting Protestants; Protestants persecuting Catholics; Puritans persecuting Church people; Church people persecuting Puritans; all exhibiting by turns the same spirit; simply because they did not understand that which is taught in the 5th chapter of Matthew, that we are not to persecute, but that it is contrary to the spirit of the gospel to persecute any one. We are to bless, and not to curse; we are to render good for evil, and we are to walk in love and good-will to all men. But, then, this true doctrine of the true gospel had been shut out. Thanks to the Lord that it is now in some humble measure understood. We live in happy times; in comparison of days gone by, in this respect. Nevertheless, human nature is the same that it ever was; and I would no more trust human nature in the 19th century than at any other time. Therefore, the peace we now enjoy, the liberty and freedom we now have, we must attribute entirely to an overruling Providence, to the power and goodness of God, and not to the goodness of the creature. For I am sure the personal ill-will among ministers, their readiness to slander each other, to persecute and to degrade each other; and the ill-will, and the trifles that will produce ill-will, between Christians instead of love, all these signs and symptoms are a disgrace to us; but they do unhappily exist; just showing that if Satan can marshal any one sect into that position, and arm them with secular power, then woe be to all the rest. What a mercy for us that our eternal salvation lies with the Lord! If any part of it were under the control of men, then woe be to us; but being all of God, we can rejoice that we have not to look to the mountains, nor to the hills, but in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.

I shall look at our text this morning, and I hope next Lord's morning to look at the after part of the verse, as it applies to us; that is, I shall look at it in a personal, practical way. Our text, therefore, contains two doctrines. The first is *that of discriminating favor*, "saints of the most High." This is intended as a twofold contrast, saints in contrast to those that are ungodly, and make no profession at all; and saints in contrast to those that are men made saints, that are made saints by human device; of course, they are not saints really. But those who are saints savingly, they are the saints of the Most High. I shall therefore in the first place describe as minutely as I can what a saint of God is, one that is holy, that is consecrated to God, and is, therefore, called a saint of God. I need not say that the word "saint" means "a sanctified one," one that is sanctified and consecrated to God. The first doctrine we have, then, is *that of discriminating favor*; and the second is *that of tribulation*; "And shall wear out the saints of the most High."

First, then, discriminating favor. And in this department, I will try to describe what a saint of the Most High is. I must begin where I usually do begin, with him who is the Alpha, and, as we must end in this same Person also, with him who is the Omega. A saint, then, is a man who is enlightened, and is led to see the way in which sin is put away. Hence in Hebrews 13, "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." That is to say, that whatever our sins deserved Jesus Christ suffered; whatever our sins demerited Jesus Christ took upon him; that whatever wrath there was due to our sins was concentrated upon and in the Savior. And he, therefore, is said to sanctify the people because he did, by his sufferings, end the wrath of God, and thereby swallow up death in victory; for death is the fruit of sin, "the wages of sin is death;" Christ, taking sin away, has swallowed up death in victory. The apostle says, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Perhaps it will help us to understand this if I first remind you of Exodus 33, to which the apostle there refers when he says, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp." You find in Exodus they had set up a golden calf; they substituted something

of their own for God's order of things. That has been the practice of poor old blind nature from the beginning, and it is so now. It is very likely some of them thought that when Moses came down from the mount, he would be exceedingly pleased with this new invention; but instead of that he pronounced, very properly, the wrath of heaven against it. The golden calf was ground to powder; and Moses (for the tabernacle, properly so speaking, was not yet built, but Moses's tent or tabernacle was the place where the Lord met with him) therefore went out of the camp where they had made this golden calf, and took the tabernacle with him; and it is significantly said that "everyone which sought the Lord," or, to take the literal Hebrew word, "every one which sought Jehovah, went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp." And when they came to where Moses was (and Moses in this is a type of Christ), what did they meet? They that were consecrated to God alone, who were glad to leave the error into which they had fallen, and to make Jehovah everything, when they came there, what did they meet? They met this, the Lord said to Moses, and of course he said it to all that were one with Moses in the faith, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Just so now; if the salvation of our souls is a matter laid home upon our consciences, and we are made so enlightened as to see that Jesus Christ putting away sin is the one essential, and that we are willing to go forth, not only out of the profane, but out of the mere professing world, where false doctrines are taught, to go to Christ in the perfection of his work, to look unto him in what he has done. Again, let me repeat the words, for they are very beautiful, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood;" that is, that he does by his atonement present the people before God just what his atonement has made them. What can be so attractive as this? He has constituted the people blameless, spotless, without blemish, yes, unblameable and unreprieveable, in the sight of God, Why, if I say no more, even this is worth meeting to look at, that the dear Redeemer might sanctify the people with his own blood. Come home to your own many sins, come home to your own heart sins, you that are taught of God will not feel I am going too far when I say, come home to your utter unworthiness of the least of all his mercies; and come home to your own heart, and the ten thousand hindrances you have got there to everything spiritual; and then you will really find it hard work to believe that a poor Ethiopian, a poor, benighted, creature, a poor infirm creature, a poor leprous sinner, a poor wretched creature, feeling that in your flesh dwells no good thing, you will find it hard work to believe that the dear Redeemer can, and will, and does present you before God as free from sin as he himself is, and that your faults are never to be named, never to be thought of, they are gone. Hear what the Lord says, I, even, I, am he that blots out your transgressions, and will not remember your sins." Oh, what a God is this! what a Jesus Christ is this! what a saint-ship is this! So, then, the saints of God are those that were relatively, and shall become personally and man festively, consecrated to God; by the blood of Christ. That he might sanctify the people with his own blood." Have you such an estimation of Christ as this? Can you really and truly believe that he is such a Savior as this? that he scorns the thought of naming one of your faults to you reproachfully; that he scorns the thought of a single fault being laid to your account; that he has blotted the whole out, taken it out of the way, nailed it to his cross? This, then, is one step towards saint-ship, and this is one part of Christian experience of this saint-ship. You thus become, by the blood of Christ, consecrated unto God; having boldness by his blood to enter into the holy of holies. "Sanctify the people with his own blood," that is, consecrate them relatively to God. And precious faith lays hold of what he has done, and there we stand, as the apostle says, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. How loud and how wondrous that song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever!" Now this is saint-ship, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. You how, the Savior says, "are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." And you

know what word he spoke unto some, it was this; "Follow me." When Jesus Christ said that, it brings us unto him, and we receive him in what he has done. When you come to die, if you are favored to lay your head, as it were, upon this testimony, that he has sanctified the people with his own blood, and presented them before God all that he himself is, what a peaceful death that must be. Eternity is a solemn word; the thought of it is very solemn, when we look at the immortality of the soul, and judgment to come. But when we see the dear Savior as having thus put away sin, it must, even in our present partial acquaintance with him, endear him.

The second thing in saint-ship is to know something of the difference between law and gospel. Because the faith of God's elect is not a blind faith; it understands what it believes. Some say, "Oh no, it does not." Yes, it does. That is to say, if God makes a promise, I understand the meaning of that promise. But how he will precisely fulfil it, to understand it as to the *modus operandi*, is not essential. I will take one instance of what I mean by understanding. The body will be raised up at the last day; how I shall realize my identity is a matter which I cannot clearly comprehend. How the dust shall be found out, and immortalized in the twinkling of an eye, the body constituted strong enough to last to all eternity, without the least infirmity, drawback, or symptom of age or decay, I cannot understand. But I do understand that the body will be raised, and I do understand that God himself will do it. I understand that, and I want to understand no more; that is understanding quite enough, and we rest in this sweet assurance.

But I hasten to notice, that those who are thus brought to Jesus Christ as their only way of consecration to God, are also taught the difference between law and gospel. There is a beautiful representation of this in the beginning of Deuteronomy 33, where the people of God are called saints. You will observe, I am keeping to those scriptures, and bringing in those scriptures, that speak of the people of God as saints. Hence it is there said, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of saints." Now Cruden, in his "Concordance," in explanation of the names, says, that Sinai means *enmity*, and that Seir means *tempest*; so, if we put the two together, it will be expressive of the wrath of the law of God. It will be expressive of that deadly antipathy, that righteous indignation and tempestuous wrath that must burst forth upon us if we are found there when we die. Now the Lord came from this wrath, he came from this tempest. And he "shined forth from Mount Paran." Cruden says that the word Paran signifies *beauty, glory, and ornament*. Now, if it does mean beauty, how well it signifies Jesus Christ! and there, God shines forth. And wherein lies the beauty of Christ? Why, in two things; first, that he himself was free from sin; and secondly, that he has put away the sins of the people; he has made reconciliation for the sins of the people; their sins are put away. Here the Lord comes from wrath into love, from tempest into calm; for Jesus Christ is our peace. Here he shines forth; here we see him in all his mercy, his loving-kindness, and his goodness. And also, the word Paran, Cruden says, means *glory*; beautifully pointing to Jesus Christ. Where do we acquire, how shall we acquire, eternal glory? By Jesus Christ. "I reckon the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." And does not the Lord even now, has he not already shined forth upon our souls from the realms of eternal glory? We see the glory before us, we see the realm before us, we see heaven before us, we see the city before us, we see the house not made with hands before us, we see the rest before us, we see the happy, happy home before us. And also, he says, it means *ornament or adornment*. And when I met with that interpretation, I thought at once of the words of the prophet in Isaiah 61, where he says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God."

And meditating upon this subject, I thought, Well, there we are sanctified by his own blood; second, I thought, there we are brought from Sinai and from Seir, from wrath and from tempest; and here we are brought into the beauty of Jesus, and shall behold the glory of Jesus. And now, how are we to appear in that glory? The last word, *adornment*, seemed to represent the people very beautifully in the way in which they shall appear in this glory. So, then, says the prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." What a blessed saint-ship is this, by which we are led to appreciate what the Savior has done, and by which we are led to distinguish between Sinai and Zion, between law and gospel. But Moses goes on a little farther, after reminding us that the Lord brought the saints from Sinai. Well, say you, then according to that they were saints while they were there. How do you make that out? Well, friends, we make it out in this way. Jude says, "Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." So that they were saints in God's provision and settlement even from before the foundation of the world. They were saints, as most of you know, before they were sinners. They were chosen in Christ before they fell in Adam; they were secured in him before they were endangered by the fall. Then comes in a fuller revelation: "From his right hand went a fiery law for them." Now that fiery law is for them in a twofold sense; to show them their need of that river which proceeds from the throne of God, or to show them their need of the mercy of the gospel, that is one respect in which the law is for them; and the second respect in which that fiery law is for them is for their defense. God throws fiery judgments round about his people against their adversaries. Hence "he will be a wall of fire round about them and the glory in the midst." If you have any adversaries, there is a fiery law on your behalf against them. God himself watches over it all; he perceives their craftiness; you stand still and see the salvation of God. You will be unconquerable if you are favored to cast yourself entirely upon the providential care of the blessed God. "Yes, he loved the people; all his saints are in your hand." God the Father so loved them that he took them into his own hands; and he has never given them up yet, and never will. Jesus Christ so loved them that he took them into his own hands; and he has never given them up and never will. The Holy Spirit has so loved them that he has taken them into his own hands; and he will never give them up. Hence you see the difference between this and another order of things. In Isaiah 5 there is a vineyard that those to whom it was left were to cultivate; and that vineyard came to nothing. In Isaiah 27 there is a vineyard that is entirely in the Lord's hands: "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day." "They sat down at your feet; every one shall receive of your words." What words shall they receive? They shall receive the testimony concerning Christ sanctifying the people with his own blood; they shall receive the testimony of the difference between law and gospel. We bless the Lord for this spiritual life, this spiritual light, and this spiritual understanding; for there is no dignity to equal that of having that precious faith that thus unites us to God.

But thirdly, the saints are also distinguished by deep downward experiences and conspicuous deliverances. Hence Hannah describes the downward and upward experience of the Christian, and then in the next verse, 1 Samuel 2:8 she says, "He raises up the poor out of the dust," I like that very much, "and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill;" I like that better, very much better; because every Christian feels, Now Lord, if I must stand upon what I am apart from your grace, I have nothing but the dunghill of sin to call my own; I have nothing but eternal infamy to look for; I shall be cast out, and held in eternal contempt. Hence you read of some coming forth to shame and

everlasting contempt. Do you know what this is? Do you loathe yourself in your own sight? Do you see yourself spiritually what a beggar on the dunghill is literally, and worse, because a man may by pure misfortune be driven to the dunghill, and there may be no crime in that; but we are in this degradation by sin, by what we are as sinners. And every Christian knows this. Some of you are young in the ways of the Lord yet, and you may think me perhaps going rather too far; but you may depend upon it, if you are seeking to live a life of daily fellowship with God, if you are in earnest about your soul, and if you are seeking after the Lord, you may talk about outward hindrances, why, the outward hindrances that you will meet will be nothing, will not be worth naming, in comparison of the hindrances of your own heart. You propose to be spiritual today; and perhaps that very day that you meant to be spiritual you shall be more carnal than before. You propose to yourself to acquiesce in God's providential dealings today, and to make it your maxim that he is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. And, perhaps, that very day you shall be the most rebellious, the most careless, the most hard-hearted; and you will have such difficulty with your own heart that you will say to yourself, I am very glad that no one else but myself and the Lord can see what I am; I am very glad I am not called upon to analyze and describe what I am; and I am very glad the word of the Lord says that "the heart, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" If the word of the Lord did not say so, I am sure I should conclude that my whole experience is nothing else but an awful testimony against me that I am too filthy, that I am too vile, that I am gone too far, ever to hope for mercy. But, bless his dear name! he comes down to the poor in the dust, and the beggar on the dunghill, and he lifts them up, and the 2nd of Ephesians shows how he lifts them up: "He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is his atonement that turns this beggar into a king; it is by his atonement, by faith in him that such are raised up, and made to inherit the throne of glory. They are said to be raised up, and "set among princes," The princes do not mean the princes of this world; they would be no comfort to us. The princes there mean the Lord's people; all the people of God are princes, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ Jesus. In relation to the Lord's people, we have, indeed, every reason to use the words,

"May I numbered with them be,
Now and through eternity."

He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints." If you are thus raised up to this gospel throne of glory, he will keep your feet there; that is, he will keep your faith; that is, he will keep you standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, I dare to say some of you are thinking now of the 40th Psalm, where you have the same experience described in another way. David says, "I waited patiently for the Lord;" that is, I could not give it up. There I was in a horrible pit, in the miry clay, a poor, helpless creature; but I could not give it up. The Lord alone is my hope. I know that Jesus Christ went down to the bottoms of the mountains; I know that he went down to the lowest hell; I know that he was laid in darkness and in the deeps; I know that his sorrows were unfathomable, and I will not despair; I will still wait, I will not give it up. So, he says, By and by "he brought me up." I could not get myself up, no, no means of getting myself up. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." The man; therefore, that is a saint of the Most High is brought forth out of the hostile camp,

out of the profane and out of the mere professing world, and is brought to side with the truth as it is in Jesus. The saint of God is a man that is brought to know the difference between law and gospel. And if any one of you that are Christians do not see the difference very clearly, God lead you along so as to see the difference, for you will never fully prize the gospel until you know something, at least by apprehension, of the terrible majesty of the law. The man that sees and feels his own wretched condition as a sinner, knows that if he ever has any fellowship with God it must be by the mighty power of the Spirit of God, by virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant. "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

One more point before I leave this part. A saint of the Most High is a man that is brought into covenant with God. 50th Psalm, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." That sacrifice is Christ's, and you will hold that sacrifice as the blood of the new covenant. If you are brought to believe in that covenant, to rest in it, to rest in its eternal certainty, then you are a saint of God. You are not a complete saint, you are not complete in your saint-ship, if you are not brought into this covenant. Let us have one scripture upon it Isaiah 55th, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Now exclude the word *David* there, and substitute the meaning of it. The word *David* means *beloved*. It does not refer to David at all there, but to Jesus Christ. Now if you go to Acts 13:34, you will see these words upon this covenant, "As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, will give you the sure mercies of David." Christ personally saw no corruption, but he went to the place of corruption; now he shall return no more to the place of corruption. The idea conveyed in the words I have just quoted is this, that just so sure as the Lord Jesus Christ died no more, that just so sure as death has no more dominion over him, just so sure are the mercies of this covenant. The Savior, in entire accordance herewith, said, "Because I live, you shall live, also." God grant, I cannot forbear, before I go to the last part, saying so, that every one of you, when you come to die (and it will not be very long), may be standing here, in the confidence of that atonement that has put away sin, that you may be standing in the confidence of his being the end of the law, in the confidence of the eternity of his kingdom, in the confidence of his covenant. It is a covenant of sure mercies, look at it, mercies, innumerable mercies; mercies that are as the stars of the sky, that are as the sand upon the sea-shore, immeasurable and innumerable. What should we do without this covenant of sure mercies? The Lord said, "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you."

Perhaps I am speaking to some Christian this morning who may say, Well, I don't think I am a Christian. I have got into such a state lately, I don't know where I have got too. I seem to have got away from every, thing that is sacred, and spiritual, and heavenly. I have got into such captivity and wretchedness, I don't know where I am, or what will become of me; and something seems to make me question the Bible itself. All seems to be dry and dead together; the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron. But there stands the promise, "With great mercies will I gather you." Are you prepared to say, that if you are gathered in again it can only be by great mercies? that if the Lord were to wait to gather you until there was something good in yourself, you could never be gathered in at all? Such, then, is the saint of God. Leaving you all to judge whether Jesus, as the end of sin, is your hope; leaving you all to judge whether you are so enlightened as to see the difference between the law and the gospel, the one making you prize the other; leaving you all to

judge whether you experimentally know your degraded condition, and that you can be raised up and made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light only by faith in Jesus Christ, I must leave you to judge whether you are brought into this sure covenant by faith in the sacrifice of Christ. If you are, what a happy lot is yours! and oh, how will you desire to be devoted to God as long as you live! He is your best Friend, the only friend that can befriend you at all times and in all places. Give up God, we give up everything.

But I now come to the last part, *the tribulation*. “He shall wear out the saints of the most High.” This has been fulfilled. It is a mercy for us they can be worn out only in the body. They never could be worn out in their saint-ship, but only in their creature-ship. I will just have a scripture or two, for the sake of bringing before you the truth of God’s blessed word. And it is right also that we should have sympathy with our brethren, though they are beyond the reach of human, or even Christian, sympathy upon earth. It is said that they should slay the saints of God by the sword. How many thousands have fallen by the sword the Lord alone knows! We know that many have. And by flame, how many have been burnt in our own country and other countries! And by captivity, how many have been cast into prison! Look at the Bastille of France, the Inquisition of Spain, and the Tower of London, perhaps there are more testimonies against the enemy from these three spots than from any other three spots in Europe. Captives cast into prison there, left to starve to death, and so shut in that no one should hear their sighs or their groans. But God heard their groans, and loosed them spiritually, if they were not loosed naturally. And by spoil, there is a man that has worked hard, industrious, and comfortable; his family comfortable. These infernal wretches come in, take the man’s property away, throw him and his family into utter destitution. And all this done to maintain the honor of holy church! all this done under the hypocritical pretense of holiness! that this man is a dangerous man, and must not live. Why, if I thought any man under the heavens was a dangerous man to my religion, I would not give a rush for my religion. If I believed the Pope, or ten thousand popes, or ten thousand Mahometans, or any class or order, could injure my religion, I would not give a rush for it. No, my religion defies the whole; my religion is invulnerable, impregnable, imperishable. Hence, said the apostle, “We are killed all the day long.” When they have killed one, they kill another, and so they go on; “but in all these things we (not they) are more than conquerors.” Thus, the poor saints were worn out in the body. What they suffered was wonderful, and the support they had under those sufferings was equally wonderful. Now, why do we pine, and grieve, and grumble, and croak, as some of us do? I can tell you the reason. It is for want of greater troubles.