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Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.

SURE VICTORY.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 11TH JULY, 1869,

By MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE NEW SURREY TABERNACLE, WANSLEY STREET.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”—Revelation xii. 11.

THE great Creator, in the exercise of his sovereign pleasure, was pleased to embrace in his love a number of souls that no man can number; and he undertook at the same time to save them, and assimilate them to some pattern likeness, or similitude which he himself should choose; and it laid entirely with him to save them as he pleased. If he had chosen to save them without a Mediator, and have laid his law aside, and have freely passed by all their sins, and thus have received them to himself, he could have done so, because there is not anything that he cannot do, for in so doing he would have done no wrong. Abraham said, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Now if the Lord had pardoned those cities instead of destroying them, he would not have done wrong. But if the Lord give a rule, and assure us that we are to be conformed to that rule, and that if he himself deviate from that rule, he would reckon himself to be unjust. Thus you see, that if you undertake positively to confer a favour, and afterwards withdraw that favour, you do an injustice. But if there is a threatening standing against a person, and you withdraw that threatening, you do not do any injustice, because you do not hurt the person by withdrawing the threatening, but you do him good instead. Hence among men it is very needful in a thousand instances, without any atonement, or sacrifice, or anything required on the part of the object of our forgiveness, that we should freely, in consideration of the Lord’s mercies to us, forgive others without demanding of them any reparation whatever. But this was not the way in which the Lord chose to act. Hence saith the apostle,—If there had been a law given—he does not say there could not have been one given, but if there had been a law given that could have given life, if God had chosen to do so, then verily righteousness should have been by the law; but the Lord hath chosen another way; he hath given two rules;—the law, and any deviation from that law is on our part unjust; then he has given the gospel; and when he brings the people into conformity to this gospel, if he should disappoint them he would reckon himself to be unjust, unrighteous; that is by the rule which he himself hath given. Therefore, saith the apostle, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have minis-

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tered to the saints, and do minister." But as I have said, that is not the way, not without an atonement, that God chose to save. Let us remember that God is infinite in wisdom, and therefore he never could do anything that did not accord with the infinity of his wisdom. God is all-wise; there is no darkness, there is no folly in him; he is wisdom itself. Hence it is, then, that we are to put the best possible construction upon all he does, and upon all his dealings with us, because of the infinity of his wisdom. He therefore knows what is best. He hath chosen a way to save us that he himself considered to be the best way; a way in which the laws of right and wrong, as creatures understand them, are wonderfully established and carried out. How then shall the matter be? Sin has incurred according to God's law;—what shall God do?—withdraw that law, and let sin drop; for where there is no law there is no transgression; or shall he remain inexorable in that law, shall he remain unchangeable in that law? He chooses the latter; he chooses to remain unalterable in that law; and he settled it in his pure and eternal mind that as sin had entailed a penalty, that penalty should be inflicted,—that penalty should be borne either by the sinner himself in eternal suffering, or else by a sin-bearer, a surety for him. This is God's plan, God's way; and we do not doubt, whether we see it or not, that it is the wisest way possible. And it certainly is a most wonderful way; the very first item in the matter is astounding to the last degree, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only think of it; that the babe in Bethlehem's manger was at the same time the self-existent, the inconceivable, the infinite, the eternal God; and that he thus took upon him the seed of Abraham, became a complex Person, God and man in one person; and he went forth in his complexity, under our responsibility was made under God's law, to sustain all the demands and responsibilities of that law; and all our sins thereby, with all their curse, came upon him. But then just look at what he was;—God and man in one person. His obedient life was the work of his person; his atoning death was the work of his person; his resurrection was the work of his whole person; for though we distinguish between the two natures, we must never separate the two; though he had, or hath, two personal natures, he is not two persons, but only one person. Therefore you must not expect me this morning, when I come to speak of his atonement, to speak in very measured terms; it is a subject so dear, precious, and attractive, and it contains in it such wonders, and is the revelation of such wonders to us, that hereby our God will make us perfect in his love, and that for ever. I may just observe that all three of the clauses in our text are essential to complete victory; but I saw at once, when these words came to my mind, that this first clause would occupy all our time this morning. *First*, then, we have to notice *the atonement of Christ, and, secondly, the accusations of Satan.*

First, the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. All our sins were charged upon Jesus Christ; there was not any curse, there was not any wrath, there was not any bitterness, there was not any indignation, there was not anything whatever due to our sins which the Saviour did not embody in himself. Sin hath in it strength, and God was pleased not to withdraw that strength; he was determined that strength should remain;—the strength of sin is the law. Where will you find a person as inflexible as God's law; where will you find a person as spiritual as God's law, as good as God's law, as unchangeable as God's law? We have all this in Christ; but then it is only you will understand this matter that see and feel yourselves completely cut up and cut down, and broken to shivers; that you are sinners of the deepest dye, and that you have no more hope from your morality, valuable as it is in its place, good as you may do by it, excellent as it is,—you have no more hope in your consistency, in your own works, of thereby obtaining pardon, or anything

essential to salvation, than you have hope in the devil; and you might just as well trust in the worst sins that men ever committed as in the best works they ever did. God's way of getting rid of sin is by Jesus Christ himself taking the sins of the people, and taking the penalty. Now, keeping up the idea that he is God as well as man, I may here just observe, what must his righteousness be,—his obedient life? Ah, it was the work of the God-man Mediator. The apostle saith of Christ that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God." I never could get at the idea, and never shall while I live. Whatever must be the exaltation, the strength, the stamina, the health, the happiness, the triumph, the glory; we are to stand to all eternity before God by the righteousness of Christ, and that righteousness is the righteousness of God; we are to be made the righteousness of God in him. I hold in infinite contempt all the attempts of men to bring one particle of human merit, one thread of creature righteousness, to connect with the wondrous righteousness of the God-man Mediator, to connect with the came for him to atone for sin, did he do so. Now when the time moment. As I have said, he was God as well as man. There was not, is not, and never will be in the nature of things the possibility of so inflicting the penalty of the law upon man as for man to compass the whole of that penalty, and put an end to it; the creature cannot do it. But Jesus Christ was God as well as man; and therefore all the penalty of the law, all the curse, and all the sin, was laid upon him, and he suffered every iota. Don't you go dreaming, as some of our divines, that tell you that the efficacy of Christ's atonement does not lie in the greatness of his sufferings, but in the dignity of his person; whereas the greatness of his atonement lies in both; for if he had not been God he could not have compassed all our woe, and if he had not been God he could not have paid the mighty debt. Therefore the efficacy of his atonement lies in these two things; first, in his ability to pay the debt; secondly, in the actual fact that he did pay the debt; the efficacy of his atonement lies first in his ability to bear, and, secondly, in the actual fact that he did bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and that he did, by an infinite sweep of his omnipotent arm, bring eternal salvation. Now if this is the way we are to be saved, if this is the way we are to have access to God, then what do we want with anything else? We want nothing else; Christ is the end of the law, and he is the end of sin, the end of death, the end of trouble, the end of every sorrow and every grief, and he is the end of the last tear. Why, he is everything. Now this Jesus Christ was to be preached in the world, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Well but, Lord, we shall meet with the veriest devils. Never mind that;—every creature; do not omit one. But look at Peter's vision; some wild beasts, some four-footed beasts, some fowls of the air, some the veriest reptiles, creeping things, vipers, adders, —the worst characters that ever lived. Never mind that; the blood of Jesus Christ, the atonement of Jesus Christ, swallows up the whole. We should not despair. I care not how bad they have been, I care not how low they are sunk, how dead they are, how far they are off; though they are as filthy and as far gone as hell and the devil could wish, or sin could make them;—never mind; preach the gospel to every creature. Therefore we are not to mince the matter. We live in a day when the gospel is not half preached. The man that knows how his own heart bubbles up clouds of infidelity, and atheism, and every other evil, it is a rare thing for him to hear the gospel preached in a manner that comes right down to him. But when the atonement of Christ is set forth in its omnipotency,—think of that; there is an absolute omnipotency in the atonement of Christ; and you that know him, if you were ten million times twice told worse than you are, and if you had committed ten million

times the sins you have committed, even then, if you are brought to have a grain of faith in Emmanuel's blood, you should not dare to despair. Oh, my hearer, is there any limit to the power of Emmanuel's blood, to the power of his atonement? "Preach the gospel to every creature."

Yes, but suppose we meet with some that have committed the unpardonable sin;—they are excepted, they are excluded. Are they? Is the question of the unpardonable sin understood by men in general? I think not. I have been very neatly and very roughly abused for differing from divines upon this question; but if there be an unpardonable sin in the Bible, I have never found it yet; if there be an unpardonable sin, then I want to know why the gospel is to be preached to every creature, let them be who they may. No, the unpardonable sin so called is an awful sin, but it is not unpardonable. Ah, but, say you, the Saviour saith it is. Yes, but you must not take one single scripture isolated by itself;—you must not do that. I once preached a sermon upon that very subject; and I see it was on Lord's day morning, September 1st, 1861, at the Surrey Tabernacle in the Borough Road. And last night, when I was pretty comfortable, and thinking of this day with a good deal of pleasure, because of the subjects I had on hand, which laid on my mind with savour, I thought,—Well, this sermon was preached a long time ago—in 1861—eight years ago; I wonder whether it is any the worse or better for keeping; so I sat down and read it, and I really enjoyed it; I could not have thought I had preached so well; I could not have thought that my conclusions were so conclusive; I could not have thought that I had demonstrated my points so clearly. And I thought of the man who said, "Why, where is your sermon on the unpardonable sin? I should like to see it reprinted, and circulated all over the world." Well, I must not say anything, of course, upon that; only that I will be honest to say that I thought it was a good feeling in the man. I am not now going to enter into the matter; but I saw on reading that sermon several other points I might have brought forward to strengthen my conclusions,—that, as a general rule, there is a sin not to be pardoned; yet that there are, as I proved in that sermon, exceptions to that rule. So then, when I look at Emmanuel, why, it drives from my mind all reason for despair. I admit that it is possible for a dying worm of the earth to commit a sin that Emmanuel's blood cannot blot out? I admit that the devil himself, if Christ died for him, could commit a sin that Emmanuel's blood could not overcome? To hell, from whence it came, let such a thought be drove. My Emmanuel is an almighty Emmanuel; my Emmanuel is a Saviour that saves by his omnipotence.

"Nor aid he needs, nor duties ask,
Of us poor, feeble worms;
What everlasting love decrees,
Almighty power performs."

Some of you muddling about because of this evil and because of that;—Oh dear me, here is that caterpillar, and that canker worm, and that palmer worm;—whatever shall I do? Ah, what to do indeed. Why, you know what the Bible says;—"Be not afraid, only believe." If thou hast a grain of faith in Emmanuel's blood, that will give thee the victory most gloriously, and thou wilt stand amazed at the greatness and wonderfulness of God. Ah, say some, this is a dangerous doctrine. Poor arrogant moth, who told you that? Was it a dangerous thing for Christ to die, and put away all sin? Was it a dangerous thing for Christ to spoil principalities and powers? Is it a dangerous thing to be told that we are saved by grace? Is it a dangerous thing to be told that the redemption Christ has wrought is an eternal redemption, and that the redeemed, by virtue of being redeemed, shall return and come to Zion, and shall there dwell for ever? See, then, the power of Emmanuel's blood. Look at Manasseh;—a viler character could not be than Manasseh was. When

you look at him in his character, you cannot forgive him; one loathes the very naming of his name; when you look at Manasseh in his slaying thousands of infants and thousands of adults, and the infamous idolatry that he set up and followed, one seems to loathe the very name of such a hell-born wretch as he was. And yet almighty mercy reached him; and the little time he had left, he did what he could to undo some of the things he had done; and who shall say that Manasseh's soul is not now joined with the apostle Paul, the holy prophets, and all the saints before God's eternal throne, bearing testimony of the infinite efficacy of the blood of Christ? Some of you that are tossed about, driven about, and tried in a way perhaps you would be afraid or ashamed to name to anyone, never mind, —name it to your God, tell it to your heavenly Father; ask your heavenly Father if there is anything too hard for his dear Son; ask if there be a sin, or ever was a sin in any person for whom he died that his precious blood could not take away. Why, the Lord Jesus Christ, by taking the penalty away, by magnifying the law, and by bringing mercy and truth together, has perfumed infinity with the incense of his atonement. All heaven savours of his atonement; God as well as man, he reached to infinity, has perfumed infinity with the incense of his name, and has made his people as fragrant to God as he himself is; has made his people as pleasing to God as he himself is; has brought matters into such a position that the blessed God looks upon his people with the same pleasure as he looks upon him. The Father does not say,—I wish my Son had not married such a jade; I wish my Son had not married such a dunghill woman as this; I wish my Son had sought for something better. No;—he loved the church; and as nothing else would do, he gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by washing it first legally with his own blood, then with the washing of water by the word, and present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. What think you of the heavenly Jerusalem now, what think you of the Lamb's bride now? Look at her, with her neck like the tower of Lebanon, to denote her majesty, her sternness and determination never to bow to the yoke of bondage; look at her standing at his right hand, arrayed in gold, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, all the prophetic testimonies of prophets and apostles culminating upon her head, and she shall shine to all eternity, just as Christ himself shines. Say you, if Christ has perfumed infinity with the incense of his name, then he has perfumed hell. Of course he has. Well, say you, then they are very happy. Yes, as happy as a truth-hating man is hearing the truth. It is a savour of death unto death to them. There is not a damned soul in hell that does not recognise the power of the Saviour; he has the keys of hell; he has conquered the whole. The very fragrance of his name is a terror to them,—it is an awe to them:—"Devils are subject unto us through thy name." It is to them a savour of death unto death. But to the living soul on earth, and to the glorified spirit in heaven, it is the Rose of Sharon carried out to perfection—the incense of his name carried out to perfection. The fragrance of the incense—for it all bears on the atonement of Christ—was brought out by fire; the incense was burned, and that brought the fragrance out. So Christ's suffering has brought his excellency out; it has brought him out in all the excellence of his character. And a grain of faith in him will give us pardon for any thing and every thing—give us victory over any thing and every thing. The excellency of his character was brought out by suffering, and he was made perfect by suffering. In the 30th of Exodus you read that each spice should be of equal weight with the other; all the spices that formed the incense were of the same weight. The meaning of that, first, is that not in any one of the qualities of Christ was there any deficiency; he was of full weight, and was not in any one respect found wanting.

and by him all his people are of full weight too; there is not a good quality you can name that he was not perfect in. Look at him in his love, in his wisdom, in his faithfulness, his integrity, his obedience to God, pleading our cause; let it be whatever it may, each quality is of equal weight with the other—no deficiency, and, on the other hand, no superfluity; I have never discovered any thing in him yet that I do not want. Then this incense is expressive also of the paradisiacal and pleasant state into which the people, by the atonement of Christ, are brought; they are brought to where every thing is pleasant—not one unpleasant thing whatever. “At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” I cannot leave this part of my subject without first reminding you that it was death to make my composition like that incense. I hope you will be able to recognise the force and solemnity of this prohibition. Any man that should make any incense like that perfume that God commanded, was to be cut off. What does this represent? It represents a false Christ, a false sanctification, a false justification, a false faith, and a false gospel. How many are there,—I must not strive to please men so that I should not serve Christ,—how many are there in our day that preach and profess a gospel that is only a semblance of the real gospel? they make something like the real gospel, but it is not the real gospel. But who can judge? The man who is made sensible of what he is, made sensible of his own grief, his own sore, his own wretchedness; he knows that these gospels do not describe his condition, cannot reach his condition, therefore it is a composition made up. What is Popery? Why, a composition, a mere imitation. What is Puseyism? Puseyism is nothing else but a mere imitation. So then the Lord keep us aware of self-sanctification, self-justification, self-salvation;—reject the whole of it. If thou hast any savour pleasing to God, that savour must be by faith in Christ. Hence, saith the apostle, “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.” They derived their savour from Christ, Christ’s infinite and wonderful atonement;—that atonement which is deeper than hell, high as heaven; broader than the sea, longer than the earth. Ah! poor tried believer, here is thy hope. And how easily you, that know this atonement, may spiritualise the words of Isaac to Jacob:—“The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed.” Does not this apply to Christ with wonderful force? Ah, what a fragrance! He is indeed that field of treasures, that field of paradisiacal fragrance which the Lord hath blessed. Therefore, said Isaac to Jacob,—and it applies to the Saviour beautifully,—“God give thee of the dew of heaven;” and so he does—“and the fatness of the earth;” so he does—“and plenty of corn and wine.” Ah, the Saviour never sent one of his people begging yet; he hath never said, Well, the crops are rather bad this year; the canker-worm, the palmer-worm, the caterpillar, and the locust have been eating my crops. Oh, no, no, no; plenty of corn “and wine,”—plenty of efficacy in his atoning blood to cheer our hearts through life and through death. “Let people serve thee;” yes, Lord, that we will; give us grace, and wisdom, and love to do so, and we will serve him; “and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren;” be it so, Lord; because we know he is a lord whose heart will never be lifted up above his brethren; “and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee.” Why, say some, who is your mother? where shall I find her? 4th of Galatians,—Sarah is my mother;—“We, then, brethren, as Isaac was, are of Sarah.” Sarah is my mother; she was a free woman, and I am a free man; I love my mother; she is the best looking woman in the universe. And Sarah laughed sometimes, and so does her son; the name “Isaac” signifies “laughter;” and “he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.” And if we belong to Sarah, to the new covenant, we shall gladly sit at the feet of the Elder Brother, contemplate the wonders he hath achieved, and

realise the fact, that "Blessed are all they that put their trust in thee." "Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Let us alter those words a little for the sake of explanation. Blessed is he that receiveth thee, and cursed is he that anathematise thee. No man speaking by the Spirit anathematises Christ, but every man speaking by the Spirit will bless and receive Jesus Christ. What a gospel this is to preach! What signifies it what people say? If we know our need of it, we shall see the infinite value of it, and abide by it.

Secondly. I notice *the accusations of Satan*. He appears in this chapter as the accuser of the brethren. If I were to expatiate upon the subject, I should go into church history—the way in which he dealt with the martyrs; so that my sermon would seem more like a mere historical lecture, than a spiritual, practical discourse for ourselves. I will therefore pass by all that. I think the accusations of Satan generally, as far as we are concerned, may be summed up in three. First, he tries to persuade us that we are hypocrites; and strange to tell, stranger still, unaccountable, the adversary makes great mistakes; he not only accuses us of being hypocrites, but he tries to persuade God we are hypocrites too. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Yes; but then thou hast made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath; thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased. I have considered him, Lord, and hate him, and I know he hates me. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will anathematise thee to thy face." Well, the Lord says, Go on, then, Satan, do so; and so he did; but Job still retained all his four qualities;—perfect. Let us take the word "perfect" there to mean decision; he was perfectly decided for the truth, the same as we are. Job lost all his property;—was he still decided? Yes; he still held fast his integrity; upright in the faith. There can be no uprightness anywhere else. If you pretend to keep the law, you must be a hypocrite, because you cannot do it; but if you believe in Jesus Christ there is room there daily to confess what you are; there you can be upright and honest. And Job feared Jehovah, in contrast to false gods; and eschewed evil,—stood against everything contrary to God's truth. Then Satan said, "Now put forth thine hand, and touch him." Now Satan would have liked to kill Job, and said, Now, then, I can tell the people that he was a hypocrite, and he was cut off because he was a hypocrite. No, said the Lord, you shall not kill him, because if so my people in after ages will not see how matters turned out at the last. You may go so far, but you shall not kill him. And, notwithstanding all that Satan was suffered to do, Job lived to prove that his religion was real. Some of you may have to mourn your deadness, and coldness, and the long absence of the Lord in his visitations from you. You pray, and hear, and read, and seem to get nothing. Does there not seem an accuser somewhere saying,—Ah, you are a hypocrite? Well, ask yourself a question or two. Here is the truth, of infinite value; do I feel decided for it? I do. Am I sincere in my decision for this mercy? I am. Do I fear this one God, and this one God only? I do. And do I stand out in contrast to everything that is contrary to his blessed truth? I do. Very well. Now, Job, where are you? Ah, he says, I am all right; "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" there is the atonement, there is the redemption; "and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." So, then, Job overcame by faith in the atonement of Christ; he himself being made decided, therefore upright therein. He was also in gospel order; for while in the 19th chapter he knew that his Redeemer lived, in the 23rd chapter he knew there was a throne of mercy. "Oh, that I knew where I might find him." What! cannot you come, Job? No. But your friends tell you to come. So he did when the Lord came to him. "That I might come

even to his seat." "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." And if the following words were understood in a law sense, they would have a very poor meaning. How do you know you shall come forth as gold? I know it because "my foot hath held his steps,"—that is, successive steps of salvation; "his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips;" his commandment is to believe, and that commandment is effectual; "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Thus, then, Satan accuses the Lord's people of being hypocrites, and we overcome that accusation by the blood of the Lamb; because Satan might with truth call us hypocrites and atheists,—there is not a single thing that is bad that we are not after the flesh; but faith in the blood of the Lamb overcomes all that we are after the flesh, establishes what we are after the Spirit; and the people of God shall be judged not by what they are in the flesh, but by what they are in the Spirit;—not according to your flesh be it unto you, but, "according to your *faith* be it unto you." Therefore, if you have a grain of faith in Christ, you will be judged in the spirit which you have, the spirit of faith, and the spirit of faith is the spirit of the gospel; the spirit of God, the spirit of life, and the spirit of freedom. That is the rule after which you will be judged; and thus you overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Then the next accusation of Satan as the accuser of the brethren, is, that he tells the people of God they are too sinful to be Christians. Joshua, just look at yourself; you call yourself a Christian! look at your dirty rags; there is a hole there, and a hole there, and a hole there;—you have patched it up as well as you could; but look at you;—you are not only clothed with rags, but filthy garments. You call yourself a Christian! And there is the poor prodigal. You say you love your father. Yes, and I am going to see him. Why, what a fool you are; do you think he will receive you without a shoe to your foot, and hardly a rag upon your back? Look at you;—you have got a drunkard's face, and a thief's face; your very countenance witnesses against you. I should be ashamed to go. Well. I am ashamed, but then he is my father, and I feel a love to him, and I will go. If he will not have me, I shall not be any worse off than I am now; and if he receive me I shall be infinitely better off. I will go to my father. So he went; "and while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." I daresay the devil was very much grieved to see that father so kind to his son; but it is just like God our Father, it is just the way that he does. His father brought him indoors just as he was, but very soon changed the garments, very soon put on the ring of adoption, very soon the shoes of preparation, very soon killed the fatted calf; very soon the music and the dancing. Ah, "this my son was lost, and is found; was dead, and is alive again." If I had been there,—I shall be there by and by,—and heard my Father say that, I think I should have leaped over the heads of all the angels there. Instead of saying,—The wretch has found his way back; the monster has come at last; the devil has come to his senses at last;—instead of that,—"He was lost, and is found; was dead, and is alive again." Is that all that my Father has against his son? Yes, that is all, that is all. Ah, the dear Saviour carried my sins away, as far as the east is from the west, blotted them from Divine remembrance;—"I will remember their iniquities no more."